

Weekend at Sawyer Farm

By Sheela Raman



It took Laura three long hours to drive from New York City to Sawyer Farm. There had been lots of traffic all along the way. As she finally pulled up the winding dirt driveway that led to the farmhouse, she suddenly felt weary and exhausted. Her silver sports car jumped and jolted along the bumpy path until she got to the front door.

Susie and Will heard the sound of the car engine and came outside to welcome Laura. They owned Sawyer Farm and used the land to raise their own animals and crops. They knew Laura from long before, when they were all in college together.

“Great to see you after so long!” Susie said, kissing Laura on the cheek. From the open door of the farmhouse wafted the delicious aroma of freshly baked bread.

“Great to see you too!” said Laura. “But are you sure I didn’t come at the wrong time of year? I’ve heard winter is not the best time to visit a farm.” Laura lived in New York City and worked as a lawyer. This was the first time she had been in the country in a long time. She was a bit nervous.

“Not at all,” said Susie. “Winter is a great time to be here.”

“There’s still lots to do on a farm in winter,” added Will. “We have to keep all our animals fed and warm. You can come with me to feed the cows and chickens tomorrow if you want. It’s fun.”

“Sounds good,” said Laura.

Susie and Will invited Laura inside and showed her to her room. It had a high antique bed and its very own fireplace. Will lit the logs with some kindling and matches, and soon a great fire crackled away. Susie and Will left Laura to settle in for a few minutes. She turned her smartphone off, washed her face, and let her feet warm by the fire. Her headache was already getting better.

It was about time for dinner when Laura went downstairs. Susie was busy stirring a giant pot of beef stew. A bowl of creamy mashed potatoes and a big tray of roasted vegetables lay out on the table. Susie explained to Laura that the roasted vegetables were a mix of butternut squash, turnips, and parsnips. These were all “winter vegetables,” she said, because they grow underneath the soil, protected from snow and cold weather.

Laura helped Susie set the plates, forks and knives. It started to snow outside, and soon the hills and fields out the window seemed to be coated in a thin layer of powdered sugar. It was so peaceful and quiet in the country, compared to hectic, fast-paced New York City. At last Susie finished stirring the stew and brought it to the table. Then she took the steaming loaf of bread out of the oven. They all sat down to eat.

“Wow,” said Laura, as she tasted her first spoonful of stew. “I have been craving a hearty meal like this all day!”

“Of course,” said Will. “In winter, when it’s very cold, all animals, including human beings, need to eat big, warm meals.”

“That’s right,” said Susie. “Our body temperature always has to be around 98.6 degrees, even when it’s only 20 degrees outside. To keep our body temperature up, we really need that extra fuel in wintertime. That’s why I make big meals when it’s cold and snowy.”

Laura never thought much about eating differently in winter and summer. Her job kept her too busy to think about food. Often she got home late from work and only had the energy to heat up a small can of soup.

“You know, Sue,” said Laura. “I think I need to learn more about cooking good food. It’s embarrassing to admit, but I can barely make an omelet! I’m so busy with work that I don’t have time to experiment in the kitchen.”

“Why don’t you come and stay with us one weekend every month?” said Sue. “I can show you how to cook some really quick and easy meals that will keep you full in wintertime. You won’t be so tired all the time.”

“I would love that!” said Laura.

Soon Laura was stuffed with fresh bread, stew, potatoes and vegetables. She felt relaxed and happy. The friends sat together in the living room for a while after dinner, drinking hot chocolate and listening to music. Outside the window, the snow kept falling.

That night, Laura slept like a baby. When she woke up the next day, all the hills and fields were covered in a thick blanket of fluffy white snow. She ate a big bowl of oatmeal and raisins for breakfast, and then put on her winter coat and snow boots. She felt peppy and full of life as she walked outside with Will to do the chores. First, she helped him untie big batches of hay and feed them to the horses. Next, she and Will patched up a hole in the barn wall where snow had drifted in. The sheep had all clustered together in one side of the barn, away from the snowdrift. “They really hate the cold,” Will explained.

In the afternoon Laura stayed inside with Susie. She helped her water all of her indoor plants. “It’s amazing that these plants need mostly just water and air to survive, while we need to eat big meals with different kinds of vegetables and fruit.”

“Yes,” said Susie. “In that way plants are a lot simpler than we are.”

The rest of the weekend flew by. The friends had such fun having a snowball fight with each other the next day that Laura did not really want to leave. But she had to go to work the next day. As she drove away in her sports car, waving goodbye to Susie and Will, she thought how lucky she was to have such good friends. She felt in her pocket for the stew recipe Susie had written down for her, and looked forward to trying it out at home.