



# Local Harvest

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## Local Farm Profile: Stevanus Family Farm

Linda and Dale Stevanus sound a little surprised as they explain that they are both fourth-generation produce farmers selling at the farmers’ market in Kitchener (*Your New Kitchener Market*). They both claim they disliked their parents’ market gardens and never wanted to farm. Dale remembers that, as a boy, the delights of the Grand River (which runs along the edge of the farm) called his name much louder than the tomatoes that needed weeding in these same fields he farms now with Linda.

You’ll find the Stevanuses at the Waterloo Farmers’ Market on Saturdays and *Your New Kitchener Market* on Wednesdays. You could say that the Market in Kitchener is in their blood. It is there that both Linda’s mother and grandmother sold their mixed veggies during the summer and canned fruits

and vegetables during the winter. Dale’s mother sold green onions and sweet corn and his grandfather sold mixed vegetables during the summer and sauerkraut during the winter. Dale has a newspaper article from 1950 that boasts of Waterloo County as the “sauerkraut capital of the world” and shows photos of his ancestors harvesting cabbage. The article estimated that “300 tons of kraut originated here in a season” and at least “100 tons were consumed locally.” The Stevanus family does not currently make sauerkraut, but who knows what will happen as this farm business expands?

This year marks the end of their first “5-year plan” where their goal was to “break even”. With the wet cool season, Dale and Linda are not sure that will happen this year, but that hasn’t deterred them from planning the next 5 years which targets Dale’s retirement to “full-time farming”. (Dale works at the University of Guelph while Linda works part-time at The Bay). Very much a family operation, Linda organizes the harvesting and marketing of their produce while Dale focuses on planting and crop maintenance. All three of their children have worked on the farm over the years. This year both sons (Aaron and Brent) are working off the farm (but are still helping out where they can) while daughter, Natalie, keeps busy both on the farm and with Linda at the markets. Workdays during the season are long—and the vacations? Well, they’re both “very rare and very short”.

Linda and Dale’s “slide back” into farming began when the garden they kept at Dale’s parents did so well that they were able to sell some corn from their front yard in Kitchener. Their kids also wanted some pocket money but were too young to get formal jobs so the next year they planted more sweet corn which their children helped harvest and sell at the market. The theory was that “If we grow it the way we like it, maybe others will like it too.” She’s not sure if it is the Bloomingdale soil, the varieties of corn they plant or simply its freshness, but Linda has never found another ear of sweet corn that tastes as good as those from her farm.

Dale and Linda explain that produce farmers not only face the challenge of weather and pests. It’s imperative to find “willing workers and understanding buyers”. Willing workers are needed during



Linda (right) and daughter Natalie (centre) selling at their market stall in Kitchener

...Story Continued Next Page.

### Farm Profile Cont...

the intense harvest periods while understanding buyers will respect the time and toil required to grow “pesticide free” produce and do not try to “bargain down” the price. When customers want to bargain with her at market Linda tells them to “come to my farm and weed beside me for a day and we’ll talk about it.” So far, no one has taken her up on the offer. Linda enjoys chatting with customers on market days, especially the customers who seek her out since she is one of the few producer-vendors. She likes getting to know regular customers and shares recipes with them. At the market she’s noticed that people often assume that all vendors are farmers. One wholesale vendor has been heard evading the question of “Is this your product?” with the response: “It’s mine now and it’s yours when you pay for it.” Customers are attracted to wholesale-vendor stalls with their wide variety of produce. Perhaps it’s the “one-stop-shop” appeal but if you’re looking for a “one-stop shop”, why go to a farmers’ market? “Much of the farmers’ market experience is in walking around and buying from different vendors offering the quality you want and the food philosophy you support”.



The Stevanus’ take a “natural approach” to farming. On their four acres of produce they use manure from their sheep and natural fertilizers made from seaweed, fish, and molasses to enrich the soil. Mechanical and hand weeding replace the usual chemical herbicides and companion planting, and crop rotation help improve resistance to pests. In the few cases where they use sprays, it is “Only when we have to spray to save the crop” and customers are always notified. Linda and Dale have considered organic certification but feel that it requires more time on the farm than they can currently give it—and too much paperwork! They’d much rather devote their full attention to growing high-quality produce.

