



Local Harvest

Foodlink Waterloo Region • Issue 36 • April 2009

Features

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Region

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all Seasons



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Local Business Profile: Stemmler's

A mere 15 minutes north of Uptown Waterloo, in the unassuming village of Heidelberg, is yet another local food success story. Stemmler's is a family-owned deli and butcher shop that has many claims to fame. Combining old world charm and quality local products with innovative design and savvy retail practices has resulted in an award-winning business that is a favourite haunt for locals and visitors alike.

On any given day the shop is bustling with people, packed with products and buzzing with energy. Stemmler's is perhaps best known for its quality local meats and cheeses. The patriarch of the family, Gerard Stemmler was a butcher by trade. While Stemmler's continues to feature a full line of fresh, custom-cut meats, it has evolved into a unique one-stop retail shop. In addition to offering over 20 different kinds of sausages and summer sausage, the shop carries a full array of fresh baked goods, produce, preserves, frozen products and store-made ready-to-serve entrees. For the more adventurous, Stemmler's even carries specialty items such as pickled pork feet, jellied tongue and blood ring! Health conscious folks or those with food allergies will find a full compliment of products free of MSG, gluten, lactose and nitrates.

Stemmler's had a humble beginning in 1985 with the family garage serving as the first facility and the Waterloo Farmer's market as the retail outlet. Within the year, a 1200 square-foot store was built in Heidelberg. But the Stemmler's continued to sell their products at the local Farmers' market until early this year when the market closed permanently. Luckily for their customers their retail shop just down the road on Lobsinger Line continues to thrive. In 2006, Stemmler's increased their store size to 6,000 square feet, winning a National Award



Kevin Stemmler displays a chub of his award-winning summer sausage.



Stemmler's retail store on Lobsinger Line is a one-stop shop for local meats, cheese, produce, baked goods, preserves and much more!

for Innovative Building Design. Stemmler products can also be found in area restaurants, clubs and retail outlets throughout the province.



Local Business Profile continued

Over the years Stemmler's has won a bevy of awards for their products and service. Just this year Stemmler's was the recipient of three additional prestigious awards from Ontario Independent Meat Processors Association. They received a Silver Award for both their Corned Beef and their famous Beef Summer Sausage. They were also the Grand Champion for their Montreal Smoked Bacon. All of these products and their numerous others, are made from meat sourced from local farms and slaughtered at area abattoirs.



Stemmler's carries more than 20 different kinds of sausage and summer sausage.

Today, Stemmler's is still very much a family operation. It is run by brothers Kevin, Shawn and Terry with a complement of 30 employees. The matriarch of the family, Maryann Stemmler, handles the produce end of the business and is a regular at the Elmira Produce Auction Cooperative. She has also become popular for her delicious "Ma Stemmler" fresh-baked quick breads. Fittingly, the Stemmler tagline is "only the best from our family to yours".

This philosophy seems to permeate all that they do—from their top-quality products to their local sourcing to their outstanding customer service. Kevin extols the virtues of making the connection with his customers because, he maintains, "food has to be emotional". Their retail space was designed with this concept in mind. The cutting and processing rooms are open for everyone to see. Customers can watch their food being prepared and various meat processing techniques "behind the scenes" while they wait. This puts their mind at ease and

helps them feel more connected with their food, says Kevin.

Stemmler's was specially designed to be small but aesthetically appealing and environmentally friendly. The award-winning building is based on a European style, boasting an all-wood vaulted ceiling, tumbled marble walls and flooring, and a "green" energy efficient design. "We decorate with product," says Kevin, joking that one of their mottos is "Pack 'em high and watch 'em fly."

Undoubtedly Stemmler's has differentiated itself from other larger retail food stores in a multitude of ways, but perhaps one of the most significant is through its products. Their famous summer sausage is a prime example. The exact recipe is a carefully guarded secret that Kevin says took ten years to perfect. But one thing he is willing to share is that the key to its success lies in the careful, slow processing.

