

## **Perth County Regional Food Summit**

### **Lunch hour Roundtable discussions**

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Roundtable Discussions:

#### **1) What are the products distinctive to our region?**

- maple syrup
- pork
- dairy/cheese, artisanal cheese, goat cheese
- abundance of product/variety
- garlic
- pulse crops, beans
- corn and corn mazes, wheat
- beef, sheep, goat, elk, bison, water buffalo, poultry
- Ontario herbal tea
- Ginseng
- Root vegetables
- Apples
- Buckthorn
- Beer
- Cabbage, tomatoes
- Soil and climate produce products with unique flavours
- Popcorn
- Omega 3 pork
- Apple cider, apple butter
- Berries
- Orchards
- Honey
- Pumpkins
- Milling own wheat

#### **2) Why do you think restaurants don't serve more local food?**

- convenient to buy "other" stuff
- some ingredients/foods not available (ie: Thai)
- cost/may think it's more expensive
- logistics/access
- consistency
- distribution/distribution costs
- need to communicate what the costs to farmers are; be transparent about expenses and why cost is higher
- lost seasonality
- lots of driving
- adequate supply of certain products ie: cuts of meat

- economies of scale
- people's mentality that "cheaper is better"
- time factor
- producers have found larger market with higher demand and can't keep up locally; need more demand for product
- education
- supply/demand
- laziness
- lack of communication between chef and producer
- healthboard restrictions
- needs more work to access
- markets don't help farmers get to restaurants
- not every chef wants local food no matter the cost, just want to work with Sysco
- owner makes the decision vs. what chef wants
- payment at time of sale vs. supplier pay in 30 days
- no organization
- solution: possible group deliveries to restaurants?
- Time to market product; farmer has to give 15 to 20% cost to distributor (minimum)
- Everything that comes out of our region is distinctive because of our soil. Summer sausage, salamis, winter carrots (higher in sugar), Tamworth pigs
- Soil- High calcium content which is a precursor to higher sugar content, same as limestone for wines.
- Our table is doing well- Mostly cost, it's simpler to get from one supplier than to distribute
- Seasonality
- Lot of driving
- The bigger stuff is easy, but the odds and ends are hard to get
- Financially, it has to work for everyone, producer, consumer, farmer
- Perth county needs a dedicated truck that gets around
- A supplier that brings it to you might help
- But delivery may only happen once a week, which is difficult when you want to serve things fresh
- Also, creating disappointment for running out of product
- There are not a lot of people that can supply you with a certain cut to keep you going

**3) What are the benefits to sourcing local food for restaurant menus? How do you make these known to consumers?**

- might attract more people because supporting local, fresher foods
- freshness, support economy, sells more product
- branding will further support farmer
- meeting customer demands, stimulates local economy
- helps to educate
- builds community

- conversation topic
- brings more locals
- innovative menus
- safety and security
- making the local source known on the menu adds value for the restaurants
- marketing
- keeps money local, creates and sustains jobs
- develops local brand
- infrastructure development
- lower carbon footprint
- more accountability
- educate service staff; food tasting, info sessions, need story to sell it, field trip to suppliers
- build customer clientele, build revenue
- chalkboards, consistent suppliers listed on menus
- highlight producers on menu, website, stamp outside
- like Slow Food snail approved; links on website
- “farm fresh and picked today”
- Server talk up the food
- Chefs announce it and promote it
- Social networking; find connectors
- Symbol at location identifying local food
- use social media
- Savour Ontario, Savour Dining, OCTA
- Chalkboards, servers, put it on your menus- consistent suppliers are listed on menus – Menu fraud is common, they buy not enough food for the night and they know they will run out, but on the menu, it says “Soiled Greens” even though it is not their product
- We are trying to make something unique for this region, so if it’s not unique and not from this region, then what are you accomplishing?

