

## MARKET MUSINGS

**By Jan Freedman**

Can you believe the weather we were lucky enough to have on the first weekend of autumn?

This past Saturday at the Farmers' Market was simply glorious ? sunny, very warm and no wind. There were some wasps around, but not as many as in previous years. Last weekend was the celebration of Culture Days and there were many exciting activities taking place in Aurora, as they were around the country.

At the Farmers' Market, we celebrate by hosting Culinary Arts Day, when our chefs take center stage and prepare dishes based on the theme of the year (pumpkins and squash) which can be sampled by the public. It is always a very popular event which is eagerly anticipated by Aurorans, as it was again this year.

As one of our chefs was unable to attend due to a wedding, yours truly substituted for him with her squash, pumpkin and apple soup which disappeared in a flash. Thank you to our Market chefs for their tasty creations and to all of you for your enthusiastic response. You may have noticed that the Market now has a sheep farmer.

Breezy Ridge Farm was established in 1983 by Phil and Liz Smith with a small flock of 40 ewes of mixed breed. The flock size was gradually increased over the next few years. Then, in 1989, soon after the release of the Rideau Arcott breed from the Agricultural Research Centre near Ottawa, where it had been in development since the early 1960s, the Smith's were able to acquire the first purebred Rideau ewes for Breezy Ridge Farm.

Since that time, only purebred Rideau rams have been brought into the flock from a very limited number of flocks of purebred sheep.

The flock at Breezy Ridge has grown to an average of 300 pure bred Rideau ewes wintered each year. The flock has twice won awards from the Ontario Sheep Marketing Agency for consistency of carcasses marketed through the OSMA forward contracting programme. In 1999, the flock also won the award from the Canadian Cooperative Wool Growers Ltd. For excellence in Commercial Wool Production/ Ontario East.

The Smiths are founding members of the Rideau Association of Canada. Phil has been an executive member of the Rideau Association of Canada since 1990, as well as serving as a district director of York Region sheep producers for OSMA for 25 years. He is a graduate of the Master Shepherd certificate programme from the University of Guelph.

Breezy Ridge Farm consists of 45 hectares of sandy loam in southern Ontario.

As of 2006, Phil and Liz are delighted to welcome their son, David, who is now working full time with them in the family business. David's twin, Nicholas, is studying to become an electrician while working on the farm in a part time capacity.

We are delighted that Breezy Ridge Farm has joined our Market family with their top quality, carefully bred lamb. I urge you to visit their booth on the street at the north end to sample their product. There will be a wide range to choose from including chops, sausages, meat pies and ground lamb. If you want a lamb roast, I suggest that you go early as David usually brings only one due to space restrictions.

Now I would like to tell you about Susan and Jen from Davis Pride Crafts who are with the Market for their second year. They knit and sew all winter to be able to offer their crafts to the public at a few Christmas shows and during the summer.

They make tea cozies, small tote bags, baby bibs and kitchen tea towels. The business is based at home in Newmarket. Susan got her start by making items for dogs such as dog beds, all made from recycled material. Her talents spread by word of mouth and she was asked to make her tote bags for kids' overnight camping. Then, others wanted them for party loot bags. Also, her paw print bags were selling like hot cakes for dog owners to take to the park with water bottles, dog toys and a book. Recently, Davis Pride Crafts have expanded their selection to include knitted slippers and small potpourri sachets for dresser drawers.

Look for Davis Pride Crafts at the Market in the Town Park on special event days.

The Aurora Farmers' Market and Artisan Fair is now going to remain open outdoors until October 25th. Our next special event is our Pumpkin Fest on October 4.

The entertainment at the bandshell will be the Phase Three Trio. As we are part of a regional Pumpkin Pie Trail that day, everything will be pumpkin themed. There will be pumpkin bowling, a scavenger hunt and, as usual, free crafts for the children. And, of course, we will have a raffle for a Market bag full of Market goodies at 12 noon.

See you at the Market!