The aging and fermenting alone takes close to a month! By contrast, larger manufacturers don't go through the full curing process and will add liquid smoke to speed things up. But one bite of Stemmler's tasty product --be it All Beef, Pork-Beef Blend or Turkey Summer Sausage--will be enough to convince you that it was all worth while...and chances are you won't stop at just one bite!

Stemmler's is located at 3031 Lobsinger Line, Heidleberg. They are open Monday through Saturday. For further information call 519-669-4590 or visit www.stemmlermeats.ca. ♦



Finding Local Summer Sausage in Waterloo Region

Most local farmers markets and numerous retails shops in Waterloo Region sell summer sausage. In addition, Foodlink's Buy Local! Buy Fresh! Map features a number of farms close by that make and sell summer sausage. Please call for hours and availability.



Faul Farms
1180 Wrigley Road, Ayr
519-632-7678
www.faulfarms.com



Unfactory Farm
5415 Streicher Line, Crosshill
519-656-2691



Ivan Brubacher
926 King St. N., Waterloo



Oakridge Acres Country Meat Store
2132 Greenfield Road, Ayr
519-632-7653 • www.wellfedfood.ca



Janlan Farms
4106 Sandhills Road, Baden
519-634-5863



Winroe Gardens
221 Katherine St. North
Winterbourne
519-664-0556



Shadynook Farms
1784 Northumberland St., Ayr
519-696-3060
www.shadynookfarms@gmail.com



Rotholme Holsteins
1272 Waterloo St.
New Hamburg
519-662-2305



Amon Martin
3124 Lobsinger Line
St. Clements



Scotchline Turkey Company
1263 Scotch Line Road, Elmira
519-664-2423



Summer Sausage for all Seasons

When our early ancestors turned to agriculture, they benefited from a more diverse diet of plants and grains that could tide them over between successful animal hunts. The downside in this shift to a more omnivorous diet was the possibility that not all the meat would be consumed before it began to deteriorate. The solution was to preserve the meat with salt and seal it in casings made from the cleaned intestines and other organs of the freshly butchered animal.

By the Middle Ages in Europe, sausages had become an art practiced commercially by individuals in almost every region. Most sausages were locally developed, based upon the type of animal and herbs used as well as the climatic conditions (for example, the level of humidity) that had to be overcome in order to preserve the meat. Today, thousands of varieties of sausage, which can often be traced back to the town and country of origin, are sold around the world.

The Whole Hog

The word sausage is derived from the French *saucisse*, which likely arose from the Latin word, *salsus*, meaning salted. Traditionally, sausage-makers would grind nutritious meat and animal parts that were not as highly valued - such as scraps, organ meats, blood, and fat - with salt and locally available spices or herbs, and stuff the entire mixture into other less useful animal parts. With meters of intestine available in every animal, this natural casing was the most practical and economical means of containing the meat.

One particular type of sausage, dry sausage, began to rely on fermentation for a characteristic tangy flavour in the end product. Summer sausage and salamis are the most recognized varieties in this category. While summer sausage is the general term for any dry sausage that can be stored without refrigeration, its name does reflect the fact that it was generally produced in the summer when humidity levels were high and the oppor-



tunity for greatest bacterial action could be achieved.

A Mennonite Staple

The Mennonites of Waterloo Region can trace their heritage to the Swiss/South German regions of modern Europe where they would have practiced the age old art of sausage making. As they moved from Europe to Pennsylvania to southern Ontario, they carefully preserved their traditions and continued to produce the foods that reminded them of home. One of the most recognized Mennonite foods is the traditional summer sausage.

