

Spotlight on Chattooga Belle Farms, Long Creek, SC

Autumn means crisp air, trees changing color before their leaves drop and shorter days. But at Chattooga Belle Farms in Long Creek, the leaves seem a little more colorful and the air seems just a little more crisp, just like their tree-ripened apples.

Chattooga Belle Farm overlooks South Carolina, North Carolina and Georgia. The panoramic view spans just over the fields of different crops including apple, peach and nectarine trees growing in rows along the rolling hills. It's a spectacular view in any season, but especially in the fall.

"The view brings them," said Ed Land, owner of Chattooga Belle Farms, who grew up around agriculture.

The land where Chattooga Belle sits was once 2,000 acres of farmland owned by Groucho Marx, the 1920s-era actor and comedian known for his moustache, glasses and cigar. Today, Ed Land owns 138 acres of Marx's former farm, the largest tract of the original acreage. After years of multiple owners, Land bought the acreage and began revitalizing the orchards. In addition to the apples, peaches and nectarines, he is growing plums, pears, blueberries and raspberries on this rolling terrain. There are also the vineyards with seedless and wine grapes neatly trellised.

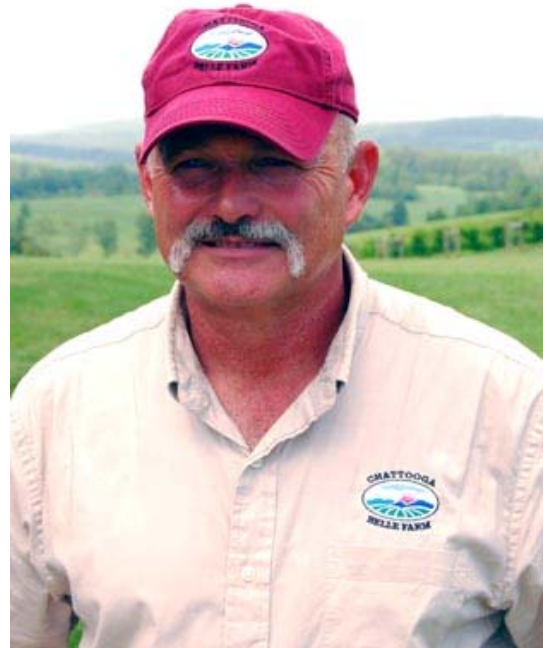
During the 1950s this area of South Carolina was the largest apple producing area east of the Mississippi River. While many of the apple producers have long since gone out of business, Land and several other area farmers are doing their part to revitalize the apple orchards here in Oconee County.

When not running Chattooga Belle Farms, Land is in the construction industry. "I love to transform a raw piece of property and turn it into something beautiful. I can build all the buildings I want to build, but I can't eat one of them," Land said.

Land also owns another farm just 10 miles from Chattooga Belle named Rocky Forks Farm where he grows a variety of vegetables. Land said he'd ultimately like to begin selling to local restaurants where there is a growing interest from chefs to use locally grown produce to cook.

It's not all farming at Chattooga Belle. In addition to the u-pick operation and growing varieties of produce on the farm, Land built a 1,300 square foot event barn with catering kitchen. The facility looks out over the rolling hills and panoramic vistas of forestland and mountains and is perfect for weddings, family reunions or any special events. They were booked up for weddings through September, October and into the first three Saturdays in November.

Land said he is proud to display the Certified South Carolina logo. He even displayed the logo during their involvement at the Westminster Apple Festival in September.



Ed Land
Chattooga Bell Farms
Long Creek, SC

“Our produce, our fruits are grown here and sold here,” Land said. The farm also features a general store that sells South Carolina made products.

Several months ago Land created an 18-hole disc golf course at Chattooga Belle and that has become very popular.

“It’s amazing how it’s growing,” Land said of the sport. “Anyone can play.”

Whether it’s just to see the fall views or sample some locally grown products anytime of the year, stop by Chattooga Belle Farms in Oconee County. For more information about Chattooga Belle Farms or for farm hours, call 864-647-9768 or visit www.chattoogabellefarm.com.