



Local Harvest

Foodlink Waterloo Region Inc.

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Features

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in Waterloo Region**



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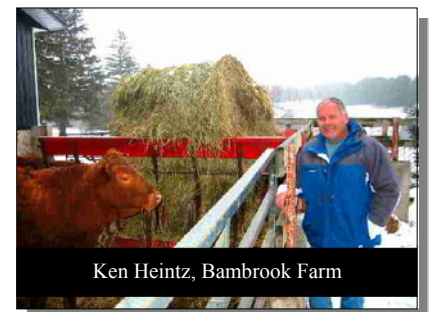
Local Farm Profile: Bambrook Farm

Ken and Cathy Heintz are motivated by a love of farming. For the past three years they have been building a small herd of Limousine cattle with one dream in mind—to turn the 50-acre farm near St. Agatha into a profitable family business. A business that will also one day allow one, or both of them to retire from their full-time jobs off the farm and take up the full-time occupation of farming. While this is not yet an option, (Ken has his own construction business and Cathy works as a financial analyst at Manulife Financial), they are currently crafting a strategy to transform their farm into a viable livelihood.

Given the current economics of farming, one might question if this dream will ever be fulfilled. Farmers are receiving a smaller percentage of total food sales prices than ever before. Smaller family farms are giving way to larger operations that cope with the tighter margins through higher volumes. The current beef crisis spawned by the discovery of BSE or “Mad Cow” disease in Canada have also seen the price of live beef plummet, further squeezing an already troubled industry. Traditional live cattle markets have always been volatile however current prices are such that some farm operators can’t afford to feed their cattle and are forced to sell live calves for as little as 10 cents per pound. At that price, a 700 lb animal would fetch \$70 yet it still costs approximately \$500 to feed and care for the calf (and its mother) until it reaches that weight. Ken recently had a neighbour who sent two cows off to the local auction only to receive a bill for shipping and the costs of auctioning them off. Frustrating farmers further is the fact that consumers are still paying essentially the same prices in the supermarkets for their beef. According to Ken Heintz, “The small farm is dying and it’s up to us to do something about it”.

Doing something about it requires creativity and energy, two things Ken and Cathy seem to have in abundance. One of the first steps in making a smaller operation viable is to maximize farm-direct sales revenue. In the case of Bambrook Farm, Ken and Cathy have chosen to market their beef directly to the consumer, providing a high quality, safe product that is consistently and reasonably priced. It takes time for a farmer to create his or her own (farm-direct) market channels, and, like most small businesses, growing sales requires solid relationships with customers. Whereas the majority of large supermarket shoppers may never know (or choose to know) anything about the food they buy, the customers who purchase beef from Bambrook Farm can ask for, and receive complete information about their “steaks and roasts”. Cathy believes this transparency is not only good for business it’s part of responsible business. “When you come here you can see the calves and know that they are born and raised here”. They can also tell you exactly what each animal has been fed and where it was “cut and wrapped” (Eglis Meats, a local butcher in Baden).

Adding greatly to the confidence they already have with their freezer beef is the fact that both



Ken Heintz, Bambrook Farm

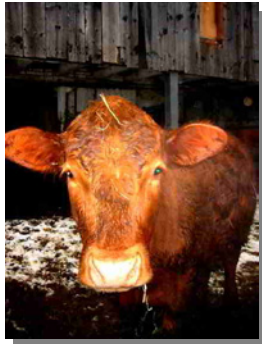
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Farm Profile Cont'd....

the Bambrook farm and the cattle herd are "Certified Organic". It took several years to achieve organic status—a "ton of paperwork" and significant costs to maintain (approximately \$550 per year for the Bambrook acreage and herd) but the move

to organic farming has definitely been worthwhile. When asked about the rationale behind the shift, Ken replies, "well, you can't always go with the flow". Predicting and understanding shifts in consumer attitudes, especially around the wholesomeness of the food we eat and its connection to health, led Ken and Cathy to "get a jump on things" and go organic. Although it's also a lifestyle commitment, Ken and Cathy concede that organics has a



distinct marketing advantage—especially relevant during the increased consumer scrutiny over the mad cow issue. "The Mad Cow issue actually helps us", offered Ken. The consumer wants organic beef because it's safe. Part of the organic process is a mechanism that traces each animal to the farm where it was born and raised. Organically grown beef is free of growth hormones and other vaccines, and the herd is fed a natural diet of hay and mixed grain—grown on the Bambrook farm—which does not include chemical sprays and fertilizers.

