

Teaching where jelly comes from can be an opportunity to launch an agritourism venture or just have a special time with the people you love. Either way, it will be fun.

My first memory of berry picking was with a neighbor who lived nearby. She would pick us up early in the morning, suggest we wear long sleeves, pants and boots; and bring a small bucket. She almost instinctively knew where the berries were located down each logging road. After the car stopped we would jump out with our buckets, race to the nearby vines and compete to see who could fill his bucket first.

After the harvest on our ride home, we talked about what we would make with our berries. Would it be berries over ice-cream for dessert, berries over cereal for breakfast, berry cobbler for supper or jelly for biscuits? My family always opted for both berry cobbler and jelly.

I'm using this short personal story, to show that berry picking can be an opportunity to earn extra income. With so many parents working today, parents look for fun opportunities for their children. A learning opportunity such as the one described can easily transform into a day camp. Choose your home or another site for the event. Keep the number of children to six or less. Arrange a drop-off and pick-up point to accommodate parents.

Schedule berry picking trips to the countryside or visit a u-pick-em operation nearby. These operations can be found on MarketMaker (<http://la.marketmaker.uiuc.edu/>), a free online listing available to farmers, ranchers, fisheries, farmers markets, agritourism operators, retailers, buyers, wineries, wholesalers, processors, and eating and drinking places. Also search Local Harvest (<http://www.localharvest.org/farmers-markets/>) and Pick-Your-Own (<http://www.pickyourown.org/>)

The schedule of the Day Camp should include berry picking, cleaning and processing. The LSU AgCenter's brochure entitled, "Berry Pickin' Time in Louisiana," provides all the information an entrepreneur needs to learn how to pick, sort, and store berries. It also includes delicious recipes for jelly, cobbler, jam and syrup. For a copy call your local LSU AgCenter office.

If the idea of running a day camp does not appeal to you, consider making jelly and selling at your local Farmers Market. A special Louisiana law, La R.S. 40:4.9, passed in 1991 and amended in 1995 and 1997, provides an opportunity for an individual to make jams and jellies in their home instead of a commercial kitchen if their sales do not exceed \$5,000 in a year. The state sanitary codes do not apply to these individuals, but the law should not be construed to imply that any unwholesome foods should be sold.

Across the United States more and more people are considering agritourism as a means to attain supplemental income and enjoyment. Recently, I was invited to join an agri-tour to Italy. The tour included visited numerous countryside farms and with each stop the tour included watching or sometimes participating in making something from the host's garden for a meal. People are paying to travel to Europe to "experience" agriculture. Let's give them an opportunity to pay to "experience" our agriculture.

For more information, contact Dora Ann Hatch with the LSU AgCenter.