#### **4) How should we acknowledge the businesses that are sourcing local food?**

- not needed; they do it for the customers
- logos: “we proudly serve Perth County products”
- Twitter, social media
- Provide businesses biography at store
- Free advertising
- Savour Stratford, other websites acknowledge these products
- Health Unit ratings
- Spend your money there!
- Windows, menus, website
- Question: Who will police it?
- Certify them; define “local”
- Build in reward system ie: websites, symbols, etc
- Tell people, word of mouth

- Savour Ontario
- Criteria, brand, ie: VQA
- Showcase in media, tourist magazines
- Festival celebrations
- Award or recognition program
- Seal of approval in door/window/sign
- Facilitate distribution
- Special events just for them
- Help with menu planning
- Graphic design for menus, ads, etc
- News ads, featured in articles/web
- Tax incentives?
- Restaurant promotes dinner with farmers
- Publication, ex: who in Ottawa is doing the same thing – Ontario wide, online publication
- Not about rewards, about incentive!
- Offer complimentary membership for STA culinary
- Offer subsidized distribution to make local more accessible
- Offer education classes to help further skills and enhance business
- Add “local” icon to directories
- Culinary maps
- By eating there! Recognition, Culinary maps

**5) How can we as a region capture the growing culinary tourism and agri-tourism market?**

- BLBF map is good
- Can we help them link?
- More festivals like Savour Stratford
- Continue to be more innovative ie: twasting, etc
- Become involved to control/react to negative publicity
- Universal concern
- Use all media ie: postcard, pictures, etc
- Change Festival focus to food focus
- Regular communication: email, blogs, word of mouth
- Work with DMO – Epicurean Trek
- Showcase best talent
- Model it after wine regions: unique soil, products
- We’re on the right track ie: Savour Stratford
- Educate more affluent, younger market
- Social networking
- Educate on simple food that’s good as well
- Ambassadors at establishments
- “ask Danielle”
- More school trips to farms
- Create posters, media, events, CBC good

- News stories and article in food books and Globe and Mail
- Keep doing what you're doing!
- Improve links between farmers and restaurateurs
- Spread it to include local people
- Work with Savour Stratford
- Signage for farm gate sales
- Show pictures of farmers and post stories
- Create distinctive dishes to define local cuisine
- Make the Chefs School more visible
- Day trips to farms with something to do there: "Pasture Walks", education, walk and talk; Camperdown Farms – shearing in the Spring, lambing; have a breakfast or lunch at the farm; train student Ambassadors
- Brand themselves ie: Prince Edward County; advertising brands, holding events
- Teach people how to can
- Think outside the box to engage new audiences
- Create partnerships, packages
- Continue with upscale market
- More local cooperative ventures, less reliance on fed. And prov. Funding
- Supporting agri-tourism: make insurance more accessible – costly (have to have liability insurance)
- Bring in visiting chefs to work with product
- Tie special events into Farmers' Market
- Cross promotions: VIA rail, Airmiles
- Barter system to share resources based on value of product
- Model it after a wine region and base it on uniqueness of soil, uniqueness of product
- Festival spawned the chef school, great feeder effect. Stratford has as many or more restaurants

**6) What is the competitive advantage of local food? What is your selling point?**

- quality, freshness
- story – knowledge “romance
- aura of more healthy, “green”
- try a variety of approaches to appeal to a variety of ages
- concern is price – consumers may not pay more
- attractive labelling and packaging; visual attractiveness grabs first
- consumer engagement
- relationship, human touch keeps consumers coming back
- there to answer consumer questions, tell story
- contributing to local economy, community building
- fresh, better tasting, ripe, more nutritious
- give recipes on how to prepare and why
- offers unique, point of differentiation
- direct connection with producer

- different region, soil – terroir of the region, distinctive flavour
- environmentally responsible choice
- knowing where your food comes from
- taste, shorter transportation, safe food, nutritional value, appearance, unique variety, value add to family farms
- easier to get issues resolved when you know the producer, traceability
- community pride
- uninspected foods entering market