Freezer beef is normally sold by the "side" or "quarter". A 1,200 lb steer will provide up to 720 lbs of beef once it is "cut and wrapped". If there is a "trade-off" for consumers to buy "farm-direct" it may be an issue of convenience. Storing 360 or 180 lbs of beef requires adequate freezer space. However, at a price per lb that is well below supermarkets and smaller meat shops, savvy consumers would do well to acquire additional cold storage. Some farms, however, are willing to sell smaller quantities of select cuts and are making an investment in proper storage space to accommodate this trade. Likewise, Ken and Cathy are planning to install a larger walk-in freezer so that customers can choose individual cuts.

The Bambrook farm and the "freezer beef" business are growing. Last year, the farm produced 5 animals that were sold (by quarter) directly to the consumer. This year, they hope to have 10 or 15 ready to go. Once again, they will rely on Foodlink's Buy Local! Buy Fresh! Map to help reach new customers. "We get most of our business through the map", says Cathy. "It's a worthwhile service to farmers and farm businesses like ours".

Ken and Cathy are still a number of years away from their "retirement", however their experience suggests that there are opportunities out there for small farms with progressive marketing. They (and their customers) are part of a growing movement that puts local farms first.

Spring is just around the corner and backyard barbecues are beckoning. What will be on your grill?

Our Food, Our Community:

-Consumers Keen on Local Food!

Residents of Waterloo Region believe it is very important to buy local food and are making significant efforts to do so, according to results of a survey commissioned by Region of Waterloo Public Health (ROWPH).

ROWPH commissioned six questions on the 2003 Kitchener-Waterloo Metropolitan Area Survey dealing with consumer attitudes and practices related to buying local food. A fact sheet describing these results was presented to the Region's Community Services Committee of Council on February 17th.

87.1% of residents believe it is either somewhat (49.2%) or very (37.9%) important to buy local food. Reasons they do so include supporting local farmers (88.6%), believing local food is fresher (58.0%), and wanting to preserve local farmland (43.6%).

This information is encouraging to the Region's Medical Officer of Health, Dr Liana Nolan. "We know that the way food is grown and distributed has an effect on health," she explained. "Increasing consumption of local food reduces air pollution, helps the local economy, and encourages social interaction, all of which contributes to our health."

Despite consumer efforts to buy local food, however, significant barriers exist. Consumers indicate that buying local food is difficult because either the food they like doesn't grow here (66.4%), it isn't always available (64.4%), or because much of it is seasonal (58.4%). These results suggest that increasing consumption of local food may require several different strategies. Consumer education may be helpful to help identify which foods are local, and to promote the acceptance of preserved local foods in the off-season. Labeling local food is one strategy that may help educate consumers: 71.3% of consumers report a willingness to buy more local food if it were labeled as local.

The Region is already involved in initiatives that support what the survey confirms residents want. For example, the Regional Growth Management Strategy aims to create initiatives to protect the Region's countryside, and the Region continues to support Foodlink's Buy Local! Buy Fresh! Map, which directs consumers directly to local food producers. ROWPH intends to work with other stakeholders in the food and agriculture sector to address the barriers to accessing local food identified by the survey.

Marc Xuereb, a Health Promotion Officer with the Region who analyzed the survey findings, thinks the survey suggests a path toward Public Health's goal of increasing consumption of local food. "The survey tells us that we really are beyond the need for raising people's awareness of the importance of buying local food," Xuereb explained.

"Consumers want to buy local food. We need to focus on making it easier for them."

Copies of the Local Food Buying fact sheet may be obtained from the Public Health Resource Centre:

email: phrc@region.waterloo.on.ca

tel: 883-2374

Check out Cathy Heintz's tips for barbecuing roast beef !

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What's your Beef?

To speak is human

To moo, bovine

Sara Rath, *The Complete Cow*, 1998

Modern cattle evolved from a single early ancestor, the auroch (Ow-rock), a fierce animal that stood 2 meters high. The last aurochs persisted until the early 17th century when hunting finally took its toll. The strain is, however, still evident in Spanish fighting bulls and in Scottish Highland cattle.

