



## Farm and Food Tourism Considerations

Kynda Curtis  
USU Extension Food/Ag Marketing Specialist  
kynda.curtis@usu.edu



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## Overview

- Evaluate the type of farm and food tourism enterprises best suited to the existing business
- Understand the management and resource requirements of farm and food tourism enterprises
- Examine the requirements and challenges of sourcing locally to restaurants, hotels, and conference centers
- Understand the benefits of building community partnerships



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## Getting Started

- Determine what you will offer
  - Identify some activities that seem doable
    - Fit with your goals and your resources
    - List all the tasks or steps required to start
- Make sure your ideas are feasible
  - Contact the extension or tourism office for input, or enlist the help of a business counselor or event planner
    - What may sound good to you may not sound good to others
- Know you customers
  - Knowing where your customers are from and what their preferences and lifestyle choices are will help you tailor your offerings, pricing, and promotional activities
  - Collecting email information may allow you to maintain regular contact with customers through e-marketing campaigns or social media




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## Getting Started

- Start small
  - Develop a launch date for the activity
  - List the resources needed
  - List all tasks to be completed
- Protect yourself and your customers
  - Make sure you understand the regulatory and legal aspects of your new enterprise
  - Develop a risk assessment plan
- Get the word out
  - Make sure publicity is integral in your plans
    - It takes a lot of promotion to get the attention you will need for launching a new enterprise
  - Word of mouth is key to building business




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## Getting Started

- The soft opening
  - Start with a small activity targeted at a select group to test your ideas
    - Understanding how you are perceived by visitors is essential to improving your “first impression”
  - Good first impressions involve trained staff who interact well with customers to ensure a safe and high-quality experience
- Take it slow
  - Take time to get feedback from customers about what else they might like to see, do, learn or buy
  - Each year, add in another attraction or product

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## Considerations by Enterprise

- Farm-based activities
- Food-based attractions
- Sourcing locally
  - Restaurants
  - Hotels/conference centers
  - Conferences/meetings

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## Farm-Based Activities

- Assess your personality
  - Do you enjoy people?
  - Are you good with children?
  - Are you a good communicator?
  - Are you patient?
  - Are you organized?
  - Do you enjoy learning new things?
  - Can you adapt to change?
- If the answer to the majority of these questions is yes, then you are a good candidate for farm tourism

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## Create a “Destination”

- Offering an experience that customers are willing to pay for without sacrificing the uniqueness of the place
- May require coordinating with neighboring businesses or communities to develop more weekend itineraries that encourage overnight stays
- Work together with local lodging, food service, and agricultural enterprises to create a network of services for guests
- What are visitors going to do while they’re here?

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## Land & Equipment Resources

- Do you have sufficient property resources for the venture and parking?
- Is your venture located near the market you hope to attract?
- Are directions to your location easy to give?
- What will you have to change about your property to accommodate your new venture?
- Is it possible to start the business without making any major changes or investments?






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## Financial & Labor Resources

- Assess your financial capabilities
  - Will you have the cash you need to begin your venture or will you need to get a loan?
  - Are you willing to borrow the money?
- Estimate your time and labor needs –
  - The time and energy needed to run an operation will require work and support from the whole family
- Lots of multi-tasking and learning of new skills will be necessary

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## Legal & Liability Options

- Seek legal assistance - As the owner it is your responsibility to see that your visitors are safe and protected, but accidents happen
  - Consider becoming a limited liability company (LLC)
- Explore insurance options
- Develop a business and marketing plan

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## Health, Zoning, & Environmental Regulations

- Food tourism requires sufficient capacity (staff and infrastructure) to provide basic services
  - Parking, transportation, signage, customer assistance, and restrooms
  - Property and facilities should be well maintained and in compliance regulations
- Keep up with food safety regulations and follow a food safety plan

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## Safety Issues

- Are you ready for visitors?
- Is your facility handicapped accessible?
- Are there plenty of restrooms?
- Are ponds or other dangerous areas fenced off?
- If your mode of on farm transportation is wagons, what safety features do they have? Do they have high rails to keep children in?
- Are there safety barriers to prevent accidents?
- Are people in place to assist visitors who might have difficulty?
- Is there a plan in place to care for someone who has an accident?

