



Agriculture & Tourism Partners of Illinois
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Absolutely Ament

By Ross Ament, ATPI President

Fall is a busy time for many people in the agricultural sector, but especially agritourism. In Illinois, the connecting of harvest, Halloween, and the tastes, smells, sounds and colorful sights of the country brings consumers to our members.

The past few months have also been busy for ATPI. One of our association's goals is to highlight awareness of the rich diversity of Illinois' agritourism opportunities. ATPI has had displays, brochures, and media awareness in many locations.

The Illinois State Fair was an opportunity to inform the public about our website and the Farm Guide. We also presented the annual Agritourism of the Year Award to the Great Pumpkin Patch, Arthur, IL at a special event during the Fair. As you can read in another article in this newsletter, the award is designed to recognize the outstanding efforts of our business members. Subsequent press releases bring further awareness to the public of Illinois agritourism.

At the Farm Progress Show, ATPI was there with a very colorful booth constructed by the Great Pumpkin Patch. A big thank you for their efforts. John Pike and Heather Wilkins informed many, many visitors from around the state, nation and the world about what there is to see and do in Illinois. Bob Reese and the IL Dept of Agriculture also reached many attendees as did the Illinois Specialty Growers group. The national Small Farms Conference recently held in Springfield was another opportunity for ATPI to market the many agritourism farms, businesses and destinations and direct people to our website. Congratulations to ATPI board member Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant for her leadership as event chair for a great conference. Deborah also coordinates the Sustainable Ag Tours each year, of which ATPI is a proud sponsor and receives greater awareness of agritourism.

And speaking of the ATPI website, you and your business or destination are continually being promoted through the virtual world. I receive the number of visitors, unique visitors and page views each week for www.agfun.com. For the week of October 5, there were 1,745 visitors, 1,465 unique visitors and 3,451 page views. Each week reports these same levels of activity.

Similarly, our Regional Tourism Development Offices and cvb's send and hand out many, many Farm Guides to interested consumers. I do want to thank Heather Wilkins for her work in display and promotional material setup and take down at many events. Also big thanks to John Pike for being at many of these events to promote ATPI and agritourism.

We hope that you appreciate the importance of ATPI to your marketing efforts. I would say it is a pretty good value.



REMINDER

– SAVETHE DATE!!

2010 Illinois Specialty Crops, Agritourism, and Organic Conference January 6-8
Crowne Plaza
Hotel and Convention Center,
Springfield, IL
for the January 2010
conference, all Illinois
Specialty Growers Association
(ISGA) members and all past
attendees will be mailed a
brochure in early December
2009. Keep an eye out for it!

For more information, contact
the ISGA at (309) 557-2107 or
visit their website at
www.specialtygrowers.org

We will again have an
Agritourism tract with sessions
on marketing, customer
service, liability issues, public
relations, and photography!
ATPI will also convene their
Annual Business Meeting in
the afternoon of Thursday,
January 7th. We hope to see
you all there this year!



ATPI Announces Outstanding Agritourism Business of the Year

Pictured at Left is:

Bruce and Mary Beth Condill accept their award from Orion Samuelson of WGN Radio.

The Great Pumpkin Patch (TGPP), located in Arthur, IL, was recognized as the Illinois Agritourism Business of the Year at the 2009 Illinois State Fair. A luncheon and award ceremony was held on the Director's Lawn of the fairgrounds on August 18th. Numerous farm families and farm-related businesses were recognized for their excellence in the agricultural fields. Bruce and Mary Beth Condill, twin sons Mac and Buck and their wives Ginny and Shana, along with eldest brother Kit (Christopher) and wife Emily have each brought expertise and creativity to making The Great Pumpkin Patch a special fall destination in Central Illinois. The Patch is in its 21st season of sharing and hosting family fun on the farm. Visit their website at www.the200acres.com. We congratulate them on their success and this exciting recognition!



5th National Small Farm Conference

The 5th National Small Farm Conference, "Roadmap to Success for Small Farmers and Ranchers" was held September 15-17, 2009 in Springfield, Illinois. The conference, held every three to four years, brought together 635 individuals, including land grant universities, community-based organizations, farmers, and other stakeholders who work with small farmers and ranchers. The conference provided an opportunity for strengthening collaboration and partnership among the various groups and it also provided an opportunity to share new ideas in research, extension and outreach.

ATPI was represented by two Board members. John Pike (Extension Educator, Community & Economic Development, University of Illinois Extension) served as a member of the Local Arrangements Committee and also presented Developing Agritourism as a Marketing Tool: The Big Picture at a concurrent session. Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant (Extension Specialist, Small Farm and Sustainable Agriculture, University of Illinois Extension) served as the conference chair. ATPI also had a display in the exhibit hall that was staffed by John and Heather Wilkins (Executive Director, Central Illinois Tourism Development Office).