Cows were domesticated about 5,000 years ago in the Middle East. They were not native to North America but were among the first livestock brought here on ships with European colonists. The quest for new grazing land would later have a profound effect on the pattern of (European) settlement across the continent. The establishment of cattle ranches (and the “cowboys” that worked them) would come to influence not only the growth of the North American economy but would also leave its mark on our culture and heritage. Although the style of cattle farming has changed, its importance lives on. Today there are approximately 90,066 farms and ranches in Canada with a total cattle inventory of about 11.78 million animals. (Statistics Canada Jan 2003)

Beef and the Economy

Today, Canadian farmers sell almost \$8 billion worth of cattle and calves, making the beef industry the largest single commodity source of farm cash receipts in the country—approximately 21.2% of the total. Cattle and beef production for export to other countries in 2002 (7.3 million tonnes) was valued at \$4 billion, making Canada the third largest beef exporter in the world behind Australia and the United States. Most Canadian exports (71.8%) are destined for the US market—much of this trade being live feeder cattle. In terms of global beef production, Canada produces an estimated 3% of the world's estimated production of 49.18 million tonnes. According to Statistics Canada (Canfax, 2002), Beef production contributes over \$30 billion annually to Canada's economy.

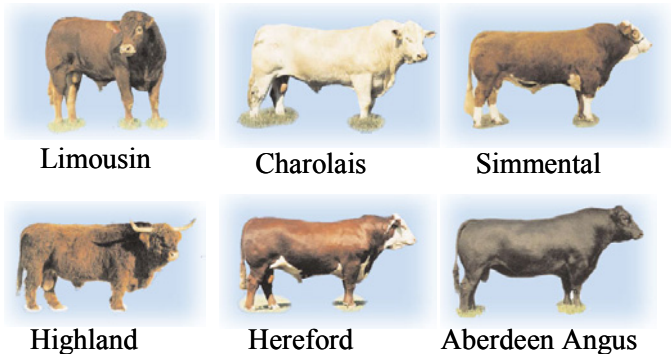
According to Ontario's Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Waterloo Region reported 289 beef farms in the 2001 census (a farm is considered to be a beef farm if 51% or more of its potential sales come from cattle or calves). In all, 955 farms in our region reported cattle but in many of these cases, the cattle were for dairy production or were not the major source of income on the farm. The farm cash receipts in 2002 from the sale of cattle and calves in Waterloo Region were estimated to be about \$114 million annually.

The Food and Economy Study undertaken by Region of Waterloo Public Health indicates that 21% of farms in Waterloo Region are primarily beef farms, compared to 25% for Ontario as a whole. This ranks beef second in the region in number of farms behind dairy (296 farms).

Beef Cattle: Breeds in Canada

There are numerous breeds of beef cattle raised in Canada. Each breed is popular due to specific traits and characteristics including their final carcass size, rate of gain (how fast they put on weight), meat qualities and taste, adaptability to the climate, docility, mothering ability etc. Most cattle herds in Canada are crossbred, combining breeds to capture traits best suited to their farm operation and location.

Of the breeds in Canada, Hereford is the most common—nearly 50% of Canada's cattle carry Hereford breeding. The Hereford was developed in Herefordshire, England in the 1700's and valued for its “economy”. In the mid 1860's, purebred Herefords were brought to Canada by Frederick William Stone and established on his farm just south of Guelph Ontario.



From Gate to Plate

There are a number of steps involved in getting beef from the gate (producer) to the plate (consumer). Beef production begins with cow-calf operations that raise spring-born calves for the industry. On most farms, cattle graze and calves nurse outdoors in open pasture until the calves are weaned at about 500-600 pounds. Over the winter, the calves are fed a hay-based diet until their weight increases to about 900 pounds. Conventionally raised cows are then taken to a feedlot where they are fed a grain-based diet and brought to a finished weight of approximately 1,250 pounds. Cattle will typically spend 60-120 days on a feedlot before being sold to processors. On organic farms, cattle will most often remain on their home farm during this last stage.

Did you know...in Canada, barley and corn are the grains usually used for beef finishing? This grain is usually of a lower quality than that used for human consumption and provides an alternative market for farmers of weather-damaged crops.

