

MARKET MUSINGS

By Jan Freedman

Thank you to the weather gods that true spring has arrived finally!

The first three weekends of this year's Farmers' Market were unseasonably cold. In fact, a week ago Saturday, I was followed down Wells Street by a camera man from CTV who wanted to know why I was dressed for an arctic winter on the May long weekend. I replied by telling him that it was 4 degrees at 6:30 that morning when we arrived. He was still laughing when he left. Things are now well underway at the Market and more vendors and farmers are arriving each week. I'm pleased to report that we now have lots of asparagus and rhubarb on the farmers' tables, and the fiddleheads and garlic scapes should be ready soon. Willowtree Farm had small asparagus plants ready for planting available on Saturday and I'm eager to see if I will be successful with them.

Our new French bakery, which comes up from Toronto, has now been at the Market for two weeks. They are being enthusiastically received, are very busy and are selling out, so come early. Their baguettes are to die for, as are their croissants and hamburger buns. I have not tried their other breads yet but customers have been raving about them.

You may have noticed that there is another young woman walking around the Market with Kiersten, our Market Manager. Her name is Joanna Allison and she is our new Market Intern.

Joanna is a lifelong resident of York Region and a recent graduate of York University, where she received her Bachelor's Degree in Social Work. Joanna appreciation for locally grown produce was passed down from her grandparents, who grew their own fruits and vegetables and taught her the value of having a green thumb.

In her spare time, Joanna is an avid baker and loves experimenting with new recipes. Joanna also loves to sew and is attempting to learn to crochet. Don't be surprised to see her one day as a vendor at the Market, either as a baker or an artisan.

One of our exciting new vendors this year is Cathy Nesbitt of Cathy's Crawly Composters. The business was established in 2002 and specialises in vermicomposting and organic diversion. Cathy conducts inspirational workshops, worm birthday parties and compost consulting.

Her goal is to raise awareness about sustainable living and to inspire individuals to be the best they can be. Over 75,000 students have been inspired by Cathy's presentation. School initiatives include an adopt-a-worm bin and sustainable fundraising. Teaching children about composting and the value of worms creates lifelong composters.

Cathy has been involved in numerous collection/composting research projects and has diverted several tonnes from landfill. Cathy lives by her word by constantly reducing her own ecological footprint. Her favourite quote is "without awareness, action IS impossible."

For the past 12 years, Cathy has been raising awareness about sustainable living and the wonder of worms. She believes that worms are going to play an important role in waste management and soil production and, therefore, in food security.

Worms have been waiting millions of years to help us with our garbage crisis. Worms are shapeshifters, quietly turning organic matter into something beautiful for growing delicious and nutritious food. They are transforming the way we think about waste.

Think of them as the original transformers. What we refer to as garbage is actually a resource as nature creates no waste.

Our soil has become depleted of nutrients with repeated applications of chemical fertilizers, which, among many other things, has resulted in the loss of our bee and pollinator population. Adding compost to the soil puts life back into the soil.

Vermicomposting is done indoors, is an aerobic (with oxygen) process and does not smell. It is a hopeful solution to global warming that can be done by anyone and by vermicomposting we can repair some of the damage that we have done to the environment.

In addition to supplying everything needed for successful vermicomposting, Cathy has added certified organic mung beans and a sprout grower to her line-up. Worms for amending the soil and sprouts for eating are going to help resolve hunger in the world.

Cathy has used the super simple sprouter for 12 years and she swears by the health value of sprouts-nature's superfood. Cathy's booth is on Wells Street in front of the former school and she'll be there on the first Saturday of each month.

We are very excited to report that we will have an Ontario winery joining us for the months of June and July. They are Pillitteri Estates Winery Inc. from Niagara on the Lake. I look forward to bringing you their bio soon.

See you at the Market!