



Abbey Road: Working Farm and Bed-and-Breakfast

Learn how an Oregon working-farm bed-and-breakfast repurposed its existing buildings to create unique accommodations and experiences for guests.

Photo by Rhoda Peacher

The two outer silos of the Abbey Road Farm were converted to guest rooms for the farm's bed-and-breakfast. The rooms have round walls, reminiscent of the buildings' former uses.

Abbey Road Farm is a delightful working-farm bed-and-breakfast located in Oregon's wine country. John and Judi Stuart have done a remarkable job creating a luxurious bed-and-breakfast and event center on a working farm. The guesthouse accommodations overlook a vista of vineyards and farmland in Oregon's Yamhill County, located in the fertile Willamette Valley. The Stuarts have given new life to three silos by connecting them to a building that now houses the guestrooms for the bed-and-breakfast—a striking testament to their creativity and vision.

Making a Change

After spending 30 years in the insurance business in Las Vegas, the Stuarts decided it was time to make changes in their lives, starting with the purchase of a farm.

The goal for their new farm life was simple: They wanted to find a way to make a living while still maintaining the agricultural integrity of the land. They also wanted to contribute to and be positive members of the community. John Stuart had definite ideas of the type of property he wanted. When he and his wife Judi visited Yamhill County in Oregon, he formed a vision of their new life and knew he had found the right area to build their future. The farm landscape felt comfortable and familiar to him, evoking memories of his childhood in England and Europe.

After finding their desired community setting, John visited city and county government officials and explained to them his vision for a farm business. By including the county in his plans from the beginning, he garnered their support and help. When the Stuarts found the 82-acre former horse farm they wanted to buy in March 2003, acquiring permits and business licenses went smoothly.

Two acres of Queen Anne cherries were already established on the property, providing an immediate and obvious crop choice. They used 60 acres of open field to grow fescue grass seed—Oregon's Willamette Valley has become known as "the grass-seed capital of the world," so they knew grass seed would be a viable crop choice. They also added a small dairy-goat herd so they could make their own goat cheese and other goat's milk products.

The first step was to build a new house. Next, they converted the grain silos into guest rooms for use as a bed-and-breakfast and transformed the horse barn into an event center. They updated the upstairs of the old farmhouse, and now it provides accommodations for families to stay for one week or more at the farm. The event center houses a commercial kitchen, where guest chefs are invited to cook for charity events. The farm can hold events for up to 1,000 people; although, events for 250 to 300 people are more common.

Pushing the Envelope

This work could not have been done without the cooperation of the county planning officials. When Stuart first proposed the idea of converting silos into guest rooms, the officials said it was not possible. But, having lived for so many years in Las Vegas, John was accustomed to seeing odd-shaped buildings. He persisted and was able to convince the county of the viability of his plan.

By working with officials to find legal ways to implement his ideas, creation of a unique bed-and-breakfast became possible. The two outer silos each have been divided into two guest rooms, one upstairs and one downstairs. The center silo has a sitting room on the lower floor and a guest room upstairs. The rooms are outfitted with every modern convenience, but their round shape harkens back to their previous use, reminding guests of their accommodations' farm origins.

These silos are a symbol of what makes Abbey Road Farm so special. John says it was just a "simple notion to build something inside of an existing structure [that satisfied his need] to reutilize existing resources." This idea of reuse is also evident in the new chicken coop and the water-treatment building—both of which were built from materials salvaged from a derelict lean-to shed that used to stand near the silos.