From Muscle to Beef

Beef is meat from a full-grown animal of two years. The meat we eat is derived from skeletal muscle, the muscles that pull on the bones of the skeleton to produce body movements. This muscle is transformed to meat after a series of treatments called **aging**. Aging refers to the length of time beef is stored under controlled conditions of temperature and humidity before being processed into retail cuts. Aging allows naturally occurring enzymes within the meat to slowly break down some of the connective tissues that contribute to toughness. Aging beef significantly increases tenderness and will vary from 3 to 21 days. After 28 days, the natural enzyme action is completed.

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Grading the Beef

Grading places beef of similar quality, yield and value into a grade category for product consistency. The Canada "A" grades (Canada Prime, AAA, AA, and A) differ by the amount of marbling in the meat. Marbling refers to the fine white streaks of fat running through the lean beef and is most evident in the Prime grade. Marbling enhances the tenderness, juiciness, and flavour of the beef and is therefore desirable. 94% of Canadian beef is graded at Canada A or higher.

Food Safety: Beef Inspection in Canada

Every beef animal must be inspected according to the Food and Drugs Act (Canada) and the Meat Inspection Act (Ontario) before and after slaughter. The sale of un-inspected meat in Ontario is illegal. There are two systems of inspection in Ontario; 1. the federal government system (operating 9 facilities) that allows meat to move between provinces and countries; and 2. the provincial government system (operating 207 facilities) that allow meat to be sold only within the province.

Both federal and provincial Acts require that each animal is fit for slaughter, handled humanely, and processed under sanitary conditions. The primary difference between the two inspection agencies is one of scope and scale, not safety. Meat inspection services also include monitoring plant operations, collecting and submitting laboratory samples, and monitoring unusual trends in animals. In 2002/03, 140 meat inspectors spent 195,000 hours at Ontario licensed facilities. Inspections are scheduled 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year. Any animal identified by an inspector as being diseased or in unsatisfactory condition is segregated and examined by a veterinarian.

Meat can only be sold for human consumption when the animals have been inspected immediately before and after slaughter as dictated by the federal and provincial Acts. If an animal dies before slaughter, it must be condemned. Any meat considered unfit for human consumption is condemned. This meat may, however, be used for purposes other than human food.

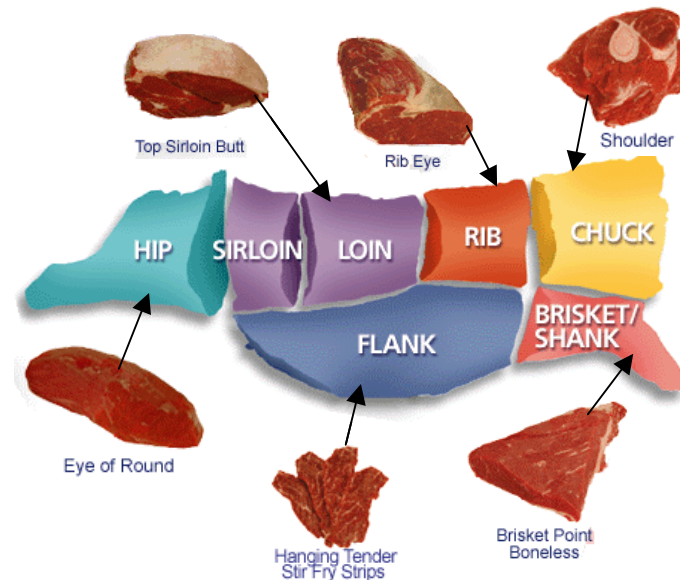
In addition to their role in assuring food safety, meat inspections play a significant role in animal disease surveillance programs so that animal and public safety threats can be contained.

The Alymer Case

On August 24, 2003, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food announced it was conducting a detailed investigation into the handling of animals and meat at Alymer Meat Packers Inc, in Alymer Ontario. All products from this abattoir were recalled. The allegations in the Alymer case included dead animals being processed at night after inspectors had gone home, and meat that was being improperly stamped and sent into the system. One of the recommendations being considered by the Ontario government is the replacement of contract employees for permanent provincial government employees, a practice that had been discontinued by the former conservative government.

Retail Cuts

Only about 55-60% of a live animal's weight is turned into meat for human consumption. The balance (bones, organs, hide, hooves, etc) can be used for a variety purposes including leather products, piano keys, fertilizer, candles, lipstick and pet food. 6 primal sections of a carcass provide an array of popular cuts ranging from steaks and roasts, stew beef, ribs and, of course, hamburger. The leanest (and most expensive) cuts of beef you can buy are taken from the loin (lower back) area.



