

Agritourism in Marin

Demand for local food and public interest in agriculture are both increasing in California. This has contributed to an increase in the number of California farmers and ranchers choosing agricultural tourism (agritourism) as a potentially profitable diversification strategy. Agritourism offers our ranches and farms a creative way to educate visitors, promote farm products, and diversify operations while caring for the land that supports them.

In Marin, you can watch cheese being made, taste and purchase wonderful artisan and farmstead cheeses, harvest apples and pet sheep on MALT preserved ranches.



Watch fresh oysters being hauled in from Tomales & Drakes Bay, bring your family to pick pumpkins and learn about the history of ranching & dairying, or spend the night at a farm stay. For more information, check out the 40+ Marin farms and ranches listed at Grown in Marin (<http://growninmarin.org>) or visit the Marin Convention & Visitors Bureau (MCVB) at www.visitMarin.org and look for their new agritourism listings.

Cultivation of oysters and other shellfish is an important part of Marin agriculture. In 2009, Marin farms sold more than \$3.2 million worth of oysters, mussels and clams, placing the county second in state shellfish production.

Most of our shellfish producers offer opportunities to purchase and picnic at their sites on or near Tomales Bay and Drakes Estero. Check their websites for hours -

Drakes Bay Oysters - <http://www.drakesbayoyster.com>

Hog Island Oyster Company - <http://www.hogislandoysters.com>

Point Reyes Oyster Company - <http://pointreyesoyster.com>

Tomales Bay Oyster Company - <http://tomalesbayoysters.com>

The dairy business is a long-standing family heritage in Marin County. Twenty-eight dairies (including dairy sheep, goat, and water buffalo) rank the county 15th in the state in milk production. Over 50% of Marin dairies are certified organic and a growing number are transforming their rich milk into cheese, butter, ice cream and yogurt that have a loyal Bay Area following as well as consumers nationwide. You could say Marin dairy products are “the cream of the crop”. Check with farm tour organizers about a dairy tour.

Did you know that there are over 28 **artisan and farmstead cheesemakers** in the North Bay, and 9 are located in Marin? The oldest continuously operating cheese plant in the US is just outside of Novato at the Marin French Cheese Company. Look for a Sonoma-Marin Cheese Trail map (<http://cheesetrail.org>) or drop by Nicasio Valley Cheese Company just off the town square to pick up a copy and taste their fabulous farmstead cheeses. There are over 100 different types of artisan cheese made in Marin and Sonoma. Tours by reservation are offered at these locations as well as retail cheese sales marked with an (R) -

Cowgirl Creamery (R) - <http://www.cowgirlcreamery.com>

Nicasio Valley Cheese Company (R) - <http://www.nicasiocheese.com>

Point Reyes Farmstead Cheese Company - <http://pointreyescheese.com>

The Fork at Point Reyes - <http://www.theforkatpointreyes.com>

Marin French Cheese (R) - <http://www.marinfrenchcheese.com>

Barinaga Ranch Farmstead Sheep Milk Cheese - <http://barinagaranch.com>

Ramini Mozzarella - <http://www.raminimozzarella.com>

Straus Family Creamery - <http://strausfamilycreamery.com>

Tomales Farmstead Creamery at Toluma Farms - <http://www.tolumafarms.com>

Over 300 acres in Marin are farmed for organic **fruits and vegetables**, including wine grapes and olive oil, all grown organically. Bay Area restaurants and consumers just can't get enough, so the upward trend continues for Marin's high quality produce. Some farms are open seasonally for u-pick, CSAs, or special events such as farm summer camp. Others operate year round tasting rooms.

Chileno Valley Ranch - <http://www.chilenobnb.com>

Devils Gulch Ranch - <http://www.devilsgulchranch.com>

Indian Valley Organic Farm and Garden - http://www.conservationcorpsnorthbay.org/f/eng/www_programs_indianvalley

McEvoy Ranch - <http://www.mcevoyranch.com>

Pt. Reyes Vineyards - <http://ptreyesvineyardinn.com/Winery.htm>

Pacheco Ranch Winery - http://www.pachecoranchwinery.com/prw_index.htm

Canvas Ranch - <http://canvasranch.com>

Marin's lush pastures and cool weather create the perfect environment for growing livestock. **Livestock production** is the second most lucrative agricultural industry in the county. Almost 20,000 acres are in organic pasture. These farms and ranches offer seasonal tours.

Devils Gulch Ranch - <http://www.devilsgulchranch.com>

Gospel Flat Farm - <http://gospelflatfarm.com>

Stemple Creek Ranch - <http://www.stemplecreek.com>

Tara Firma Farms - www.tarafirmafarms.com

True Grass Farms - <http://truegrassfarms.com>

Many farms and ranches can be visited on **farm tours** organized by these Marin based organizations who support and sustain our agricultural productivity and others sell their products at the weekly **farmers markets** operated by AIM. The Sunday Marin Farmers Market is the third largest farmers market in California and has long been considered one of the premier markets in the state. At summer's peak, nearly 200 local farmers, specialty food purveyors and artisans come together to celebrate a vibrant local food movement. Tourists from all over the world join local shoppers each week, to explore and taste the best of Marin and the Bay Area.

Agricultural Institute of Marin (AIM) - <http://www.agriculturalinstitute.org>

Marin Agricultural Land Trust - <http://www.malt.org>

Marin Organic - www.marinorganic.org

University of California, Cooperative Extension, Marin County - <http://cemarlin.ucdavis.edu>

Farmstays common throughout Europe, Australia, and other parts of the world, are becoming popular in the US. On-farm lodging is popular with guests seeking a rural experience and a better understanding of where their food comes from. Marin offers several unique experiences from renting a beautiful cottage located on an apple cider operation, to a one of a kind rental in Pt Reyes National Seashore on a working dairy ranch.

AppleGarden Cottage - <http://www.applegardencottage.com>

Point Reyes Vinyard Inn - <http://www.ptreyesvineyardinn.com>

Read more about agritourism ventures at the Small Farm Program website <http://www.sfc.ucdavis.edu/agritourism>.

Prepared by Ellie Rilla and David J. Lewis, July 2012. More information about visiting a Marin ranch or farm is available at the *Grown in Marin* website (<http://growininmarin.org>), or by calling the UCCE Farm Advisor's office at 415/473-4204.