Each year, the ripening of the tomatoes is eagerly awaited. Dale records the planting dates and estimates when the first ones will ripen using the “days-to-harvest” information for each variety. This year the tomatoes may be a couple of weeks behind schedule. With the cool summer, the tomato plants are lush and healthy and setting many tomatoes, but are still “greener than grass”. Dale’s revised estimate is that they’ll start selling their first ripe tomatoes August 18<sup>th</sup>, so if you’re hankering for a homegrown tomato you can go to Your New Kitchener Market on that Wednesday and buy some from the Stevanus’ stand, located in the outdoor roofed section of the market.

They are always looking for new varieties to tempt their customers, this year they are trying *Juliette*, a small plum salad type tomato. They will also be offering their regular varieties including *Plum Dandy*, *Viva Italia*, *Jolly*, *Celebrity*, and *First Lady*. While *Celebrity* and *First Lady* are favourites of customers who like medium-sized red tomatoes with the “real” tomato flavour, *Jolly* is a popular “snack” variety for which people have begun to ask: “Have you got your *Jollies* this year?” A large, pink cherry tomato bursting with flavour, the *Jolly* is a pleasure to eat as its name suggests.



So, this summer, as you’re searching for that irreplaceable “farm freshness”, why not call or drop by the Stevanus farm (BLBF map listing # 70) on Tuesday and Friday afternoons. You’ll be welcome!

### Our Food, Our Community

#### Cookbook to celebrate local food and seasonal eating!

Not so long ago, (certainly within the memory of many of our parents and grandparents), most fruits and vegetables on North American tables came from our own gardens or from gardens close by. Eggs, milk and dairy products, flour and meat also came from local sources.



Today, the average item of food travels thousands of kilometres before it lands on our tables. It’s a remarkable technological accomplishment, but it has not proven to be healthy for our communities, our land or us.

Through stories and simple “whole foods” recipes, the “*Simply in Season*” cookbook from *Mennonite Central Committee (MCC)* will explore how the food we put on our tables impacts our local and global neighbors. It will show the importance of eating local, seasonal food — and fairly traded food — and invite readers to make choices that offer security and health for our communities, for the land, and for the mind body and spirit.

You can be an important part of producing this new cookbook. Recipes and testers are needed. The authors are also looking for stories of finding health and wholeness by eating local and seasonal foods.

#### Interested in learning more?

Contact MCC at: (519) 745-8458

Or, visit the website at:

[www.morewithless.org](http://www.morewithless.org)

### Tomato Production Facts and Figures

The top five tomato producing countries, in descending order, are The United States, China, Turkey, Italy and India.

#### Production in Ontario (2003)

##### Field Tomatoes

Acres	17,363
Yield	1,082,060,000 lbs
Average Price	5.9 cents/lb
Farm Value	\$ 64,049,000

##### Greenhouse Tomatoes

Yield	305,000,000 lbs
Average Price	61.7 cents/lb
Farm Value	\$188,274,000

#### Waterloo Region (2001)\*

14 farms totaling 11 acres (4 hectares).

\* stats from OMAF

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## “Catch-up with Tomatoes”

### Wolf Peach? Love Apple? This fruit has a history!!

Ah, the tomato...the belle of the summer ball and the darling of the culinary stage! Where would Italian cooking be without tomato sauce? What could complement Mexican food as well as salsa? Tomato soup, slices on a burger and ketchup have all become popular North American uses for the versatile fruit. And a fruit it is! In 1883, the American Congress levied a 10% tax on all imported vegetables and decided to reclassify the tomato as a vegetable. After all, it was served as part of the main meal and not as dessert. This ruling was contested in 1893 and the case sent to the Supreme Court, which subsequently rejected the botanical truth that the tomato is in fact an enormous berry. Since then the tomato has been legally classified as a vegetable and a tax is still paid on imported tomatoes in the United States.

