

MARKET MUSINGS

By Jan Freedman

I think that one could be forgiven for looking for broccoli and cauliflower at the Market on the weekend, given the autumn-like weather of the past week.

However, it is only the second week of June and you can expect the farmers to be showcasing the usual spring produce at the market. The fiddleheads likely are finished but there will be abundant quantities of asparagus and rhubarb, spring onions, lettuce, maybe wild leeks, and the first early peas should be making an appearance soon.

I'd like to tell you some interesting attributes of the wonderful heirloom vegetable plants that you can find at our Market, courtesy of Shirley and George Wiedemeyer. Heirloom or heritage plants have seeds that have been saved and handed down through families and friends for many generations. They have survived through the centuries and have not been genetically modified. They are also open pollinated.

Heirloom vegetables are available in a wide variety of shapes and sizes and a rainbow of colours. Chefs and creative cooks love the heirlooms for their beauty, flavour and elegant presentation since, as chefs like to say, 'you eat with your eyes first'.

We are concentrating on the peppers now since it is unlikely that there will be more heirloom tomatoes plants available at the Market for this season.

Recent research indicates that heirloom vegetables are more nutritious than other varieties. In addition, growing heirlooms is an environmentally friendly way to eliminate the chemicals found in pest control products and fertilizers that can be very harmful. You can save money and preserve a part of natural history by saving heirloom seeds and growing them next year.

All varieties of peppers are an excellent source of vitamin C, A and some B vitamins. They are low in calories and are very versatile. They can be eaten raw, roasted, baked, stir-fried and stuffed. Most European cuisines have some version of a stuffed and baked pepper dish. The hot peppers lend their zest to soups, sauces, dips and egg and meat dishes as well as the ever popular salsas. Red pepper jelly is one of the most requested savouries at my booth.

The Aurora Hot Pepper is a beautiful dwarf plant that is ideal for containers and can be grown on a deck or balcony. Its beauty is evident in its purple-green foliage and its lavender, purple, orange and, finally, red fruit. Bring the plant inside in the winter but it can be re-planted in the warm weather the following spring.

The Alma Paprika Pepper is ideal for eating fresh or for drying and grinding into paprika powder. Its fruit changes from white to red.

The Ancho Gigantea hot pepper is perfect for chilies and salsas and other Mexican and South American cuisine. They are often smoked before using in many dishes.

The Wiedemeyers carry nine varieties of hot and extra hot peppers including the Thai Chili and the Fatali, for the very brave. They also have nine varieties of organically grown sweet peppers including the Bull Nose Bell grown by Thomas Jefferson, Purple Beauty and the outstanding Jimmy Nardello which is wonderful to B.B.Q.

Once you have tried the heirloom varieties of tomatoes and peppers, you'll come looking for them year after year.

As mentioned earlier, the next 'Special Event' at the Farmers' Market will be our annual strawberry festival, taking place this year on June 22. There will be a number of exciting events occurring during the Market day.

The Farmers' Market will have a large strawberry shortcake, made by Toscana Bakery, for the public along with strawberry cupcakes made by Nicolle, as well as some fresh strawberries for those who prefer to savour the wonderful flavour of the ripe berries

without any adornment.

Throughout the morning, we will be having music provided by Aaron Morris, our Market set up person, and his fabulous Manatee Band.

In addition, the Optimist Club is hosting a bike rodeo and tune-up at the GO Station.

June 22 is also the first time that the Aurora Public Library will be at the Market for the season. At 10 a.m. they will present stories, rhymes and puppet fun for the entire family.

This will be followed at 10.30 by Art for All Ages, provided by The Aurora Cultural Centre. Art instructor, Helen Rodrigues, invites you to come and make a recycled paper collage bird. This is a family friendly event open to everyone. Then, at 11.30, the Aurora Historical Society will take over and have you guessing about the use of several old culinary artefacts from Hillary House.

See you at the Market!