

## Dinner and drinks offered at Fat Sheep Farm event

Fat Sheep Farm can be a misleading name as evidenced by the first sheep to greet us, at the Hartland farm. She was a skinny, little lamb named Apple. Fat Sheep Farm owner, Todd Heyman, and I had walked from the main house, down through the barn, full of harvested produce, along a foot path lined with fruit trees, branches heavy with the season's first fruits, to a pasture, in order to see the sheep.

There were half a dozen mature sheep and as many babies behind an electric fence in a grassy pasture within view of the farm's five pristine guest houses. Heyman owns Fat Sheep Farm with his wife, Suzy Kaplan. They came from Massachusetts in 2016 and have created this farm as an agritourism destination for people interested in connecting with a Vermont agricultural experience.

Visitors stay in one of the five guesthouses. Each guesthouse is newly built in a modern farmhouse style; very Scandinavian, clean and stylish. The nightly rates are extremely competitive, and guests have the opportunity to help out around the farm but are by no means required to do so.

As we approached the sheep pasture, Heyman explained that the mother sheep are named for the cheeses, which their milk will produce, such as, Feta, Bleu, and Brie. The babies are named for foods which pair nicely with cheeses. Apple may be a skinny little girl, but she has a big personality. She came right up to the electric fence to say hello to us, despite risking a solar-powered zap to her little pink nose.

"She was a runt. Her mother rejected her. We had to hold the mother down so that Apple could nurse. When her mother's milk ran out, we would hold other mothers down for Apple to nurse from them. She hopped from mother sheep to mother sheep nursing as much as she could until she had gotten enough," Heyman explained. "She's a survivor, for sure."

The small herd's white fleece helps to create a photographer's dream as it contrasts dramatically with the greens and golds of the meadow in the foreground and the autumnal beauty of the long-range mountain views in the background. Everywhere the eye lands at Fat Sheep Farm provides a photo opportunity. The barns are immaculate, the chickens are plump, the sheep rollick, and the produce is freshly harvested and stacked in a manner that says, "Abundance."

"Agritourism is important for Vermont. People come here and learn that Vermont products are not only unique but are of the highest quality. Every guest we have here takes that message back to their homes. We are helping to brand Vermont as a source for exceptional quality produce," Heyman said. "Guests have the opportunity to help out, but they don't have to."

Helping out means feeding chickens, collecting eggs, taking goats and sheep to pasture and milking the sheep. There is currently a sourdough making class, which guests often enjoy. The next step will be offering cheese-making classes. The property boasts a brand new, cheese making room and "cheese cave" both of which are situated just below the smartly designed event room. At the end of the day, the farm's guests are encouraged to gather around the fire pit, enjoy a glass of wine and take in the stunning mountain view, unrivaled for its panoramic vista.

On Tuesday, Sept. 24, from 5:30-7:30 p.m., *you* have the opportunity to gather around Fat Sheep Farm's fire pit and enjoy the incredible views while sampling sitesourced produce as prepared by Chef Nick Laurendau of Mangalitsa in Woodstock. Mangalitsa is one of Woodstock's most sought-after restaurants. If you've had trouble getting a reservation, now is your chance to sample some of Chef's creations and find out for yourself why it is so difficult to get a table.

As if that is not enough to lure you to the farm, SILO Distillery will prepare one-of-a-kind custom cocktails, which will be available for purchase and there will be free Silo tastings available, as well (here's hoping for a favorite: Silo's lavender vodka, fresh-squeezed lemon, and Vermont maple syrup with a sprig of thyme as garnish).

Fat Sheep Farm's owners will be on hand to provide tours and skinny little Apple will be waiting for anyone who would like to come rub her nose.

Come see why Fat Sheep Farm, 122 Best Road in Hartland or online at [fatsheepfarmvermont.com](http://fatsheepfarmvermont.com), was featured on the front page of the Boston Globe's travel section and is now one of New England's most popular farm-stay destinations, winning more than 150 five-star reviews on TripAdvisor.

Many of the farm's guests come from Holland and Germany thanks to a New York City travel agent who steers clients to Fat Sheep Farm. But most of the visitors are American, young couples or young families.



**Jennifer**

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