This giant berry has a colorful history and is typical of a fruit that originated in one hemisphere, became popular in another, and returned close to home for further breeding. The tomato likely originated in present day Peru where eight species still grow wild in the Andes Mountains. From Peru, an unidentified wild ancestor of the tomato made its way north to Central America. Tomatoes were in wide cultivation throughout Central America in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century when the first conquistadors arrived in the Yucatan area of Mexico. It is commonly believed that the tomato was domesticated in Central America and not in Peru. Pre-Columbian cultures in Peru were inclined to decorate textiles and pottery with depictions of crops and figures important to their well-being. To date, no such artifacts have been found. Linguistic evidence also supports this theory. The Aztecs of Central America called it "xitomatl", and wild Central American tribes called it "tomati". Yet, the writings of ancient Peruvian tribes fail to mention a tomato-like fruit as being an important part of the diet or even a word meaning tomato, while Aztec writings in Central America mention dishes comprised of peppers, salt and tomatoes, a concoction which seems likely to be the original salsa recipe

It is presumed that the tomato found its way across the Atlantic with the explorer Cortez. The earliest mention of the tomato in European literature is found in an herbal written by Matthioli in 1544. He wrote that tomatoes, or as they were called in Italy, *pomi d'oro* (golden apple), were "eaten in Italy with oil, salt and pepper". This provides evidence that the first tomatoes to reach the Old World were a yellow variety. The tomato was likely first experienced in Spain, and the name *pome dei Moro* (Moor's apple), was probably the first Old World name ascribed to it. Cultivation of several varieties became widespread in the ensuing decades in Spain, Italy, and in France, where it was called *pomme d'amour* (love apple)—perhaps because of suspected aphrodisiac properties—but more likely the result of a corruption of the early Spanish name. The introduction of the tomato did not proceed rapidly in all areas of Europe. Northern cultures associated the tomato plant with poisonous members of the same family, specifically henbane, mandrake and deadly nightshade, which all bore physical resemblance to the tomato plant. Old German folklore has it that witches used plants of the nightshade family to evoke werewolves, a practice known as lycanthropy. The common German name for tomatoes translates to "wolf peach", and was

avoided for obvious reasons. In the 18th century, when Carl Linnaeus devised a system for naming plants, he seemed to have taken note of this legend and named the tomato *Lycopersicon esculentum*, which literally means, "edible wolf peach". The original center of domestication was, as mentioned, Central America. However, further domestication on a much more intense level occurred throughout Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries, and later in



North America. Tomato production in western countries began to soar in the early 1920's with the advent of mass canning and the invention of juice extractors. Shortly after, a young entrepreneur named Joseph Campbell found a ready market for canned tomato products and went on to make millions with his soup company.

## Tomatoes, Health and Nutrition

The latest buzz surrounding tomatoes is the purported benefit of lycopene, the major carotenoid contained in tomatoes that is responsible for its deep red color. Similar to the orange pigment beta-carotene in carrots, lycopene has been touted as a potent anti-oxidant protecting the body from free radical damage. In December 1995, the Journal of the National Cancer Institute published the results of a study conducted by Harvard University researchers that showed an association between consuming a diet rich in tomato-based foods and a decreased risk of prostate cancer. The researchers found that the consumption of tomatoes, tomato sauce, tomato juice and pizza was associated with a reduced risk for developing prostate cancer. Researchers theorize that lycopene, found in large amounts in tomatoes, may be responsible for this possible protective effect. Lycopene is not well absorbed into the body unless the tomatoes are cooked and some dietary fat (such as olive oil) is present

In addition, vine-ripened tomatoes have more lycopene than those that ripen after they are picked. Other sources of lycopene include watermelon, red grapefruit and, to a lesser extent, shellfish like lobster and crabmeat.

## Buying and Storing Tomatoes

A ripe field tomato should be firm, though not rock-hard, and feel heavy for its size. Avoid any sign of mould or bruising. Tomatoes should be stored at room temperature, away from direct sunlight. To ripen tomatoes, place in a plain brown paper bag with apples or pears. Both fruit release a natural ethylene gas that speeds up ripening.

### Nutrition Facts

Serving Size:	
1 medium tomato (148g)	
Calories: 35	
Calories from fat: 0	
<hr/>	
	% Daily Value*
Total fat 0.5g	1%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 5mg	0%
Total Carbohydrate 7g	2%
Dietary Fiber 1g	4%
Sugars 4g	
Protein 1g	
<hr/>	
Vitamin A 20%	
Vitamin C 40%	
Calcium 2%	
Iron 2%	

\*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

Source: PMA's Labeling Facts

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## Tomato Varieties

There are more than 300 different varieties of tomatoes commercially grown in Ontario. Popular local "field tomato" varieties include Sunrise, Pik Rite, Mountain Pride, Pilgrim, Red Star and Ultra-sweet.

