

taste

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offers on meals
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Strawberry fields forever

PICK YOUR OWN FARM HAS BEEN IN FAMILY SINCE 1939
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Ravenous rambler visits the fat duck ...no, not that one!

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Let's salsa! Mexican food to keep you cool in summer

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taste

Freshly picked a tasty treat....

STRAWBERRY TIRAMISU

Ingredients

(makes 6)
 12 sponge fingers
 4 tbsp marsala wine or elderflower cordial
 500g strawberries
 Juice of quarter of a lemon
 1 tbsp sugar
 For the mascarpone cream
 3 eggs separated
 3 eggs separated
 250g mascarpone cheese

Method

Soak sponge fingers in marsala wine or cordial, then place 2 in each of 6 glass tumblers. Put the strawberries in a bowl with lemon and sugar, stir and leave to soften. Whisk the yolks with the caster sugar till pale and thick, then fold in the mascarpone. Whisk whites in a bowl and fold in. Spoon strawberries into each glass, then follow with a couple of tablespoons of the cream. Refrigerate for 30mins then serve topped with a strawberry



THE HONESTY BOX

BE honest. How many people have gone strawberry picking and not given into temptation to scoff a few on their way around?

It's part of the fun, the experience but it is also lost income for the farm as you pay for what you pick by weight. Of course they will not put you on the scales and they

don't mind people having a taste of a few as they go around. But they can make up for it by putting a few coins into the honesty box at the end.

The cash from the honesty box goes to charity and Annabelle says they have raised several hundreds of pounds as a result.

If ever there was a perfect advert for big fat juicy strawberries it is Tom Glover.

Not Tom Glover senior, who has been running his family's Mill Farm in Thorrington for 36 years.

Not even the middle Tom Glover, his son.

But his son, ninth generation Tom Glover, who so eagerly chomps on the farm's Alice variety, happy to let the juice trickle down his chin.

Little Tom, as he is known to avoid confusion, makes you want to grab a handful of the fruit from the Pick Your Own farm and stuff it into your mouth before the season ends in the coming weeks.

Annabelle Glover, Tom senior's wife, laughs as she watches her grandson devour the fruit of their labour.

"The children love it," says Annabelle, 63. "We will keep this farm going for as long as we can."

The couple, who have always had their day jobs alongside running the farm and having a Pick Your Own business, came to the 60-acre Mill Farm 36 years ago.

It has been in Tom's family since 1939 and started life as a dairy farm just after the war.

Tom, who is sales director of a business selling farm machinery, has fond memories of growing up on the farm and admits it is easy to take for granted.

Leaning back in his chair he says: "It is hard work living on a farm but it

is a won-

By VANESSA MOON

vanessa.moon@bt.com



Brightlingsea," says Annabelle, a former primary school teacher who has worked for Headway for 26 years.

Pick Your Own makes up a large part of the business now, with people harking back to their childhood, keen to give their own

derful life. As a young boy I had an idyllic childhood. We used to go out the back door and disappear into the countryside. Of course it is all different now."

The couple, who have a son and a daughter who are married with their own families, raised their children on the farm, something Annabelle remembers with humour but admits it was hard work at the time.

"I remember shouting up from the field to make sure the children had their blazers and bags so Tom could take them to school. We used to sell to quite a few shops then across Colchester and Clacton but only sell to five now in

■ Pick your own business

- Annabelle Glover and her husband, Tom, at the farm in Thorrington
 Pictures: STEVE BRADING
 CO81755



DID YOU KNOW?

Strawberries are high in vitamin C and A and provide 8 per cent of the recommended daily allowance for iron. They are a natural detox. There are only 60 calories in a cup of fresh berries. Mill Farm is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and is in an Environmentally Sensitive Area.

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strawberries are just ask Little Tom!

children the same experiences and memories.

Tom explains: "We are enjoying a bit of a renaissance in Pick Your Own. It's not for everyone but whereas years ago people used to pick to make their own jam, these days it is more for the experience."

"We are also in a very beautiful spot with the old watermill and a lake which helps with the irrigation."

"People are also appreciating local produce now and strawberries are also considered very healthy."

Mill Farm grows several different varieties of strawberries on its farm, including Honeoye, Christine, Alice, Florence and Pegasus.

Annabelle, who has also managed to fit in a masters degree in interprofessional health care while working, running a farm and being a mum, swears by the Alice variety for jam making and even gives away her secret tip: "I make the jam, jar it and freeze it. That way when you use it it taste as fresh as the day you made it," she reveals.

The Alice variety are not sold in supermarkets because they are so soft they are not robust enough to last the journey.

The farm is now coming to the end of its busy season, with the last of the strawberries being picked after a late start due to the poor weather this year so far.

Despite this the mouthwatering scent of strawberries fills the air in the garage, from which Annabelle sells the fruit picked by staff that very morning.

Soon Tom and Annabelle, who celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary this year, will be thinking about starting the whole process again, getting the

land ready, weeding, planting, irrigating and strawing.

Tom says: "We try and keep it as simple as possible. It's been a busy few weeks with picking starting at 5.30am until 7.30am, from

which time we welcome members of the public to pick their own.

"It is hard juggling work and running the farm but it is becoming more popular now and people

keep asking us to keep going.

"We are not interested in growing strawberries under polythene bags or on raised beds."

"What we do is traditional and people seem to like that."

■ Strawberry lover – ten-month-old Little Tom, left, loves the Alice variety



PYO TOP TIPS

- If you bring your own container, make sure you have it weighed before you pick to ensure that the weight can be deducted at the end.
- Don't just pick at the edges of the fields as this is where most people stop meaning there won't be much left for you!
- Ask the owners where to pick to find the best fruit. At the peak of the season when the plants are heavily laden the strawberries often meet in the rows. Try not to stand on them!
- Place an order with your local grower if you need a large number of strawberries, for a special event, or don't have time to pick your own. You will avoid disappointment.
- Keep them cool and out of sun to make them last longer.
- Farms will often sell off yesterday's fruit cheaply and it's ideal for jam making.

