

In fact, at last count, Vermont had some 45 different farms offering farm stays—the third most in the country (after Pennsylvania and California) and about as many as the five other New England states combined. “It’s a whole new wave of people who are excited about the farm,” says Beth Kennett, a past VFA president who owns Liberty Hill Farm in Rochester, which started taking guests 27 years ago. “We’ve seen a substantial increase in the past two years. It’s been this incredible thing. Suddenly everyone knows what agritourism is.” Where once most of her guests were families with small children, now she sees much more diversity. “It’s totally cool for college students to go to a farm,” she says. With the explosion of interest in local and organic foods, even the parents are coming with a different attitude. “It’s no longer, ‘I want to bring the kids to visit the cute animals.’ Now it’s, ‘I have a responsibility to feed my family healthy food.’”

Kennett’s own farm is a family affair; it’s not an uncommon sight for her grandchildren to show up at the back door with a couple of cartons of eggs in the morning, happy to explain to guests which ones came from their favorite hens. Oftentimes those eggs are fried up with house-cured maple-pork sausage from Kennett’s son Tom, who makes five different varieties from the farm’s pigs. Dinner is usually accompanied by whatever veggies the neighbors bring by that day.

Kennett allows guests to participate as much or as little as they’d like in the farm chores, which include milking some 120 head of dairy cows. “Sometimes people come to the farm thinking they are going to milk cows, then they meet a cow and realize how big it is and they are like, ‘No way.’” In addition to the fresh food and farm education, she finds that many guests are just as taken by the freedom of being out in the fresh air. “Just walking down through the meadows to the river and having that freedom of access to the fields and the forests is such a soulful experience,” she says. “Time after time, people tell me they couldn’t believe the change in how they felt being here.” In fact, she says, one guest from the city who has visited several times with his 13-year-old daughter was so taken by the peace and quiet of farm life that he recently returned—by himself.

➔ VERMONT FARMS ASSOCIATION, VTFARMS.ORG; LIBERTY HILL FARM, 511 LIBERTY HILL, ROCHESTER, VT, 802-767-3926, LIBERTYHILLFARM.COM.



## BLANTYRE

Blantyre’s romantic Berkshires setting is only enhanced by perfect pairings of wine and cheese. The menu here offers at least seven rare cheeses from across New England. Recommended is Rawson Brook Farm’s Monterey Chèvre: Creamy and fresh with a zesty aftertaste, it’s made down the road in Monterey, Massachusetts. ➔ 16 BLANTYRE RD., LENOX, MA, 413-637-3556, BLANTYRE.COM.



## OCEAN HOUSE

This newly renovated resort keeps a “food forager” on staff who acts as the liaison to local farmers and leads guests on educational field trips to area farms. No time? The gift shop offers gourmet items such as Pelloni Farm’s jam, made in tiny batches from fruit plucked at the peak of ripeness. ➔ ONE BLUFF AVE., WATCH HILL, WESTERLY, RI, 401-584-7000, OCEANHOUSERI.COM.