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From field to table

Posted By **ROBIN HARVEY FOR QMI AGENCY**

Posted 4 days ago

The phrase "eat local" has become the mantra for eco-conscious food shoppers for half a decade now.

Generally its proponents encourage us to eat food harvested from within a 160-km radius of where we live. Adherents see it as a form of ethical eating, similar to what our ancestors did.

Supporters say eating local has many advantages -- shopping local benefits the community's economy by giving business to local producers.

As the products are seasonal and not trucked in from far away, they are healthier, having lost fewer of their natural vitamins and enzymes with time. People say they taste better, and the reduced need for transport cuts down on the use of fossil fuels.

Later this month, Lennox and Addington County will celebrate "eating local" with an elegant, seven-course Farm Field Gour - met Dinner -- a meal composed entirely of local ingredients -- held in a local farmer's field.

Here's a look at some of those who will be contributing to the table:

BUMBLEROCK FARM

Karen and Maarten ten Cate have scaled up to their first full year of production at the farm just outside Roblin they've been preparing for several years now.

After selling honey for 10 years, moving into local produce "was always a dream," Karen said.

Their produce is unique in that much of it is heirloom vegetables, open pollinated and non hybrid. By open pollinated they mean pollinated by insects or the wind, as was done before large-scale commercial farming.

As a result, they have varieties of heirloom vegetables (for example, tomatoes and beans) that are unique to the county and can rarely be found except on other heirloom seed farms.

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"We have about 60 different types of heirloom tomatoes and dry beans," she said, including James Cattle, Black Turtle and Soldier beans.

Heirloom seed farming "is a lot of work and involves a lot of juggling because there are no shortcuts," Karen said.

Instead of commercial manures or fertilizers, they cover their crops with "green manures" -- rye, oats or wheat, and, in the summer, clover and buckwheat. They do not use pesticides at all.

Both Karen, 35, and Maarten, 41, work (along with their three boys in the summer) many long days, but feel very grateful to be part of the local farm feast.

"It's about time we found a way to promote our variety of offerings," Karen said. "There seems to be a stronger network out toward Kingston, so it is great to see this kind of thing growing here now because our numbers are increasing."

By the end of August, they said, plans to open their own storefront at their farm should be complete.

BRIAN QUINN'S MEATS LTD.

The sign outside -- "All local beef and pork from the farm to your fork" -- just about says it all when you pull up to Quinn's Meats in Yarker.

Owner Brian Quinn, 55, established his abattoir and wholesale meat company 36 years ago. Since then, it has grown into a business that does \$1 million a year in trade.

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