In general, tomatoes are grouped into the following categories:

**Round (slicing/table):** Medium-sized, globe-shaped. Ideal for eating raw.

**Roma or Plum:** Plum-shaped and thick-fleshed. Smaller and less juicy than the Round variety. Excellent for preserving, sauces, or making paste.

**Beefsteak:** Similar to Round tomatoes but flatter with fleshier walls and not as juicy. Excellent for both cooking and eating raw. Size varies from small to large.

**Cherry:** About an inch in diameter, this category also includes the hybrid Grape tomatoes.



Plum



Beefsteak



Cherry

## Heirloom Varieties

If you have only ever had a round red tomato you should really try experimenting with heirloom varieties. They don't look as perfect, nor do they store or ship well, but discriminating consumers look beyond appearances and consider taste! The flavour of heirloom tomatoes makes them highly sought-after by local chefs.

Heirloom tomatoes (and other *Heritage* plants) have a long history and are in danger of being lost from production. Heirloom varieties have been handed down from generation to generation, even traveling from country to country and long treasured by gardeners. As a result these tomatoes come with interesting stories. Take for example the variety *Mortgage Lifter*. Legend has it that the farmer "Radiator Charlie" developed this tomato in the early 1930's and paid off his mortgage by selling plants. The fruit weighs about 1 pound on average and up to 4 pounds each!

Heritage varieties offer an incredible range of colours and tastes. Why not try the extra juicy *Black Krim* with its smoky saltiness and dark purple-black flesh, or the classic *Brandywine* an Amish heirloom tomato which consistently wins best-tasting awards across the country. The low-acid, uniquely shaped fruit of the *Yellow Pear* has been enjoyed by gardeners and tomato aficionados since the 1800's.

**Diversity Gardens**, (*Buy Local! Buy Fresh! Map listing # 22*) currently grows and sells 14 heirloom tomato varieties—available until the end of the season in October. For ordering information or to be added to their weekly mailing list, contact [tshumilas@diversitygardens.com](mailto:tshumilas@diversitygardens.com).



Black Krim



Brandywine



Aunt Ruby's  
German Green



Hawaiian  
Pineapple



Yellow Pear

Don't miss Diversity Garden's heritage tomato tasting event!

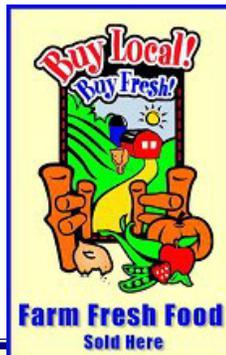
Saturday August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2004

12:00 pm - 3:00pm.

1528 Notre Dame Drive, St. Agatha

## Buying local tomatoes

Foodlink's 2004 Buy Local! Buy Fresh! Map lists a number of producers across the Waterloo Region that grow and sell tomatoes direct to the consumer. Looking to buy the  *freshest*  tomatoes this season? The map features an extensive list of farm stands and country markets close to you.



