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**Visit Rainbow Orchards for apple cider doughnuts**

The allure of [Rainbow Orchards](#) is its quaint simplicity. While other Apple Hill farms boast plenty of activities and attractions for visiting families, Rainbow Orchards, with its relaxed vibe, offers a contrasting experience for visitors. Head to Rainbow Orchards to unwind and enjoy authentic, home-cooked apple treats.

### **What is Rainbow Orchards?**

Rainbow Orchards is, at heart, a working farm in the small town of Camino, California. Rainbow Orchards is part of Apple Hill, a collection of over 60 farms, bakeries, and inns that have become one of California's premiere fall destinations. The area is surrounded by pine trees and rolling hills, and has a distinctly rural feel.

Sitting on 28 acres, Rainbow Orchards is dotted with tons of apple trees and blueberry bushes. On the property, you'll also find a bake shop, a produce barn and a picnic area. Farmer Tom Heflin, the owner of Rainbow Orchards, calls his apple farm "a dream." He explains, "It was the result of not wanting to live in the city, and it was a result of coming back to my roots. I was raised here, and I was working in the city. I met my wonderful wife, Krista Campbell while I was working. We had young children, and we thought it would be better for them to go to school in a rural environment. And so that's how we got to Rainbow Orchards."

The name Rainbow Orchards was inspired by the Marshall Tucker song, *Searchin' for a Rainbow*. "They had this crazy song about searching for a rainbow and how sometimes you have to get out and look – and lo and behold, we found it," Tom said with a smile.

### **What crops are grown at Rainbow Orchards?**

Chasing their rainbow, Tom and his family moved to a 28-acre farm in Placerville, California. They started selling their apples at local Farmers Markets, and soon realized they needed to diversify their offerings, so they planted a few acres of blueberries.

"You can't just go to Farmers Markets for three or four months out of the year. You really should have a crop that's earlier. And so, you got blueberries in June all the way through August. Then you got your early apples starting in late August. And then from there, we have what we have now: hoards of people, hoards of apples," Tom said.

### **What types of apples are grown at Rainbow Orchards?**

Rainbow Orchards grows eight different types of apples: Red Delicious, Gala, Arkansas Black, Jonathans, Cameos, Braeburn, Fuji and Pink Ladies. "If you think about varieties of apples, you have to start with the fact that there's probably over 2000 varieties of apples in the United States and 3000 worldwide. So we only have, uh, just what, like seven or eight. So, you know, we're a minor player in the apple business," Tom said.

Like most things in life, apples are subject to trends. In Tom's orchards, he had many older, established Red Delicious trees. That particular variety has steadily become less popular – and since

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apples are a permanent crop, how can a farmer adapt? “The problem with that sort of thing is it takes a number of years to develop an apple orchard,” Tom answers, “and so we grafted Granny Smith onto the Red Delicious. And that saves you about five years of getting ready to produce apples. If you put in a young tree, you don’t get a really big crop until eight or nine years old. Whereas if you graft, you’re gonna get a crop in two years, and you get a big crop again in four or five years. So it’s very efficient to graft.”

### **Call him “Farmer Tom”**

In Camino, Tom is a bit of a local celebrity. He’s clearly knowledgeable about farming and is passionate about teaching kids about agriculture. To that end, he partners with the local school district to host field trips to Rainbow Orchards. “I’m known as Farmer Tom to all the first graders at the Camino Union School District. And that’s because we do [Ag in the Classroom](#). Every year, three times a year for different seasons, we have the kids come down and we talk to ’em about farming and about raising apples. And so it’s a link to the community in terms of having the kids learn about farming, and so, I’m Farmer Tom, locally,” he proudly states.

### **What is there to do at Rainbow Orchards?**

If you’re headed to Apple Hill, we recommend either starting or ending your day at Rainbow Orchards. Grab a few of their world-famous Apple Cider doughnuts and your favorite apple beverage and head to the picnic area. Take in the views, let the kids play on the hay bales and simply enjoy nature and (hopefully) good conversations with friends or family. After you’ve enjoyed your treats, head back into the barn and take a look at all of the pumpkins, apples, and ciders.

Word of advice: stock up on apples. Trust us. If you’ve never tried a freshly harvested apple, you’re in for a treat.

### **What should you order at Rainbow Orchards?**

If you only order one thing at Rainbow Orchards, it has to be the Apple Cider doughnuts. Our friend [Jerry James Stone](#) ranked these as his top treat during our visit to Apple Hill.

That being said, there are no wrong choices here. If you’re a fan of hard cider, grab a bottle of their homemade apple or blueberry cider. Rainbow Orchards is one of only two Apple Hill farms that bottles their own!

### **Ready to plan your visit to Rainbow Orchards (and Apple Hill)?**

Ready to plan your trip to Rainbow Orchards? When you visit this family-owned farm, you’re not just enjoying some of the most delicious apple cider doughnuts known to man, you’re also supporting farm families. “Small farming is the backbone of the American farm family,” Tom states. “So, if you can go to places that are supporting their family and the families that work there, you’re doing a great thing to the local economy. You’re really helping local people when you support small family farms.”

Rainbow Orchards

2569 Larsen Drive

Camino, CA 95709

[Check website for up-to-date hours.](#) Find Rainbow Orchards produce at these [Northern California Farmers Markets!](#)

Apple Hill has over 60 different destinations, so much to do and so many farms to explore that you can easily spend a day, or even a whole weekend at Apple Hill! Start the day with an apple fritter at [High Hill Ranch](#), then head to [Apple Ridge Farms](#) to pick your own apples, dig for gold, and stroll down their flower-lined nature trail. Finish the day off at Rainbow Orchards. While there, be sure to grab apple cider doughnuts for dessert and a bottle (or two) of their homemade apple cider!

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