

Apple Tour 2014 A Cultivate Michigan Video Transcript

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Terry McLean: We are here at Blake's Orchard & Cider Mill in Armada, Michigan to take a look at a good sized operation that is a big apple grower multigenerational farm and has many, many different facets to its operation.

Peter Blake: Blake's Apple Orchard started in 1946. My parents, Gerald and Elisabeth Blake after World War II came out and started a family. They had 13 children, which I'm one of them. And the farm started to grow by having those 13 kids participate heavily in the production of fruit and vegetables.

Bob Tritten: Blake's are an example of an individual fruit farm that I help to bring the resources of Michigan State University and other institutions, and those resources include knowledge-based research and scientific information to help them do a better job of raising, in this case, their fruit crop.

McLean: As an extension educator in food systems, I am trying to promote the purchase of local foods following our Michigan Good Food Charter goal of 20% by 2020. And so we're taking a tour today with food purchasers to show them a large scale operation like this, and hopefully make connections between our farmers and our food purchasers.

Brian Rosso: You know, really the biggest thing for us is just to know what's available and how we can get it to our kitchens. As long as we can get it to our kitchens and to our chefs, we can definitely use the product, prepare for our residents. They love fresh produce. Blake's is a great example of, you know, local apples and a wide variety of produce. So if we're able to have it in our kitchens, we definitely produce it.

Tritten: I think the connection between the apple grower and institutions in the state is a viable possibility for the future. I think it would benefit the local grower to help expand the markets. I think it would help the local institutions to be able to truly buy local. But more importantly, to have that connection that the farmer and the institution will have this relationship of trust, knowledge, and to provide a local product for the food system.

McLean: And so hopefully we support the farmers by bringing some business to them. And we enhance the quality of the food that the consumers will eat.



>> Rosso: In the past, we've always really just relied on whatever showed up from our distributors. That's what we used. But now we realize the importance of supporting local farmers and using the freshest products available, because we're getting a lot of requests from our residents that live in American House. They want it, they're demanding it, so we definitely want to deliver on what our customers want.

Tritten: So the real takeaway from a tour like this where institutional food buyers are touring a food operation is for the food buyers to understand the complexity of raising a crop and marketing a crop and getting a crop to the institution. And from the grower's perspective, it's the challenge of the institutional buyer that is going to need to make a crop with a new system of marketing their product.

Rosso: Yeah, join Cultivate Michigan. It's a great organization. You definitely get the ball rolling.

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