

# **OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND FORESTRY**

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## **Pick Oklahoma On the Oklahoma Jelly Making Trails**

Bobby Sloan of Buffalo Creek Berry Farm will provide the bucket and the berries. Visitors just have to bring a few dollars and a lot of great memories.

Or you can pick up some new memories while you are at Sloan's "U-pick" berry patch.

His family has lived on this land in the Mustang area for decades. Sloan and his brothers were like "critters along the creek" as children, touching every stone and stick along the way. They'd hunt, they'd fish and they'd eat berries.

In 2009 Sloan built a brick home on the very spot where the children used to pause to pick wild blackberries. They'd either plop them in their mouths or toss them into a bag or bucket to carry home so their mom Nancy Sloan could make jelly.

Today, just down the hill from where they picked the wild blackberries is Sloan's "U-pick" berry patch where hundreds of people come to gather berries and either reflect on or add to old memories.

Although Sloan has had a "U-pick" business for a few years, there's a new opportunity on the horizon – the Oklahoma Jelly Making Trails presented by the Oklahoma Agritourism program. Individuals, rather than purchasing jelly at the various stops, will pick berries, take them home, and have the option of making jelly – or just eating the berries.

"Parents bring out the kids because this is something they did when they were a kid. They want to get the kids back involved in nature," Sloan said. "Daycares come out. Assisted living centers come too. More than anything else, they'll come out and they'll spend a little bit of money but they'll have a couple hours of healthy, getting- back- to- what- they- used- to- do fun."

### **The Jelly Making Trails**

This summer gather peaches, strawberries, blackberries and blueberries along the Oklahoma Jelly Making Trails.

This isn't one large fresh produce section, but rather one large outstanding Oklahoma program spanning from Kenton in the far western Oklahoma Panhandle to Broken Bow in the state's southeastern area or Sweetwater out west to Pocola in the east.

Even more fun is that you don't pick these berries off the shelf. On the Oklahoma Jelly Making Trails you pick them off the tree or the vine, from the orchard or the patch from May through August.

In May, Oklahoma Agritourism is launching the Oklahoma Jelly Making trails to encourage further visitation of farms during the fun, warm summer months. Trails are grouped by area and have different crops available for picking, or picking up. After your outdoor adventure, bring the

fun into the kitchen and make something fresh and delicious with juicy crops picked right from an Oklahoma farm.

There are 47 participating farms on the Oklahoma Jelly Making Trails. Each farm will have stickers, jelly labels to put on your canning jars and a map to continue your exploration of Oklahoma farms.

Those interested in picking berries can find a nearby farm by going to [okjellymaking.com](http://okjellymaking.com) . Quite possibly not everyone will make it to the kitchen and the jelly making process before deciding to enjoy the fruits of Oklahoma.

Either way, good tastes and good times are highly likely.

### **On the farm**

Buffalo Creek Berry Farm is just an example from among the 47 farms of what can be expected on the Jelly Making Trails.

At Buffalo Creek Berry Farm, instead of going into the thicket like Sloan did to pick wild berries as a child, visitors can stroll among the well-kept patch and depending on the time of the year, can pick blackberries, raspberries or strawberries from the patch.

“There’s a cleaning table and buckets right there and everything they pick is by the pound at \$6 a pound,” he said.

His particular business is usually open on Tuesday and Thursday evenings and Sundays starting in about late May.

Also across the creek, Sloan’s father Bobby Sloan Sr. offers “U-pick” grapes in his vineyard at certain times in the summer.

For Bobby Sloan Jr., the “U-pick” is one of three jobs.

But this one doesn’t really seem like a job.

“Honestly, it’s hard for me to ... I can’t really figure out why people wouldn’t want to go outside and take a deep breath and relax,” Sloan said.

### **Enjoying Oklahoma Agriculture**

This is an enjoyable activity to do outside that will be fun for families and friends complete with three steps: Pick it. Take it. Make it.

Also, the farm operators along the Jelly Making Trails can hand out recipe cards and jelly jar labels.

Oklahoma Agritourism encourages you to contact a farm before heading out, to make sure that they are open on that particular day or to ask for directions.

“Oklahoma Agritourism hopes to educate Oklahomans further on all the farms that are available in Oklahoma and the joys of being outdoors,” said Jamie Cummings, the program administrator in Agritourism for the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food Forestry.

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**Photo caption:** Bobby Sloan of Buffalo Creek Berry Farm is shown at his “U-pick” business, just one of the farms on Oklahoma Agritourism’s Oklahoma Jelly Making Trails. Photo provided, Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry

**Photo caption:** A child is shown in this photo taken in recent years as he enjoys a day of picking strawberries. Archive Photo, Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry

For more information: Go to <http://oklahomaagritourism.com/>