As ATPI members and supporters, we know the importance of encouraging, fostering, supporting, and stimulating tourism. An important part of the conference was showcasing Illinois small farms. Attendees had the opportunity to attend one of seven tours that highlighted the amazing diversity of Illinois agriculture and tourism opportunities. The tours include: Beginning Farmer Tour—Farm Beginnings and Beyond (Tour Host: Terra Brockman, Illinois Land Connection); Bioenergy Tour—Small Farm Energy (Tour Host: Gary Letterly, Natural Resources Educator, University of Illinois Extension, Christian County); Building Community Support (Tour Host: Deanna Glosser, Slow Food Springfield); Developing Sustainable Farming Systems (Tour Host: Shannon Allen, Macon County Soil and Water Conservation District); Exploring Alternative Enterprises and Marketing Opportunities (Tour Host: Roger A. Larson, County Extension Director, University of Illinois Extension, Peoria County); Managing Business: Keeping the Farm and Ranch (Tour Host: Lindsay Record, Illinois Stewardship Alliance) and Walking Tour: Tour of Lincoln Sites and the 100th Commemoration of the 1908 Springfield Race Riot (Tour Host: Garret Moffet, Springfield Walks).



The Conference also received support from Shirley Eck, Convention Services Manager of the Springfield IL Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB). The Springfield CVB provided assistance throughout the planning and execution of the event – from making the arrangements for the Walking Tour to hosting an informational display to providing information to local businesses.

ATPI and agritourism was an important part of the 5th National Small Farm Conference. We had the opportunity to share with attendees, from across the US, the diversity of our small farms and the hospitality of Springfield. Many people commented that they would like to return to Illinois in the future. This is what we all want to hear!

For more information – www.conferences.uiuc.edu/smallfarm

ATPI Business Spotlight



DARN HOT PEPPERS
827 Vines Road Cobden, IL
www.darnhotpeppers.com

Darn Hot Peppers is a family farm in Cobden, IL committed to growing a wide variety of specialty hot peppers. Gerardo Jimenez and his family grow their peppers on their farm Rancho Bella Vista, meaning “a farm with a beautiful view”. The Jimenez family pride themselves on respect for the land and its’ fruits. This respect comes from deep migrant farm worker roots and the pride in caring for their land.

Darn Hot Peppers believes in taking their time, using traditional farming methods and doing things the old fashioned way. Through those methods, they have perfected the balance of heat and flavor in their products. At Rancho Bella Vista, only sustainable agriculture methods are utilized. This excludes all use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, plant growth regulators, crop residues, and livestock feed additives. They rely solely on crop rotation, crop residues, animal manures, and mechanical cultivation to maintain soil productivity and tilth to supply plan nutrients, and control weeds, insects, and other pests. By maintaining full respect for the land and therefore the health and safety of their customers, Darn Hot Peppers are committed to growing healthy and flavorful specialty hot peppers, using environmentally safe and pesticide free products, and employing all natural and sustainable farming methods.

Peppers grown on the farm include cayenne, chile de arbol, guajillo, habanero, mirasol, and thai. The products available for purchase include dried whole peppers, ground pepper spice jars, jams & jellies, salsas, and great gift boxes. You can purchase their goods at the retail farm store at 827 Vines Road in Cobden. You can also find them at numerous farmers markets throughout the state, Food Fantasies in Springfield, and Bill’s Country Store in Makanda. You can try some of their peppers and products at the annual Darn Hot Pepper Festival, held on their farm every year Labor Day weekend. The festival hosts southwest style cooking, local music, salsa and jelly tasting and arts & crafts booths. Sure to be a fun-filled day for the whole family!

The farm pepper retail store is open June – December, Monday – Saturday from 10 a.m to 5 p.m. Tours can be scheduled during August and September when the beautiful peppers are in bloom. Please call to schedule at (618) 893-1443. Darn Hot Peppers is hosting a Customer Appreciation Day on December 12th. Make plans to visit and enjoy some Mexican Hot Chocolate, hot tamales, pan dulce, and find a perfect gift box for that hot pepper fan! On their website, www.darnhotpeppers.com, you can order products, read their blog, and view and share recipes. Here’s a great recipe to get you started!

Enjoy!

Darn Hot Guacamole

Ingredients:

- 1/2 small sweet onion, (Walla Walla or Maui are best) finely chopped
- 1 fresh mirasol or jalapeno pepper, de-stemmed, de-seeded, finely chopped
- 2 medium tomatillo, finely chopped
- 6-8 sprigs fresh cilantro, finely chopped
- 4 ripe, medium-size avocados
- 1/2 teaspoon Darn Hot Pepper Herb Shaker
- 1/2 lime, freshly squeezed

Instructions:

Add chopped onion, fresh cilantro, tomatillos and fresh chiles in a medium-size bowl, mix together, cover and set aside in fridge.

When about ready to serve guacamole, cut avocados lengthwise in half.

Twist halves in opposite directions to loosen the fruit from the pits, scoop out pits, and remove pulp from the avocado skin.

Mash avocado with a fork and mix in the other ingredients.

Add lime juice last and set aside for 2-3 minutes to allow flavors to mix.