Mennonite summer sausage is a 60:40 mixture of beef and pork. The pork adds lots of flavour and fat, while the beef prolongs the shelf life of the sausage. Today, as in yesteryear, fresh meat is put through a meat grinder and thoroughly mixed with salt, pepper, sugar, secret spices, and nitrates. Before the advent of sodium nitrate - a relatively modern preser-

vative - saltpeter would have been added to the meat to act as a preservative and give a reddish colour to the sausage. Lactic acid bacteria are then introduced into the mixture, and the raw sausage is stuffed into traditional Mennonite cloth bags.

The Big Smoke

Rows of stuffed bags are hung in smoke houses where the temperature and humidity is gently raised, providing perfect conditions for the bacteria to grow. For four hours, the meat is sweated and fermented before the drying process begins. In order to slow down and eventually kill off the bacteria, a hardwood fire is built outside the smokehouse and the heat and smoke is blown inside with fans. This process of increasing the temperature, reducing the humidity and adding flavour to the sausage continues for two to three days.

On traditional Mennonite farms, the sausage would then be aged in a root cellar for about one month to bring down the pH level of the sausage and, again, intensify the flavour. The lower the pH, the tangier the flavour will be. While smaller producers still follow this requirement of aging the sausage in cool rooms, many larger industrial companies forgo this crucial step in the devel-

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Types of Sausage

Cooked Sausage

Made with fresh meats and then fully cooked. The sausage is either eaten immediately after cooking or must be refrigerated and is usually reheated before eating. Examples include Braunschweiger, Veal sausage and Liver sausage.

Cooked Smoked Sausage

Much the same as cooked sausage, but it is cooked and then smoked, or smoke-cooked. It can be eaten hot or cold, but is stored in the refrigerator. Examples include Wieners, Kielbasa and Bologna.

Fresh Sausage

Made from meats that have not been previously cured. This sausage must be refrigerated and thoroughly cooked before eating. Examples include Boerewors, Italian Pork sausage and Fresh Beef sausage.

Fresh Smoked Sausage

This is fresh sausage that is smoked. After smoking, the sausage can then be refrigerated and cooked thoroughly before eating. Examples include Mettwurst and Romanian sausage.

Dry Sausage

Made from a selection of meats. These are the most complicated of all sausages to make, as the drying process has to be carefully controlled. Once produced this type of sausage can be readily eaten, and will keep for very long periods under refrigeration. Examples include Salamis and Summer sausage.

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opment of the flavour and end up creating a more generic tasting product.

Once a low pH (5-6) has been achieved, the sausage heads back into the smoke house where it will be fully cooked for three hours at 56 degrees Celsius.

This lengthy process is indeed a culinary art form – types of spices, quantities of bacteria, time needed to sweat and dry the meat, and the optimal pH level for perfect tang – based on hundreds of years of tradition. This high level of artistic creativity is what makes Waterloo Region's Mennonite summer sausage a highly sought after delicacy for casual lunches or upscale hors d'oeuvres, both in rural and urban homes. ♦

Heidleberg Summer Sausage Sandwich

The Old Heidelberg Restaurant is in the heart of Mennonite Country. Amongst their offerings of traditional German fare is a delicious, hearty summer sausage sandwich. Here is one variation that you can try at home.

What you will need:

- Summer sausage (your choice of beef, beef/pork or turkey)
- 2-3 slices of Limburger Cheese
- Pickles, dill or sweet
- Sliced tomatoes & red onion
- Lettuce
- Dijon or traditional mustard
- Kaiser bun or Rye bread



Method:

Thinly slice summer sausage, cheese, tomatoes and onion
Spread mustard on bread.

Build sandwich.

Enjoy with a glass of apple cider or Bavarian-style lager!

Did You Know?

You can learn more about Pennsylvania German butchering and sausage-making techniques at Joseph Schneider Haus, Kitchener's oldest Mennonite homestead. Each November the museum offers a day-long Butchering Bee workshop featuring demonstrations, tastings and fascinating history.

Heidelberg Restaurant Tavern & Motel est. 1860

GOOD FOOD, FRIENDLY SERVICE



Bob MacMillan

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