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## Food-Based Attractions

- Vending at existing fairs/festivals/events
  - Convince the organizers that you should vend food at their event
  - Pick your food carefully
    - Aim for a large target audience
    - Organizers want something that will stand out from the rest
  - Know what paperwork/licensing you will need.
    - You may need to get a license from a local authority which may include a fee
  - Find out about insurance requirements
  - Find references that articulate your ability to provide large-scale food production in an outdoor setting

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## Food-Based Attractions – Food/Drink Festivals

- Establish a theme that enhances your destination image
- If a similar program already exists, avoid duplication
- Gain buy-in where you want to hold the event
- Vary the programming for a general audience event
- Make sure the space can accommodate the crowds
- Make sure vendors can handle attendee volumes
- Create a budget and get bids from reputable companies
- If this is your first time planning the event, hire an outside festival vendor
- Market through traditional tourism channels, partnering with area businesses and tourist destinations




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## What is Sourcing Locally?

- The promotion of local sources of food through enhanced local menu items
- The inclusion of locally grown food items in the hospitality (restaurants, hotels, conference centers, etc.) supply chain
  - Local produce and livestock
  - Local foods
  - Local recipes
  - New/exotic foods




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## Local Food Demand

- The National Restaurant Association's 2019 "Restaurant Industry Forecast" reported that 7 of 10 consumers were more likely to visit a restaurant offering locally produced items
- The National Restaurant Association's 2020 "Top Ten Trends across the Nation," included locally sourced meats and seafood and locally grown produce as the top 2 trends




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## Sourcing Locally

- Involves sourcing restaurants, hotels, conference centers, and meetings
- Check with major distributors, such as Cisco or Avendara, as they have programs for the provision of local food
  - These may be expensive or bureaucratic
- Consistency and reliability are the most important feature to food service establishments
  - Are there central drop-off locations (food hubs) to reduce time and travel requirements?




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## Sourcing Local - Restaurants

- High-end or fine dining category - \$150 couple
- Locally-produced, in-season, and specialty products in demand
  - Perceived higher quality and freshness
  - Restaurant customers request local products
  - Chefs seek innovative or unique items
- Why Restaurants?
  - Pricing higher than wholesale
  - Reliable customer base
  - Opportunity to build relationship with customer/local business
  - Opportunity to grow special or new products and varieties




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## Sourcing Restaurants

- Challenges
  - Delivery, availability, and variety requirements
  - Limited seasonal availability
  - Low volume frequent sales
  - High turnover – chefs move, restaurant's close
  - Product packaging, labeling, processing to meet food safety regulations




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## Sourcing Restaurants

- Contact the chef or person in charge of purchasing – never contact during meal service
- Research the menu, clientele, food philosophy
- Understand the key personnel – chefs, owners, managers
- Find out how they wish to be contacted and when (day/time)
- Invite the chef or buyer to your farm
- Bring samples of produce to share with the chef/buyer
- Schedule a winter visit for product planning/seed selection
- Prepare a “story” for your farm
- Provide overview of your products, volume, packaging, availability (season)
- Update chefs on availability regularly
- Grow unique items, select the best product for chefs
- Make weekly contact at agreed time, provide deliveries on time
- Immediately notify chef of potential shortages and/or change in delivery




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## Sourcing Local - Hotels/Conference Centers

- Hotels need the largest supply during peak summer seasons when farmers are busiest
- Conference centers need the largest supply in the winter (off season)
  - Consider season extension or value-added foods
- Supply chains are a complex issue for global hotel companies as suppliers extend across numerous countries in which they purchase food and beverage, heavy equipment, linens and pillows, personal soap and shampoo




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## Sourcing Hotels/Conference Centers