## **7) How can we celebrate the advantages and overcome the challenges of sourcing local food?**

- not everyone knows how to cook, busy lifestyle
- might have to travel further
- difficult for producers to deliver products and connect
- web sales may take all your local product
- we like a variety of food – not necessarily seasonal
- have food events; social marketing
- implement a Good Food Box
- help people create weekly menus
- implement cooking classes in school; learn how to double cook and freeze
- communicate and be honest, promise and deliver, work together, community effort
- more farmers' markets, easier to get but need education to teach people why to buy local
- invite schools to the farm, ex: strawberry picking
- education and communication
- teach farmers re: packaging for grocery stores, teach consumers to want it
- SSPC Culinary Festival
- Programs like Screaming Avocado, Chefs School, use Slow Food
- Need a car usually to access local food – not efficient
- Education of products, websites and technology
- Local producers have advantage of transparency
- Large companies use “local” message to confuse public
- Celebrate and see transparency at producers' farms
- Talk to MPs and provide solutions/ideas
- Spend your money consciously
- Local menu used by local charitable events
- Workshops on pickling and preserving
- Promote local farmers' markets more
- Create local distribution system
- Best practice forums
- Marketing bus tours
- Economic development office – to engage distribution companies to come here, attract investment in distribution
- Open house – coordination, free prestigious offers ex: Twitter exclusives

- Travel Media Association of Canada: why do they love Ottawa ex: on video, do same for Perth County
- Video: ask people on the street “Why they celebrate local food?”, post on YouTube
- Partner with Grower Associations, local grocery stores, growers need to know how to package

#### 8) **How do we increase the amount of local products being produced and consumed in our region?**

- consolidating in order to serves bigger markets; open communication channels
- business development groups kickstart business
- provide higher return
- review organic certification and shorten
- plants can take a variety of soil nutrients and may not be replaced
- local/organic both choice and overlap; read more labels
- more and more rules for start up businesses vs. encouragement to start up entrepreneurs
- local procurement policy with big public institutions
- reduce regulations for small producers and make government aware of realities of small producers
- keep talking about it!
- Produce, produce; increase local processing capacity, infrastructure
- Increased awareness of seasonality, local food for consumer
- Create an environment that operates on economy of appropriate scale
- Primary education, local media engagement, engage the local people
- Take lessons from mass producers and apply to small business
- Find a niche, encourage word of mouth
- Partnerships: ex: Dave Koert (farmer) works with yoga instructor
- Land use planning
- All jobs are local ex: website designer
- Stratford Perth Food Strategy
- Government organizations have to source from local

#### 9) **How do we make buying local the norm for consumers?**

- teach our kids, public education
- identify products, accessibility
- justifications for price = quality
- have more available, more farm stands, markets
- advertising more
- advocacy, lobby; food scares allow people to think about where food comes from
- culinary tourism part of integrated strategy; work on local community to value food culture
- grocery stores need to carry local; promote eating in season
- “Seasonal education”

- Culinary tourism is part of Toronto's Food Policy
- Community engagement in training – children
- Reconnecting with raw materials
- Offer farmers' market downtown more often
- Make cooking local fun; get supermarkets on board, local sections
- Teach the real cost of buying local; label packaged foods with health risks
- Talk about how local food lasts longer than imported; talk about health benefits
- Seasonal recipes and list costs; show benefits (health, economy, food safety, food security) and then compare
- Challenge 10% of money on local food
- Understand consumer buying preferences
- Local Food Policy First
- Working with Health Unites: standards – change food policy

#### 10) Why do you think consumers want local food?

- freshness, quality, trust, community, support farmer/economy, “feels good”, global warming scare
- marketing issues, ethical philosophy
- “hip and cool”
- Accountability, knowing where food comes from
- Puts a face on the food, know how they treat food
- Hip, trendy, taste
- Relationships, stories
- Enviro. Responsible
- Hip, trendy- Taste involved in that – Where does the meat come from?
- Products first
- Skill
- Marketing – Rebecca!! Omg Promotion
- Infrastructure of chefs