

VonThun's Employee Expectations & Handbook ... 2023



A SUMMARY OF WHAT WE EXPECT FROM OUR EMPLOYEES ...

- HONESTY ... *We need to trust you & everything you do. And so do your fellow employees.*
- DEDICATION, FOCUS, & CONFIDENCE ... *Your job commitment & work ethic speak volumes!*
- COMPETENCE & PRIDE ... *We need to know that you are the best person for the job you have been hired for & that you are committed to doing the best you can do.*

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM US ...

- A FUN, SAFE WORK ENVIRONMENT
- A FLEXIBLE SCHEDULE ... *Tell us now when you need off & we can accommodate it. Tell us a week before (or less) you need off & we can't.*
- A 20% EMPLOYEE DISCOUNT WHEN WORKING ... *which applies to food, drinks, & other farm market favorites. That's for YOU, not your friends.*
- 4 FREE FALL ADMISSION TICKETS for you to give to friends or family

WE HOPE YOU CAN UNDERSTAND ...

- *The more competent & willing you are, the more hours you will most likely get.*
- *The more you go out of your way to create positive experiences for our guests, the more hours you will most likely get.*
- *The more you know & learn the more valuable you are to us, and the more hours you will most likely get.*
- *The more flexible your work schedule is, the more hours you will most likely get.*

THE EASIEST WAYS TO GET FIRED OR LOSE YOUR JOB ... THINGS WE WON'T TOLERATE

- *Lie*
- *Cheat*
- *Steal*
- *Excessive/continual cell phone use*
- *Being routinely late for work*
- *Not showing up for a shift*
- *Taking/using farm products that you did not pay for*
- *Leaving your work station unattended*
- *Foul language*
- *Not doing what you are supposed to be doing*
- *Inappropriate customer interaction*
- *Gravitating towards your friends*
- *Confusing work time with social time*
- *Leaving early before your shift ends or your work area is completely clean!*

You Are Important

VonThun's Farm is an experience provided to the guests by YOU, our employees. Each member of our team should interact with the guests (a smile and appropriate conversation) EVERY time the opportunity exists. If one link on the team fails to deliver, the guest experience suffers. That's why we only keep the best people!

Appearance

Why A Dress Code? Uniformity is key. Guests should be able to clearly identify staff.

Employee Dress Code While working at the farm employees must be presentable and dress for the weather, including multiple layers when it gets cool & sunscreen as needed. **As an employee, your VonThunWear needs to be your outermost layer of clothing.** We do have various types of sweatshirts for you to purchase (at our cost) ... they are comfortable & are truly a good investment for keeping warm. The farm is frequently cooler than expected, so having a sweatshirt to wear if needed is a good idea.

The bottom half of the employee "uniform" consists of jeans, khakis, capris, or shorts. The length of any shorts must extend half way down your thigh or more ... absolutely NO short shorts! The top half of the "uniform" consists of a VonThun's tee shirt or sweatshirt and a name badge. During cool weather, layer clothing to stay warm, but always wear VonThunWear as your top layer. Please, no stained, ripped, or frayed clothing ... you need to look PROFESSIONAL!

Guest Interaction

Guest Interaction. Every employee is required to interact with our guests. When you are within 10 feet of one of a guest, that guest becomes YOUR guest. If you cannot hold a conversation or greet guests warmly, this is not the best job for you.

Appropriate interaction may include, but would not be limited to: saying hello, asking how their day is going, encouraging them to try the corn maze, asking if you can help load their purchases into their car, remarking how good that cold soda will taste, thanking them for visiting the farm...

Dealing with Difficult Guests. Difficult guests represent two key situations:

1. Something, probably under our control, has gone wrong;
2. We have the opportunity to win that guest for life.

Our system for handling complaints. After the guest has approached you and you have determined that something is wrong, take them aside, away from other guests, look them in the eyes and say, "Thank you for letting me know; I want to make this better. Please tell me about the situation."

