



Rose's Berry Farm- History and Overview

[Rose's Berry Farm, LLC](#) (RBF) in South Glastonbury, Connecticut has been a vendor at farmers markets for over 10 years and a "cornerstone" farm at markets such as CitySeed's in New Haven, CT since 2004. We attend over 10 Markets statewide every week with 1-3 employees prepping for and attending each market. Customer feedback helps awareness of local food trends. We try to offer unique and ethnic food selections that are popular in urban locations. Farmers' Markets are a major part of our income, representing as much as 25-30% of our sales. They provide a critical outlet for our fresh produce, giving us full value for our product and enabling quick turnover. Markets also increase our exposure to more customers, both retail and wholesale.

Our fruit is also sold through wholesale partners like FreshPoint, giving us a broad, focused distribution network. We also supply berry and vinegar products to local chefs and restaurants to participating in "Farm to Table" events. RBF has also partnered with Chef Billy Grant/BG Catering to hold a series of dinner events on our Deck, overlooking the farm.

Our reputation and quality are very important, and we follow GAP (Good Agricultural Practices) and IPM (Integrated Pest Management) measures to produce the safest, freshest, and tastiest produce for our customers. RBF works closely with the USDA and UCONN agriculture researchers to keep up with the latest developments in crop production.

Through our "South Glastonbury Growers Cooperative", we bring to market the best produce from our farm, as well as several other neighbors. This helps us all while providing "go to market" efficiencies.

Farm Overview

Beginning as a small 20-acre fruit farm in 1908, (owned by the Scaglia family) to a 100 acre "family destination farm", RBF has continued to evolve with the times. In 2018, Owner Sandi Rose sold 50 acres to the Town of Glastonbury for Open Space so it will not be developed. Our neighboring farm, Belltown Hill Orchards took over this parcel and is planting fruit trees.

Through the hard work and guidance of the late Henry Rose (3rd generation) and the marketing savvy of his wife Sandi Rose, the farm promotes "Keeping Connecticut Green and Growing" year-round with a variety of locally grown products.

These include Strawberries, Blueberries, Raspberries, Blackberries, Currants, Pears, Apples, Pumpkins and Christmas Trees, grown in the Tuscany-like countryside of the central Connecticut town of South Glastonbury. Rose's Berry Farm was the largest blueberry farm in Southern New England and was one of the first PYO farms starting in the late 1960s.

At our Wickham Hill (Hebron Avenue) Farm Stand in Glastonbury, we grow most of our vegetables (30 acres) and strawberries. Locals anxiously await our opening every May on one of the main thoroughfares in town.



Irrigating to prevent frost damage to berry crop



Greenhouses under blue spring skies



Misty sunrise on pond

The Rose's "family" extends beyond Sandi, to Farm Manager Michael Draghi, our summer student help, creative genius Debbie Cofield and her "Jam Ladies", the Breakfast Wait staff, and our Mexican seasonal farm hands. Marketing Manager, Mark Sanderson takes pride in documenting the beauty of the earth, people and creatures here on the farm, and promoting Events.

Owner Sandi Rose hosts popular Monday Night dinners for employees, friends and family at the farm and conversation runs from local politics, farming issues or sports, and laughter abounds. These friends help "spread the love" for RBF to their acquaintances near and far. Sandi has become the "go-to" expert on fruit farming for local media outlets. Sandi is contacted by the state Media when weather threatens to affect the fruit crop in Connecticut or when they need some scenic video footage.

Farm Fun, Education and Shared Responsibility

As our popularity has grown over the past 30 yrs., Rose's has added activities such as Fall Hayrides, Halloween scarecrows and décor, a fun playground, School Tours, Pick-Your-Own fruit and our famous Sunday "Breakfast with a View" restaurant, That is available for special events such as weddings, business meetings, parties and more!

Rose's Berry Farm is proud to host thousands of visitors over the course of each year. We strive to educate school children and Yale college students who come here on tours. We discuss Buying Local, and how Food Freshness makes a difference in the quality of the

foods we eat. We have hosted the local Audubon Society and 2 Hopewell Bistro for Fall fund-raising dinners. Rose's uses humane methods to deter bird populations that threaten our crop. As good "farm citizens", we try to promote the beauty of the farmland in our large riverside town in Connecticut. We try to provide a showcase for sustainability and the protection of farmland to show how this benefits the community and region.

Our "farm outreach" moves from Hartford to Hamden, New Haven to New Milford, Windsor to Westport, as we travel far and wide around Connecticut to deliver our products to customers and Farmers' Markets. Managers Elpidio, Winny, Agustin, Gonzalo and their staff work hard to make sure our produce is fresh and presentable.

How our Success goes beyond Local

The real human "back-story" is the loyalty between Sandi and Rose's Berry Farm and our close-knit group of Mexican workers from the State of Guanajuato in Central Mexico. About 8 workers live on the farm from April to November and perform the lion's share of the physical labor required to run such a large farm operation. The men also work the Farmers' Markets, do the bulk of our planting and pruning, cook for our Breakfast with a View (Sundays June-October), drive tractors and bake some of our homemade fruit pies and baked goods. They also manage our Farm Stand operation.

Several of the men have been working at RBF for over 20 years. As with many seasonal laborers, they leave behind their families for a chance to make a better living than they could at home. These loyal men were a great comfort to Sandi when she lost husband Henry Rose to cancer in 2008. Sandi had dependable employees who could run the Farm Stand, Markets and much of the field operations without a lot of guidance. Along with local friend and farmer Michael Draghi (Littel Acres Farm), who signed on as Farm Operations Manager, RBF was able to continue operations without interruption.

In turn, Rose's Berry Farm has provided the men with consistent employment and support for their families. Sandi and friends often travel to visit the men and their families during the winter. It has been very gratifying to see them raise families, and to help them build a better life in their beautiful mountain city of Tierra Blanca (Municipality in 1536). They are not just employees, but true friends who are woven deeply into the lives of all whom frequent and love Rose's Berry Farm.

In 2018, a Graduate Student film team from Columbia University (NYC) chose RBF to film a story about farming and migrant workers. They spent over a year and 1000 hrs. filming, between Connecticut and Mexico to bring this story to life.

The *BAFTA Student Film Award for Documentary (Gold)* was awarded to Ingrid Holmquist and Sana Malik from Columbia University for "Guanajuato Norte." This was a worldwide award with hundreds of entries!



Sandi visits men and families in Tierra Blanca



Tierra Blanca is in Central Mexico about 4 hrs North of Mexico City



Sunset in Guanajuato State of Mexico

Rose's Berry Farm is more than a local institution and destination. It has become a small brand with worldwide impact from the workers it supports, to the friends we meet at Farmers' Markets, and the many families who continue to build lifelong memories when visiting us in the summer, fall and winter.

We proudly represent our town, and Connecticut farming with quality food and a very human touch.



Panoramic View from the Blueberry Fields - Rose's Berry Farm, South Glastonbury, Connecticut 2012
 Essay and photos by Mark Sanderson