



Lattin's Country Cider Mill and Farm

– Not Your Typical Run of the Mill

By Heather Clarke

AFTER HER KIDS GREW UP AND STARTED GRADE SCHOOL, Carolyn Lattin's late husband Vic gave her two choices – go back to work in an office, or get their old hand-cranked apple press going.

We can all be grateful she opted for the apple press. Carolyn has spent the last 33 years pressing apples and serving up award-winning cider and smiles.

What is now Lattin's Country Cider Mill and Farm, located in Olympia, started rather humbly with a cider press that was used by the Lattins and their neighbors to press apples. Carolyn began making cider from their own apples and selling it to a neighbor's restaurant and the Olympia Farmer's Co-op.

It didn't take long before the cider built itself a reputation for deliciousness.

Carolyn now supplies her cider to more than 250 restaurants, supermarkets and juice companies in Western Washington and Oregon. Blending together anywhere from nine

ABOVE:

Liam Clarke, age 22 months, is excited to share his cider with his dad, Jeremy.

RIGHT:

Lattin's apples on display.

OPPOSITE PAGE:

Turkey struts its stuff at Lattin's Country Cider Mill and Farm.



to 14 varieties of apples, depending on the season, the cider is always made with the freshest apples available and pressed, pasteurized and packaged onsite.

“We use only the best apples and we check them all by hand. It’s hard work but worth it – you can taste the difference,” shares Carolyn.

Even though they can now process as much as 90,000 pounds of apples in one week – their quality and attention to detail hasn’t changed.

They also haven’t changed the Yakima grower that has provided Lattin’s with apples for more than 30 years now, or even the delivery man who has been pulling up to Lattin’s with truckloads of apples all those same years.

The cider is 100 percent juice and comes in strawberry, raspberry, blackberry, spiced and apple.

While at the farm you can enjoy a blackberry cider milkshake, the same shake they’ve been serving up for decades.

“I have grown men come in and ask for this milkshake and tell me they can still remember the day they first enjoyed the milkshake as a young child,” Lattin says with a smile.

“We are coming into our third generation of visitors now and it’s so exciting to see the tradition and joy passed from parent to child,” shares Lattin.

Besides being coveted by locals, the cider has received five national awards, including 1998 National Champion at the Illinois Special Grower’s Show and first in the nation from the North American Direct Farmers’ Association in 2004. They also won first in the nation for their strawberry jam.

Although the cider is enough to warrant a visit to the farm there is a long list of other reasons to visit Lattin’s.

They have 24 varieties of pies, cider donuts, breads, apple fritters (on Saturdays) and a variety of treats from the onsite bakery located smack-dab in the middle of the farm. They make syrups, apple butter, applesauce and

freezer jams.

They also grow and sell a long list of vegetables – lettuce, swiss chard, cucumbers, pickling cucumbers, green beans, zucchini, summer/winter squash, beets, carrots. Basically, any vegetable that grows in Western Washington can be found for sale at Lattin’s shop, a big red barn that also

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houses the apple press.

While sipping your cider, take a walk around the farm to see a whole array of farm animals. This spring there were baby goats, peacocks, quails, turkey, pigs, cows, chickens and rabbits.

Admission is free to the farm and for only 60 cents, you can buy a bag of grain to feed to the goats and chickens.

“We want to provide a fun family experience that doesn’t cost a lot of money,” shares Lattin.

They also provide tours for groups ranging from preschoolers to seniors. Ask any local school child and it’s likely they have fond memories to a field trip Lattin’s. Each student that visits receives a tour of the farm, a fresh donut, a cup of cider and feed for the animals.

Aside from being a popular field trip destination, Lattin’s also hosts special events for the community to enjoy.

Whether it’s the annual Easter egg hunt in April, apple festival the last weekend in September or the harvest in October – good times and great childhood memories are ripe for the picking.

With 40,000 eggs filled with chocolate and candy, the Easter egg hunt requires volunteers to come in weeks in advance to prepare. You can taste the ciders at the apple festival in September and the pumpkin patch comes to life complete with wagon

rides and a maze in October, as well as an apple sling-shot.

It’s exhausting to consider all that Lattin’s offers while still continuing to be a small family-owned and operated business.

Although her two sons ran off to get “real jobs” as Lattin says, Carolyn Lattin works side by side with her two daughters, Debbie and Sherrie, and about 15 other employees.

“We work 16 hours a day, but it isn’t like a job because at least half of those hours are fun,” says Lattin.

An employee of Lattin’s said that she doesn’t have customers, she has friends – and she’s working on her third generation of friends and making more daily.

Lattin says, “We just love what we do.”

And, it’s obvious by the ongoing success of Lattin’s Country Cider Mill and Farm that everyone else does too.

Lattin’s Country Cider Mill and Farm is currently open seven days a week from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Visit <http://www.lattiniscider.com/> for more information, including driving directions. ■