- Once they start to tell you the story: DO NOT INTERRUPT. Wait until they have explained the entire situation, even if they say things you want to react or defend, REMAIN SILENT and listen carefully for clues about the situation.
- Give them even a couple of seconds of silence after you think they are finished talking, just in case they have more to say. Why? **Letting them talk about the situation allows them to vent the pressure built up from whatever has made them angry.** People need to be heard and allowed to speak their minds. Let them do it. After you are sure they have completed their story say, "Thank you for your feedback. I'd like to repeat back to you my understanding of the situation." Rephrase the guest's story as best you can. Be careful not to apply any of your own judgments about the story - just rephrase it. Say, "Is that a fair understanding of your situation?"
- If it is, say "I'm glad we're on the same page. We're happy you came to experience our farm and we want you to come back again and have a good time every time you visit us. You are important to us. What can we do to fix this problem and win you as a future guest?" That might have sounded like the cheesiest line you've ever heard, but it must be said (from the heart) to the guest because they are important to the future of this business. No one is expecting this kind of response. Most are gearing up for a big fight. Take them off guard with this kind response and 99% of the guests will be reasonable.
- Once you have identified the problem and the guest's solution, implement the solution, then find a manager and tell them how you handled it.

- **Example:** guest comes to you with a half-eaten hot dog complaining that it is too cold or doesn't taste right. You could say, "How can I help make this right? Would you like another, fresh hot dog?" If yes, take the old dog, throw it away and give them a hot, new dog. End the conversation with; "Let me know if I can do anything else for you. Thanks for coming to visit us!" Situation solved, guest happy!

The Unreasonable 1% If a guest is mad & uses abusive language or raises his/her voice to you repeatedly after you have tried the methods listed above for diffusing his/her anger, reply calmly, "I feel that I can no longer help you resolve this situation. Let me get someone who can help." Excuse yourself to find a manager.

Refunds. We don't issue refunds ... not in the farm market, and not for admission. If a customer asks for a refund we can find an alternative to remedy the situation- often a store credit or bounce back passes will work. Find a manager to help you.

Work Communications, Sign-in, Safety

Please do not ever give out anyone's personal information to a caller. If you need to direct someone to us, please provide Cindy's email address: Cindy@VonThunFarms.com.

Employee Sign-in. All fall weekend employees shall sign in & out in the office. If you do not sign in/out you will not get paid. (How can we pay you when we don't know what hours you worked because you failed to list them?!)

Your sign in time is your start time ... that is the time you actually START working. That is not the time you arrived at the farm or the time spent getting ready to work. The pay periods are 2 weeks long and will be available for pick up every other Sunday as you leave for the day.

If you are under the age of 18 and are scheduled to work **more than** 6 hours you should indicate a 30-minute break on your time card. Staff 18 and older are not required to take a meal break, but if you desire to take one you may do so. You must talk with a manager first to find a convenient time. If taking a 30 minute break it should be listed on the sign in sheet. All 30 minute lunch breaks are UNPAID.

Arrival at Work Employees will be directed to an employee parking area on their first way of work. Please do not park in our prime customer parking spots. Employees are expected to arrive to work 5-10 minutes **before** their scheduled shift to prepare for work. Anyone under the age of 18 scheduled to work exactly 6 hours may not clock in more than 3 minutes before the scheduled start of your shift or more than 3 minutes after the end of your shift to comply with child labor laws.

Personal Cell Phones. Personal cell phones are a distraction to our guests. **You may NOT use your personal cell phone during work hours.** You are here to serve the guests, not take calls. If your phone rings in front of a guest or you are texting/talking/checking your phone, you will receive a strike ... and remember, 3 strikes & you're let go.

Walkie-Talkie Etiquette. Although each employee will not have walkie talkie radio, some staff will. Keep the radio on so YOU can hear it, but not the customers. Customers don't need to know all that is going on. If you are with other employees & there are multiple radios in your area, one should be left on, the others turned off. If there is an emergency & you need to use the radio, keep it simple and radio a manager immediately. Do not give specifics or detailed information over the radio. There should be no personal conversations over the radio, ever.

