

# Get Fresh

Go straight to the source and taste the good life at these organic farm getaways

**I**F THE CLOSEST YOU'VE come to a cow lately is the milk in your latte, consider a farm stay for your next vacation. The trend is spreading from Europe as Americans gain interest in the origins of the food on their forks—eating free-range chicken and grabbing microgreens at the farmers market. U.S. sales of organic food and products totaled about \$11 billion in 2002 and are growing by 20 percent per year, according to the Organic Trade Association. Indeed, vineyards, dairies, and ranches that practice sustainable agriculture are opening up their orchards, fields, and barns to guests. Whether you're looking to learn culinary skills or to muddy your boots (all labor is optional), there's a farm stay for you. These four provide everything from in-room saunas to lessons in making cave-ripened cheddar.

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## organic farm vacations

### The Apple Farm Philo, California

California's *other* other wine country, the uncrowded Anderson Valley, two and a half hours north of San Francisco, is home to vineyards, a regional brewery (Anderson Valley Brewing Company), and The Apple Farm. The owners, Don and Sally Schmitt, and their daughter and son-in-law Karen and Tim Bates, grow more than 80 varieties of apples—from Sierra Beauty to Rhode Island Greening—on their 30-acre farm, where Sally started a cooking school eight years ago.

CHIC ACRES, at The Apple Farm : The farm's namesake fruit

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**Prime Time:** Fall

**Haute Adventure:** Cooking weekends are renowned for Sally's gentle approach and earthy recipes such as wild king salmon in sorrel sauce and caramel apricot bread pudding. Most ingredients are grown or raised on the farm, and the delectable fruit chutneys and jams are sold on-site and at the Ferry Plaza Farmers Market in San Francisco. (Don't leave without a jar of pomegranate jelly.)

**Sleep Easy:** The three cottages are furnished with queen beds and gas stoves, and there's a

guest room on the top floor of the main house. The peaceful Navarro River is out the front door.

**Where to Play:** Across the river sits pocket-size Hendy Woods State Park, with towering redwoods and ten miles of hiking trails. Drive less than an hour for longer hikes at the coastal Van Damme or Russian Gulch state parks—or stick around The Apple Farm for a dip in the Navarro.

**Details:** Doubles cost \$200 per night. A cooking weekend costs \$1,140 for two people, including two nights' lodging, four classes, and all meals, or \$350 per person per class. (707-895-2461)

## **Bobolink Dairy and Bakehouse**

### **Vernon, New Jersey**

At Bobolink Dairy and Bakehouse, master cheesemaker Jonathan White produces acclaimed wood-fired breads and raw-milk cheeses, with the help of a grass-fed herd of 30 cows. (Memo to Jerseyphobes: The 200-acre dairy is in the scenic Warwick Valley, part of the greater Hudson River Valley region, an hour-and-a-half drive from Manhattan.)

**Prime Time:** Spring and fall

**Haute Adventure:** Bobolink offers internships to would-be bakers or cheese maestros who work in exchange for room and board. During a minimum two-week stay, interns learn about grass cultivation, which according to White is "where it all begins." You'll move on to milking and cheese ripening next. Aspiring bakers tackle wild yeasts, bread doughs, and the wood-burning oven. Not ready for a career change? Visitors can arrange shorter stays, immersing themselves in dairy life for a few days while overnighing at a nearby bed-and-breakfast.

**Sleep Easy:** Interns stay in the guesthouse, a four-bedroom converted chauffeur's residence more than 100 years old. If you're not an intern, head to the Apple Valley Inn, an 1831 clapboard house in Glenwood. Bobolink meals (for all guests) are hearty and made from local ingredients—dishes might include venison stew and homemade ginger ice cream.

**Where to Play:** Hike the Appalachian Trail, a mile and a half away; nearby Borderland Farm offers horseback riding.

**Details:** Rooms at the Apple Valley Inn (973-764-3735, [www.applevalleyinn.com](http://www.applevalleyinn.com) (<http://www.applevalleyinn.com>)) cost \$120–\$140 per person. (973-764-4888, [www.cowsoutside.com](http://www.cowsoutside.com) (<http://www.cowsoutside.com>))