

## Cantaloupe, ice cream, and shade



“I’d pick a cantaloupe that was just perfectly ripe, cut it in two, scrape out seeds, fill it with ice cream and go find a shady spot,” second-generation family farmer Kerry Mattics, smiled as he shares with us pieces of the sweet, ripe melon he just cut from the vine. The warm Western Colorado sun gently shines on his 110 acre farm while we sit in the shade—without ice cream. Located just a couple of miles outside of [Olathe](#) (oh-LAY-tha) in Montrose County, [Mattics Orchards](#) is a modern day truck farm with a variety of vegetables, a small orchard of apples and peaches, and “Dad’s berry patch.”

Kerry waters his crops using drip irrigation infused with the necessary fertilizer. Mattics Orchard is not an organic farm, Kerry’s use of landscape cloth minimizes the need for fertilizer and water. The Mattics family, father and son, owns a produce stand in Montrose about 20 minutes from the farm. Truck farmers like the Mattics supply stores, restaurants, and schools in the area. In addition to numerous farm stands throughout Montrose County, a weekly farmers market at the Courthouse brings growers to town with fresh fruit and vegetables. This is Western Colorado’s heart of agritourism.

The fertile [Uncompahgre](#) (UN-com-pa-gray) Valley has been home to American farming and ranching since 1870, and for nearly seven hundred years before that, the Ute Indian Nation called this area its home. The dominant crop throughout the Valley is the famous Olathe sweet corn hybrid enjoyed roasted, steamed, and grilled at various times during our visit. Wineries, dairies, and ranches are also in the Valley. The dominant sight is the mountain ranges surrounding the Valley.



*Kerry Mattics slices a ripe cantaloupe for sampling*

After our sweet treat at Mattics Orchard, we headed down the road and up the hill to [Cottonwood Cellars](#). Owner Diana Read and Rex, the dog wine master, greeted us with a special pairing of wine and food. Local foods and her Cottonwood Cellars and Olathe Winery label wines



*Chardonnay, Merlot, Lemberger, White Pinot Noir, and Gewurtztraminer*

Winery Lemberger—an Austrian grape—we were served both a red and white vintage. Cottonwood Cellars is just one of a cluster of several wineries west of Olathe.

Adding to the meal at Cottonwood was a supply of cheese from Rocking W Dairy on the way back to Olathe from Cottonwood Cellars. [Rocking W Dairy](#) supplied the cheese for the pairings at the winery. The handcrafted selection demonstrates the diversity of locally produced food in the Uncompahgre Valley. Earlier we also learned that locally grown hops are used in the microbreweries dotting Western Colorado.



*Rex made sure everyone cleaned their plates. If someone didn't he finished the job.*

Olathe is located about 15 miles north of Montrose in Western Colorado. Access is by Amtrak, air, Greyhound, or passenger vehicles. For more information contact [Visit Montrose](#) online.