

# Chores are Becoming Tourist Attractions

In the title of an article in the *The Atlantic* yesterday Joe Pinsker [asked](#), “What Do Professional Apple Farmers Think of People Who Pick Apples for Fun?”

He found one grumpy farmer in Washington state who had no idea, said “it must be an East Coast or urban thing,” and called the activity “hilarious and sad.”

Another farmer, who welcomes the u-pick crowd for business reasons, said that she feels visitors assume she is dumb and look at her like she is “part of the zoo.”

As Pinsker points out, picking your own apples used to be performed by those who wished “to buy fruit cheaply and in bulk, for canning.” But prices have gone up, and now, in most cases, u-pick is mainly something for tourists.

So why has apple picking become a tourist attraction? Pinsker proposes several reasons. One is our disconnection from nature. [Many children](#) today actually think food is something that is made in grocery stores, and parents wish to show them otherwise. In addition, for our photo-obsessed culture, the more aesthetically pleasing apple orchard provides a much better backdrop than a grocery store.

The reason Pinsker finds most compelling was introduced by historian Cindy Aron in her book *Working at Play: Vacations in the United States*. Apparently, white-collar Americans have a history of taking vacations to observe working-class life. As Aron writes, ?

*“Such tourism allowed middle-class tourists to measure the gulf between themselves and those whom they observed at work,*

*marking their difference from the working class even while affirming the centrality of work to middle-class life."*

I also tend to think there's another, perhaps less cynical, reason not raised by Pinsker.

Americans live in a wealthy country, and many things that were necessities in the past have now become hobbies. Most Americans today don't *need* to personally harvest apples to survive, just like most of us don't need to sew, knit, woodwork, garden, or own chickens or bees.

Many people engage in these activities because they want to feel some connection to a way of life and its accompanying skills that were more common in the past. In addition, these activities provide us some communion with those who still perform these activities out of need in the present.

We have become more disconnected from nature, yes. But I think apple picking also illustrates a healthy vigilance lest we become too disconnected from tradition and our fellow man.