- The menu choices made by hotels/conference organizers are driven largely by cost-consciousness and risk aversion
- Sourcing options for most hotels/conference centers are constrained by national sourcing contracts with major distributors
- Farmers may have difficulty competing with large-scale producers with large-scale marketing




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## Sourcing Hotels

- Hotel food service establishments operate similarly to restaurants, but have some differences
  - The Food and Beverage Manager should be your first contact
  - Invite the F&B Manager to your farm
  - Hotels usually need staple items (fresh meat, vegetables, fruits) rather than specialty/unique items (They do not offer “daily specials”)
  - Hotels usually need the same items in the same amounts each week (unless it is a conference center as well)
  - Bring samples of produce to share with the chef/buyer
  - Provide deliveries on time
  - Immediately notify F&B manager of potential shortages and/or change in delivery
  - Provide references




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## Sourcing Local - Conferences/Meetings

- Often meeting planners are the best contact
- Find meeting planners that specialize in “green meetings”
- Meeting planners may only need products occasionally, but in large quantities
- Know where planners source their food (in-house food and beverage, caterers, self bought, etc.)




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## Sourcing Conferences/Meetings

- Partner with other local farms to ensure quantity
- Think of the “whole” package – coffee, pastries, snacks, meat, vegetables, dairy, juice, bread
- Snack foods provide an option for value-added products




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## Sourcing Conferences/Meetings

- Have an accurate list of produce in season each month
- Promote your strengths
  - Fresh, healthy food allows participants to sit longer and concentrate (no sugar high/crash)
  - Tell your region's story (promote cultural and environmental sustainability)
  - Provide printed fliers to promote your involvement

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## More Considerations

- Work in partnership
  - Coordinating to serve a common market is mutually beneficial
  - Agricultural, tourism, marketing associations, community food system organizations, chambers of commerce, or business districts will help develop the destination image
  - Coordinate with other tourism attractions nearby
  - Actively participate in regional food and drink events

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## Partner Examples

- Partner with a caterer or food truck(s) to supply food for events (farm dinners, concerts, brunches, etc.)
- Partner with art, yoga, or other instructors to provide classes
- Partner with Extension to provide bee keeping, bird watching, and other educational programs
- Work with other groups/associations
  - Cheese makers, wood workers, mountain bikers, etc.




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## Tips for Building Community Partnerships

Goals	Actions
Talk about your proposed project and share your ideas at clubs and meetings	Listen to their concerns and feedback. Address any potential problems early in the project's development.
Develop a comfortable style of public presentation	Create a clear picture of your mission and expected outcomes. Join the local chamber of commerce. Offer to write a regular column for your local newspaper if you have time and the ability.
See any shortcomings as potential for future partnerships	Inventory your community, seeking out those who have what you need in order to accomplish your goals. Develop mutually supportive relationships.
Identify those with whom you share potential customers	Develop joint promotions and possibly joint marketing opportunities to track the source of your leads. Be innovative.
Engage adversaries	Most people simply want to be heard or are afraid of unknown impacts. Sit down with them, listen, and address their concerns.
Make your business and marketing plans available	Engage community members to work with you. Use your plans to support your actions and efforts.
Manage the physical expansion of your operation	Ensure a satisfactory quality of life for everyone affected.
Work with other businesses	Encourage support for locally owned businesses in general.
Build on resource-based assets	Maintain and enhance historic structures in your locality.

Source: Jolly (2006)

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## Tourism Contacts/Resources

- Utah Department of Ag and Food: <https://ag.utah.gov>
- Utah's Own: <https://utahsown.org>
- Utah State University Extension: <https://extension.usu.edu>
- Visit Utah: <https://www.visitutah.com>
- Utah Office of Tourism (includes destination development): <https://travel.utah.gov>






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## Activity

- Worksheet 2.1: Resource Needs
  - List resource needs for a food tourism enterprise or product
  - What resources do you have already?
  - How will you acquire those you don't have?

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