Nutrition

Some of the latest Health Canada nutrient information shows that through genetic selection (breeding programs) and new diets, today's beef is, on average, 50% leaner and 21% lower in cholesterol than it was 20 years ago. Is beef good for you? You bet it is! Lean beef is an important source of 12 essential nutrients including protein, iron, zinc and B vitamins. All beef must meet the government standard of no more than 17% fat for lean and no more than 10% fat for extra lean cuts.

One serving (65g) of cooked, lean top sirloin grilling steak has:

4.4g of fat
47mg of Cholesterol
19g Protein
0g of Carbohydrate
2mg of Iron

Did you know...a serving of 50-100g of cooked beef is the same size as a deck of cards, or the palm of your hand?

Beef Consumption

It's estimated that the average Canadian:

- Eats beef 132 times a year
- Eats 48.3 lbs (21.9 kg) of beef per year
- Eats 1.3 oz (36 g) beef daily

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Where to buy freezer beef in Waterloo Region

The 2003 Buy Local! Buy Fresh! Map listed a number of farms across Waterloo Region that sell beef direct to the consumer. Looking for farm fresh freezer beef? How about (beef) summer sausage, a regional tradition? The following local producers can help you out. Please be sure and call ahead.

Shadynook Farms (Jeff Stager)

1784 Northumberland Street, Ayr

Tel. 696-3060

Email: shadynook@golden.net

Map Listing # 1

- *Custom fed freezer beef*

Laepple Organic Farm

(Linda and Fritz Laepple)

RR#2 2298 Bleams Road, Petersburg

Tel. 634-1033

Email: laepple@golden.net

Map Listing # 4

- *Certified organic freezer beef*
- *summer sausage*

Amon & Anna Martin

RR#1, 3124 Lobsinger Line, St. Clements

Map Listing # 6

- *Summer Sausage*

Denis Baer

2669 Carmel Koch Road, Baden

Tel. 669-4529

Map Listing # 8

- *Organically raised freezer beef*

Mike & Edey Bender

4616 Huron Road, New Hamburg

Tel. 662-9536

Email: embender@porchlight.ca

Map Listing # 16

- *"Drug free" freezer beef*

Matteas Meadows

(Katie Mae & Nelson Roth)

5071 Deborah Glaister Line, Wellesley

Tel. 656-2406

Map Listing # 19

- *Certified organic freezer beef*

Bambrook Farm

(Ken and Cathy Heintz)

2332 Berletts Road, St. Agatha

Tel. 699-6205

Email: bambrookfarm@sympatico.ca

Map Listing # 20

- *Certified organic freezer beef*

Edwin B. Sittler Farm

(Edwin & Noah Sittler)

RR#1, 4750 Ament Line, Linwood

Tel. 698-2094

Map Listing # 27

- *Organic beef*

Charles Quality Meats

(Sam, Tony & Peter LoBrutto)

1476 Wilby Road, St. Agatha

Tel. 886-7931

Map Listing # 30

- *Chemical and drug free beef*

Rotisserie Roast Beef

If you're planning a gathering, why not serve up some local beef on the Barbeque? Cathy Heintz provides us with one of her favourite ways to prepare a roast of beef. (note: if you don't have a rotisserie barbeque, this works equally well in a conventional oven heated to 400°F)

Ingredients:

4-5 lb Sirloin Tip Roast

3 Cloves of garlic

½ Cup Greek spices*

2 tbsp olive oil

2 Cups water

1 Cup red wine

1 Package dried onion soup mix

1 Sweet Onion

Chop garlic cloves into slivers. Make small slits in the roast and insert slivers of garlic. Rub the roast with the mixture of Greek spices. Prepare basting sauce by mixing 2 cups of water, 1 cup of red wine, the onion soup mix and chopped sweet onion. Pour mixture into a foil pan and place on the barbeque directly under the roast to catch the drippings. Place the roast on rotisserie. Maintain the BBQ temperature at 400 F until meat is cooked (a meat thermometer will allow you to cook to desired doneness). Baste the roast often using mixture.

*Greek spices contain mint, oregano, rosemary, sage, black pepper, sea salt, and cinnamon, all crushed together in 2 tbsp olive oil