HOSPITALITY AND CREATING A POSITIVE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

An agricultural producer diversifying his/her operation into agritourism will have business experience in agricultural production but may have less experience or context about the hospitality business, which can look very different. Hospitality and interactions with customers are not everyone’s preference or forte and it is important to identify who on your team is best suited to manage the hospitality side of the business.

Successful agritourism operations understand the importance of the customer experience. Below are some strategies for creating your visitor experience and considering how well such an enterprise may fit into your larger operation and personal goals.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

UNDERSTAND that customer service is what sets you apart and REMEMBER to SHINE.

- Sociable - open and friendly, use questions to connect and smile.
- Honest – build trust for long term relationships, tell the truth and share your expertise.
- Individual – use your best judgment for each situation, tell your story.
- Needs based – address immediate needs (comfort) first, then address intermediate needs and then finally help guests with higher needs.
- Excellent - Make customers say “wow”, understand what your visitors want from you and remember that details matter.

ASSESS your own personal skills and EVALUATE the best team member for the job if you want to delegate the role of agritourism host to others in your organization.

- Do you like meeting and working with all types of people?
- Do you like to engage and serve strangers?
- Are you patient and sensitive to the needs of travelers?
- Do you know about your operation’s own heritage as well as the history and other cultural assets of your area?
AGRITOURISM IS AN EXPERIENCE

CREATE an experience.
- The experience is what makes you memorable and provides a positive emotional impression and memory for customers.
- Example: Coffee started as a commodity and then became a service when sold to the hospitality industry. Starbucks turned coffee into an experience!
- Challenge yourself to imagine how to use animals, nature, food and beverages to create a similarly immersive experience.

ENGAGE your customers—do not just entertain them.
- An engaged customer is immersed and actively participating in the activity.
- The experience should relate to the customers personality or it will be quickly forgotten.
- Promote a sense of place through telling your story.
- Personally interact with guests to provide an experience that connects them to you and the experience.

RESOURCES

Resources for Understanding Hospitality and Creating a Positive Visitor Experience
1. Are you ready to Host Visitors at your Farm? Self-Assessment
2. On-Farm Customer Relations
3. Getting Started in Agritourism: Customer Relations
4. Customer Service
5. Pouring Happiness: The Starbucks Story

Resources for Promoting a Sense of Place
1. Visitor Readiness Toolkit: Destination Identity
2. Visitor Readiness Worksheet: To be a Visitor