

Stronach brings healthy food options to Aurora with Frank's Organic Garden



Frank Stronach has left an indelible imprint on Aurora. From his time steering Magna International from a tool and die company to an automotive giant, to his decades of giving back to the community he calls home, his legacy is undisputed and, in some respects, he is just getting started.

This fall, Aurora is set to become the flagship of a project near and dear to Mr. Stronach's heart: Frank's Organic Garden, a new culinary concept that offers not only a dine-in experience but a chance to shop organically to cook for your family at home.

Frank's Organic Garden, located at the Smart Centres plaza at First Commerce Drive and Wellington Street East, builds upon the philosophy Mr. Stronach has developed through his 95,000-acre Adena Farms, an organic farm focused on producing meat that is free range, free of chemicals, antibiotics, growth hormones and GMOs.

The philosophy is based on raising animals in the most natural environment possible, using the greatest of care and the highest standards of animal welfare to avoid pain and stress for the animals.

Over the past year, Mr. Stronach has been assembling a team of chefs or, in his words, food scientists to develop menus, and a roster of local farms and suppliers that share this philosophy, in order to bring signature dishes and products to reality.

Now, he's just about ready to open his doors.

There is an old saying that you are what you eat, says Mr. Stronach. Everything in here will be organic. Whatever you see on the menu, you can buy semi-finished or totally finished to prepare at home. I have been blessed and, for me, the most important thing is a country should be able to feed itself with food that is good for you and without chemicals. There is huge potential in every person and food has a great bearing on that. It has nothing to do with politics should food be down on the list for society?

This is a viewpoint he has put into practice well before the concept of Frank's Organic Garden grew from a kernel first sown at Adena Farms. He cultivated the enterprise in consultation with Temple Grandin, one of the world's leading proponents for the humane treatment of cattle and livestock.

We used the Temple Grandin system [creating] an animal rights charter which we live by, Mr. Stronach explains. The number one principle is no pain, no stress, no hormones, no antibiotics, no GMO and free range, and we're following that.

I want to produce foods without chemicals. This is the future. People will realize this is what life is all about. A country's top priority should be, Can we feed our people with healthy food? We have spent hundreds of billions on pharmaceuticals and it is crazy.

Helping to steer the development of Frank's Organic Garden is Jess Ostlund, President & CEO of Adena Agra Corp. Mr. Ostlund says that every ingredient they offer ? from the food on the plate to the wines, beers and liquors at the bar ? will be organically sourced and GMO free.

Menus have been developed based on these principles and they have been test-driven by a panel of tasters of all ages to ensure they tick all the boxes for even the most finicky of eaters ? including hot dogs made to the highest standards, a particular hit with the youngest taste-testers and even Mr. Stronach.

?We're extremely proud of these dishes because they stand on their own,? says Mr. Ostlund. ?When Frank says that we're food scientists, we really are. Our chefs are artists. We get people with good attitudes in the kitchen and at that point [the vision] is easy to execute. It couldn't get any better than this!?

Frank's Organic Garden is just the first step in Mr. Stronach's overall vision of making healthy, organic food accessible to even the most cost-conscious Canadians.

While their menu is designed to be priced affordably, there is more in the works. In the coming months, Mr. Stronach plans to lay the foundation of a processing plant in Canada while urging lawmakers to incorporate healthy eating, farming and home garden concepts into school curriculums.

?I have a few small farms in York Region and I want to get together with the school boards as I think kids from Grade 1 to Grade 6 should have at least half a day where they learn how to grow food [in the ground or in greenhouses] and from Grades 6 ? 12 it should be at least once a day,? says Mr. Stronach. ?It will help kids gain practical and hands-on skills. We're getting away from that, so growing food should be a top priority and part of the curriculum.?

By Brock Weir