Safety. Certain pieces of equipment may only be used if you are at least 18 AND have a manager approval. Some of those things are: tractors, donut machine, and kettle corn equipment. Other equipment may only be used if you are at least 16 AND have a manager approval, including the weed wacker, & Kubota.

If you are injured on the job, report it immediately to a manager or owner. A report must be filled out immediately. The failure to report an injury or accident immediately after its occurrence may result in our denial of liability for workers' compensation benefits.

If a customer is injured at the farm, and the injury is minor, you may provide basic first aid care and complete an injury report (found in the first aid kits). Afterwards, please report it to a manager or owner. If the injury is a little more significant but not life threatening, call a manager. The customer should be made as comfortable as possible without risking injury to yourself. If necessary, call 911. Never hang up on a 911 call first – you want to make sure the person answering the call

has all of the necessary information. A VonThun's Injury Report must also be completed for all injuries. Injury reports are located in the first aid boxes.

Scheduling

If an emergency comes up, you will not be responsible for finding a replacement but you must **call** (not text or email) Emma or Kristie. An emergency is a serious, unexpected situation requiring immediate action such as attending a funeral or being ill. Emailing or texting about an emergency situation is unprofessional and will result in a strike.

October is our busiest month and requires our full staffing. **No one is excused from October weekends without requesting off in advance.** We do our best to hire extra workers for this time to allow some flexibility in scheduling within the weekends, but full employment is required to adequately serve our guests.

Parental Involvement with Scheduling. Parents are expected to assist the employee in achieving a perfect attendance record. Parents may not call in for their children. We believe it is important for our youth workers to learn the responsibility of managing their time and taking responsibility for their actions. Parents should take the time to impress upon their children the importance of on-time work performance.

Working Hours and Pay. We do not guarantee any number of hours per week or per day. We reserve all rights to make schedules and pay rates according to performance, experience, and ability. You get more hours by providing a great customer experience. A great customer experience means more customers & more customers means more shifts needed!

Our Fall Festival Weekends for 2023 are from September 16 - October 29 and include Columbus Day which includes a total of 15 very busy days!

Other important info.

- Our slogan is "Spend less, stay longer, play harder, & make more memories together as a family." Please understand it's meaning.
- We have 2 farm locations ... here, in Middlesex County, and another farm in Washington (Warren County), which is an hour from here. Both farms offer basically the same fall activities. They are very different throughout the summer.
- Our job ... to keep the farm clean, friendly, & a fun place to be!
- When you are in the presence of a customer, talk to them! Ask where they are from. Ask if they have ever been to the farm before. Ask how they heard of us. Ask if they are having a good time. THANK folks for coming to the farm!
- Each employee is responsible for cleaning up their work area BEFORE they leave for the day. That's not negotiable!
- On busy weekends you may be needed to stay longer, as we may not close promptly as scheduled.
- Do NOT socialize with other employees when you are, or are not working. Save the socializing for after work!
- Your lunch break starts when you are relieved & ends when you restart working. It is 30 minutes TOTAL, start to finish!
- Your lunch break will go by quick. Be sure to bring your lunch & drinks so you do not need to wait in lines to get it.
- First aid kits can be found at the corn maze, in the apple barn, in the office, & at corn cannons.
- If you find a lost child or parent, make a radio announcement & bring them to the office. Never radio announcing a lost child ... call it a lost parent instead!
- If you are not able to work you must CALL Emma or Kristie. Texting is not acceptable.
- Employees may not use ear buds/air pods while working. You need to hear/focus on what is going on around you.
- If you find a lost item, announce it over the walkie talkie & bring it to the office. If someone has lost something, refer them to the office & ask that they give contact info to the cashier in case the item is found.
- Everyone in the activity area must have a wristband. Kids & adults both pay the same price. We thoroughly encourage parents & grandparents to have fun & do the activities with the kids.
- No eating or sampling in the orchard. Do folks sample apples before they buy them at the supermarket??
- Pony rides, face painting, & corn cannons each require an additional cost.
- All pumpkins must be paid for ... NO pumpkins are free or included with any admission. Ever!