### Joel Bauman

1764 King St. N., St. Jacobs  
Tel. 664-3093 Map Listing # 8

### Arnold and Selina Bowman

8047 Reid Woods Dr., Elmira  
Tel. 669-8155 Map Listing # 11

### Brubacher's Produce

1562 Halm Rd., West Montrose  
Tel. 664-3214 Map Listing # 13

### Corn and More

2050 Bleams Road, Petersburg  
Tel. 634-8903 Map Listing # 18

### Diversity Gardens

1528 Notre Dame Dr., St. Agatha  
Tel. 885-8775 Map Listing # 22

### The Farmarket

98 Peel St., New Hamburg  
Tel. 662-6914 Map Listing # 27

### Floralane Produce

2191 Arthur St. N., Elmira  
Tel. 669-3161 Map Listing # 29

### Gillespie's Garden

1043 Brantford Hwy. (#24), Cambridge  
Tel. 622-2294 Map Listing # 31

### Herrle's Country Farm Market

1243 Erb's Rd., St. Agatha  
Tel. 886-7576 Map Listing # 36

### Clarence and Edna Knorr

2477 Lobsinger Line., Waterloo  
Tel. 699-4077 Map Listing # 41

### Edward W. Martin Farm

144 Southfield Dr., Elmira  
Tel. 699-4108 Map Listing # 48

### Paul M. Sherk Farm

2818 Hackbart Rd., St. Clements  
No phone Map Listing # 66

### J. Steckle Heritage Homestead

811 Bleams Rd., Kitchener  
Tel. 748-5719 Map Listing # 69

### Stevanus Family Farm

1082 Snyder Flats Rd., Bloomingdale  
Tel. 585-7784 Map Listing # 70

### Sunset Haven Dairy Goats & Produce

2637 Three Bridges Rd., Elmira  
Tel. 696-3839 Map Listing # 72



## Special Feature: Your *New* Kitchener Market



Each week for more than 165 years, farmers have arrived in the dark to set up stalls of fresh produce in Kitchener's market. Originally housed in Jacob Shantz's market house, it has today found a new home, and a new name, on King

Street in downtown Kitchener. While the farmers' market section of Your New Kitchener Market is now operating every Wednesday and Saturday, the official grand opening will take place September 25<sup>th</sup>. On that day, the upper level Market Shops – offering specialty foods, coffees, Mexican, Croatian or Caribbean take-out cuisine, European hand-tied bouquets, fresh produce and more – will also open to customers for the first time.

Time has not changed the welcome one receives upon entering Your New Kitchener Market. The shopper is assailed by colourful displays of fruits and vegetables that look more like arresting works of art than edibles for Sunday dinner. The flowers are fresh-cut, crisp and fragrant. The loaves of bread are plump and the aromas of culinary delights from a multitude of countries fill the air. But Your New Kitchener Market is much more than just a place to buy and sell food. It's become an important Kitchener institution. It's a venue for socializing, where urban residents meet farmers and their neighbours. It figures significantly into the revitalization of the city's downtown, bringing people into the area. And, it serves an educational function as well, with passionate vendors helping people to learn to eat better.

Stephanie Massel, Market Manager, is extremely proud of this market. "We're attempting to do what we've always done best here and that is promoting the atmosphere of a cultural crossroads where shoppers and vendors of all nationalities and socioeconomic backgrounds can come." As well as selling food in a cost-effective, resource-efficient way, Massel notes that the market helps to support family farms.

Buy Local! Buy Fresh! Map participants Nelson and June Gerber say their customers express a desire for a more healthy diet, and that is why come back each week to the Rothdale Farms counter, established in 1949. People will line up to buy their garden fresh produce, nitrate free organic sausage, apple butter, honey and eggs – the Gerbers sometimes sell as many as 225 dozen on a Saturday. June and Nelson of Wellesley's Unfactory Farm, another BL!BF! location, agree. "The smaller farms and growers are not as plentiful as they used to be, yet people are seeking us (smaller growers) out because they want to know where their food is coming from", says June.

Tony LoBrutto, one of three brothers who operate Charles Quality Meats (BL!BF! Map #17), believes that customers want to know how the animals are raised and what went into their diets. "We can tell

our customers exactly what's in their meat, where it came from and just about anything else they want to know", says LoBrutto. "Our customers want to know that their meat is without preservatives or additives – which it definitely is – so that they can serve it to their families without reservation."

At a time when a limited number of grocery chains control the purchase of much of the fresh food in this country, knowing who grows your food and where it comes from can make all the difference to many consumers. Massel adds that, "When growers and producers reap the rewards of their efforts directly, without the expense of middlemen, they have a better chance of staying in business. That translates into keeping green spaces around our cities". Your *New* Kitchener Market cuts out the middleman, allowing farmers to sell directly to the consumer and capture the full retail dollar for their efforts. Conversely, consumers frequent the market because it means they can buy directly from the people who just yesterday, picked the produce.

Although Your *New* Kitchener Market is a bustle of activity, there remains room for more vendors. Maybe you already have an unusual product – a salsa your guests swoon over, access to free raw materials, like the blackberry brambles in your backyard that could keep you processing preserves for six months, or a skill like raising honeybees or making pies – that could turn from a hobby to profitable enterprise. Maybe you have a fish farm or are renowned for your green thumb and have a wide selection of plants and bulbs to make any garden bright. If you care deeply about customer service and are interested in contributing to the excitement of one of Canada's finest urban markets, contact Market Manager—Stephanie Massel at 741-2297.



*Get Ready to "Open your Ears"!*

Stay tuned for the August edition of Local Harvest, coming soon.