

## Jackie Devoid Maple Meadow Farm

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Photo courtesy of Maple Meadow Farm

Maple Meadow Farm has gone through many changes since George C. Devoid started the operation in 1946. In the beginning, the farm comprised 7 acres, a house and a 3-story barn where they kept 200 hens and 1 Jersey cow. George delivered fresh eggs and cottage cheese by bicycle to homes and country stores in the area. In 1954 the family purchased a sugarbush and added pure maple syrup to their offerings.

Today the farm encompasses 320 acres, and George's son George E. Devoid, wife Jackie and members of the 4<sup>th</sup> generation of the Devoid family operate the enterprise. Now 40,000 Rhode Island Red and White Leghorn hens produce the trademark Maple Meadow Farm eggs, available at many locations throughout Vermont. Since the beginning, Maple Meadow Farm has produced quality eggs and provided exceptional service and support based on strong relationships with retail and wholesale customers. The farm's unique customer service has helped them thrive in an egg market where many small producers have left the market, pushed out by increasingly larger operations; their nearest competitor keeps a flock of 2 *million* hens. Maple Meadow Farm has kept up with changes in farm technology, using temperature controlled, bio-secure facilities to deliver reliably fresh and consistent eggs. Though they welcome visitors to the farm, guests are not allowed into barns to maintain biosecurity. For their maple operation they have about 5,000 taps, producing approximately 1500 gallons of syrup each year. However, the 2021 maple run in Vermont was significantly below average and they only produced a little over 800 gallons.



Photo courtesy of Maple Meadow Farm

Jackie Devoid appreciates the long history of the family farm, and also recognizes that being nimble has helped them stay successful. While the operation has kept up with a lot of changes over the decades, the last two years during the Covid pandemic have required unique levels of adaptability. In a single day, sales to restaurants, colleges and schools abruptly stopped, a loss of approximately 40% of their market, while retail demand for eggs more than doubled and consumers increasingly bought cage-free eggs, nearly three times what sales for these were previously. Home chefs wanted high-quality local eggs for their renewed cooking and baking efforts. This dramatic increase in boxed egg sales speaks to the long-standing reputation Maple Meadow has cultivated as a trusted producer in Vermont. However, it was not without challenges. For example, they needed far more egg cartons, and with a globally reduced workforce and production slowdowns, there was a shortage of cartons available. Nonetheless, Maple Meadow Farm has been able to meet the challenge of adjusting types and quantity of production to meet demand in a rapidly changing market. While many consumers were experiencing reduced income

from so many jobs reducing hours and having layoffs, Maple Meadow Farm kept their egg prices stable while many other producers significantly increased their prices.

Jackie says the family takes pride in being fair to their customers, and also providing living wages, health care, and other benefits to their workers. While many farm jobs in Vermont are seasonal, the Devoid family does their best to retain employees and provide them job security, even when there are reductions in production.

When asked about farm risk, Jackie cited market price fluctuations as the biggest challenge. The profit margin for eggs is extremely small, so it doesn't take much of a shift to impact profitability. Another challenge cited by Jackie is one that many businesses must contend with: employee management. Finding employees who are reliable and have a strong work ethic can be difficult, and Maple Meadow Farm strives to provide a stable and positive workplace with extremely competitive salaries and benefits that will provide satisfying and reliable employment.

One of the farm's most effective ways to manage risk is through their strong and longstanding cultivation of caring relationships with their workers, retail customers, and commercial clients. Maple Meadow Farm sees this as creating a culture of service and community, where they check in on their customers regularly and are flexible to meet their needs. For Jackie, these relationships are some of the most satisfying parts of the work, filling her heart and giving her the energy to keep their flock and workforce healthy and happy day after day, year after year.



Maple Meadow farm relies on egg and maple deliveries for most of their sales, including purchases from their online store. The farm also has an on-farm store that stocks their eggs and maple syrup, as well as Monument Farms dairy products.

Maple Meadow Farm works hard to provide consistent supplies of eggs, and they enjoy and benefit from the positive relationships they have earned with customers and the community. This has all been built over decades of outreach and production practices that result in quality products and caring for their many loyal customers.



These residents watch the arrival of customers and all the comings and goings at the farm.



These friendly farm workers keep brushy areas trimmed in exchange for good feed and loving care.



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