

Millen Farms Wild Blueberries - From Field to Your Table



Ann Marie Bailey, Jacqueline Nicholson and Charmaine Fletcher are all from Jamaica and they are working at Millen Farms assisting with the wild blueberry processing. They are shown here making sure all the unripe berries and stems are removed from the blueberries going to fresh market. (Harrington Photo)



The final step in wild blueberry processing is making sure the weights in each box are accurate. Claudette Walker, from Jamaica, is kept very busy as a "weigher" at Millen Farms. (Harrington Photo)

By Linda Harrington

Machines hum along in the background as a sea of blue flows along the conveyor belt. Millen Farms has six blueberry cleaning lines operating at peak season.

The wild blueberries are harvested in the field, equal percentages by hand or machine, and brought to the warehouse for processing.

There is a large stack of harvested boxes of berries next to each of the mechanized lines. A person called the "dumper" works at the top, looking after three lines at a time, pouring berries into a large funnel like structure.

The blueberries pass through large fans that blow out any leaves, green berries or other debris. The berries then fall onto a conveyor belt that passes in front of three line "pickers". Their job is to remove any remaining green unripe berries and any still having small stems attached.

The wild blueberries continue on down the lines where they pour into waiting boxes which are then weighed into either 3lb or 5lb boxes.

The best quality berries are sold as fresh market berries. Each machine processes about 45 boxes per hour.

A person known as they "cleaner" removes the piles of leaves and any overflow of berries. The waste berries are made into juice. The 3lb and 5lb boxes of Millen Farms are then shipped throughout

Atlantic Canada to all Sobeys stores and locally to the Masstown Market.

Jay Millen says that they usually ship over 400,000 lbs of wild blueberries per year.

Many of the employees working on the wild blueberry processing at Millen Farms are from Jamaica. Ann Marie Bailey is working as a "picker", her first year coming to Nova Scotia.

She says she came here on June 20th and first worked picking strawberries. She will move on to sorting strawberry plants once the blueberries are finished.

"I have been enjoying my time here and I would like to come back another year," she says.

Ann Marie is planning on returning to Jamaica in about 2 weeks but she says other will stay until October.



Sophia Wright keeps three processing lines supplied with wild blueberries at Millen Farms. (Harrington Photo)

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Mary Adshade (left) gives her daughter Cheyene Adshade (right) and friend Kristin Weir a tour of the Hair Salon located in the new Shannex Debert Court. Mary is a CCA who will be working at the new facility. (Harrington Photo)



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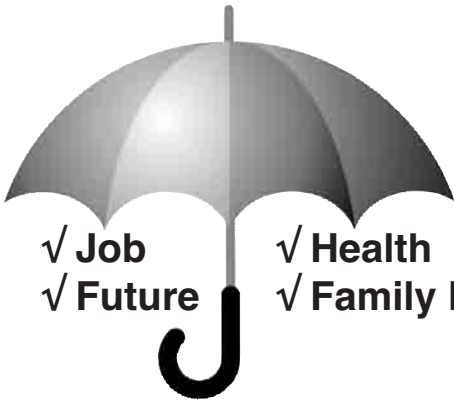
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