

MARKET MUSINGS

By Jan Freedman

Another gorgeous fall day at the Farmers' Market has come and gone.

Although last Saturday, our Customer Appreciation Day, dawned quite cold, the day was sunny and became increasingly warm and pleasant.

We were fairly busy with shoppers buying the ingredients needed for their Thanksgiving meals. As I have said before, the farmers' tables are piled high with so much produce that ripens at this time of year.

Willowtree Farm even had flats of everbearing strawberries available. Other farms had all manner of greens, together with a large variety of squash, turnips, cauliflower and broccoli, tomatoes, beans, zucchini, and even some corn.

There were still a few types of plums, several kinds of pears, concord grapes and many varieties of apples. 19th Avenue Farm had russet apples which are often hard to find and two farms had their delicious apple cider on hand. It is an exciting and very busy season at the Aurora Farmers' Market.

Now let's meet the very interesting family behind Pepperlaw Creek Farms.

The farm is a family run Ontario farm that specializes in the production of the finest 100% pure Ontario Maple Syrup. The tradition of making maple syrup runs through the Tomory family for three generations.

Three brothers, Tony, Ben and John together with their long-time friend, Michal Kowalczyk, represent the core members of the business. The brothers have been making maple syrup since they were small boys at their family home in Stouffville.

Then, about four years ago, the family bought a farm in Uxbridge. To the great delight of the three brothers, the farm has a large sugar bush in its forested area. What started as a small hobby, trudging through the deep snow carrying heavy buckets of fresh maple sap, suddenly developed into an opportunity to expand.

Twenty-some years have passed and all four members have embraced their passion for the outdoors, forestry, and maple syrup production. Along the way, they have also acquired University degrees in Engineering and in many different fields of business.

The Tomory brothers come from a large family of engineers. Led by a father who worked as an electrical engineer for many years, the six boys in the family all studied and worked as engineers in several different fields. The youngest brother, John, who is usually the one representing the family at their market booth, recently switched his career path to devote himself to the family business full time.

The boys started off with a wood stove and chafing dish to process sap from about 50 trees.

Last year they designed and built their own evaporator, using principles learned in engineering, to include a small sap pre-heater, to accommodate 150 trees. This year they have expanded to a 2,500 tap maple bush which they hope will represent their livelihood someday.

Pepperlaw Creek Farms, a truly Canadian business, now participates at local farmers' markets and their products are available at several road side farm stands.

Alongside expansion plans, the farm maintains traditional maple syrup production techniques, using a wood fired evaporator to process the sap, while integrating new technology to improve sanitation and quality control. They use no thickeners, additives, sweeteners or artificial de-foaming agents?the sole ingredient is 100% maple sap, collected from Sugar and Red Maple trees at the farm, boiled down to 1/40 of the volume so they can say proudly that the finished product is genuine, high quality 100% pure Ontario Maple Syrup.

I encourage you to visit them at their booth on Wells Street to talk and taste maple syrup.

Two of our long time vendors did well at last weekend's Markham Fair. Mike Howard's family won first place and second place with their Lavender Orpingham chickens, Dad, Don Howard, cleaned up with his grain crops and this writer won nine ribbons for both her preserves and baking.

There are only three weeks left in the outdoor Farmers' Market 2015 season, before we move indoors to the Armouries the second Saturday of each month. Be sure to plan to attend the final day of the Market on October 31 for some exciting Hallowe'en themed entertainment.

See you at the Market!