

MARKET MUSINGS

By Jan Freedman

On behalf of both this writer and the Aurora Farmers' Market and Artisan Fair, best wishes for a happy and healthy New Year to all. We hope that everyone managed to overcome the ice storm and accompanying blackout and the nasty weather that followed right after the New Year.

While waiting for the rest of the ice to melt, you can plan to attend the second indoor market at the Aurora Cultural Centre on Saturday, January 18 from 10 a.m. ? 2 p.m. There you will be able to meet Rob Hudyma of Rob's Good Food, one of our newest vendors, located on the main floor.

Rob is the offspring of culturally diverse parents and, as such, was introduced to the cuisine that would shape and influence his life. Between stuffed grape leaves, raw ground lamb with bulgar, pierogies, kielbasa sausage, lebneh, pomegranates, kiwi fruit and the like, how could he not love food?

This love led him to his first job at the meat counter at Dominion. It was also the perfect place to learn the butchery skills and the appreciation for fine meats that led him to enroll at George Brown College in Culinary management.

He admits that it was difficult as he was also trying to finish his degree in Geological Sciences at U. of T. at the same time. Fortunately for Rob, food won out.

After graduating, he took some entry level positions in the food service industry for a few years and decided that he'd prefer to sign the front of a cheque and not just the back.

In his final year at George Brown, he met his wife, Colleen. In 1986 they started their own catering company called Catered Affare Fine Foods, for which they won many awards in the event industry. They pass this love of food and business along each year through a scholarship offered through Colleen's Alma Mater, Ryerson University, in the form of an Entrepreneurship award for budding individuals who wish to lead in the hospitality profession.

Although the catering business was very good to them, Rob says that there is a season to all things. So, in 2012, he concentrated on baking and experimenting with organic ingredients to produce a well-received line of scones and shortbread cookies.

As the seasons change, so do his offerings. For example, strawberry and rhubarb pies give way to fresh raspberry and blueberry concoctions which, in turn, lead to pumpkin and apple goods in the fall.

Since chocolate and maple are two of his favourite ingredients, he also makes double fudge brownies and maple cranberry butter tarts available. In addition, Rob produces a line of condiments such as mustards, preserves, jellies and spice blends.

During the summer months, he makes homemade coolers and lemonades flavoured with Thai basil, ginger, kafir lime and lemongrass syrup or blueberry mead syrup.

He sources only high quality ingredients from local producers and, although his products may not suit all pocketbooks, he believes in using only the very best of ingredients and that quality and taste are the two most important aspects of what he produces.

Having worked behind the scenes in the kitchen for most of his professional life, Rob finds it fulfilling to meet people face to face who appreciate the work and quality that go into his products and it becomes even more meaningful when they become repeat customers.

As we go to press, the following vendors are expected to be at the indoor market at the Aurora Cultural Centre on Saturday:

Rob's Good Food, Sassy Chameleon, Pioneer Honey, Designs by Eva, Nutmeg Catering, Rustic Breads< Kind Organics, Snowden Farm, Catharina's Kitchen, Toscana bakery, Project Christina Marie, Jan's Country Pantry, Green River Coffee, 19th Avenue Farm, Green Leaf Designs, Kibo Natural Body Care, Sasha's Sweets, Eurasia Jewelry, and Nancy's Bags. Please keep in mind that there are sometimes cancellations at the last minute for unforeseen circumstances.

See you at the indoor market!