

The beauty and diversity of Kings County's Foote Family Farm

Stepping out of the farmhouse, the view takes your breath away. The autumn sun lights up the vista of farmland and falls on the apples and pumpkins overflowing in bins below. In the warehouse, the whirl of machines separating honey and the buzz of ever-present bees fill the ears.

These are the sights and sounds of Foote Family Farm in Woodville, Kings County where, for the past 40 years, George Foote and his family have worked hard to fulfill consumers' demands, while appreciating all that farm life has to offer.

George grew up in Woodville –the original family farm is just down the road – and after retiring from the air force returned to start his own farming operation. Farm life in Kings County holds great importance for him.

"The beauty, the environment, and the panoramic view are worth a lot to a fellow like me," says George. "And friends are all around me."

Though the Foote Family Farm's main crop is apples, it produces a unique combination of products. It has about 700 bee colonies, with the honey processed right on the farm. Hives are leased throughout the province for pollination, and bee supplies are kept for sale to other beekeepers.

Friday is the farm's cider day. A special blend of apples is pressed to make sweet apple cider, which is immediately pumped into a refrigerated tank for direct sale. And when consumers come for their holiday cider, they can also cut their own Christmas trees or buy them pre-cut.

The farm's products are sold direct - the majority of the apple crop goes to a packer for the wholesale trade, with about 10 per cent going to consumers coming to the farm. The farm does not sell to stores. "We get more per pound by selling direct," says George, a 35-year director of the Nova Scotia Fruit Growers Association and a past president. "Our honey and cider are only sold here at the farm."

Selling to consumers on-site is very important to George. "I want people to know who's doing the growing, and I can learn how they feel (about the product) firsthand."

George likes to spend Sunday afternoons telling people about the varieties of apples the farm grows and sells. "People should be able to identify the difference in the varieties. The consumer really is the boss – we have to grow what they want."

For example, because of public demand, the farm produces Honey Crisp apples. Best grown in a colder climate like Kings County's, the apple is shipped primarily to the American market. "It's a good apple," says George. "It has a melt-in-your-mouth texture."

Kings County's Foote Family Farm will be filling consumers' needs for some time to come. "What would I do if I wasn't farming?" asks George. "I've traveled a lot of the world – I joined the air force for adventure – but I just happen to like this place."

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