



# Local Harvest

## Features

**Farm Profile:**  
Herrle's Country Farm Market

**Our Food, Our Community:**  
Elmira Produce Auction

**Fresh in Focus:**  
"Berried Treasure"

**Buying Strawberries in Waterloo Region**



## FOODLINK

218 Dawson St.  
Waterloo On  
N2L 1S4  
(519) 747-7641

**Website:**  
[www.foodlink.ca](http://www.foodlink.ca)

**Local Harvest**  
*Content, layout and editing:*

**Carmen Everest-Wahl**  
**Nina Bailey-Dick**  
**Peter Katona**

Foodlink Waterloo Region Inc.

Issue # 5

JUNE 2004

## Local Farm Profile: Herrle's Country Farm Market

In 1964 Elsie Herrle put up a "Sweet Corn for Sale" sign at the end of her farm lane. To her surprise, cars stopped and she ran out to the field and yanked the ears off the stalks while the customers waited. Little did Elsie know that where she was standing, amidst the rows of corn, would be the site of a bustling farm market store forty years later.

Elsie no longer runs out to pick sweet corn these days. Instead she is bookkeeping, sourcing fresh product from other farms, and managing over 200 acres of produce—including 7 acres of strawberries. While the Herrles are famous for their selection of sweet corn, they are also becoming known for their strawberries, available at their store or as part of an expanding "u-pick" operation.

The Herrle's farm and Country Farm Market is definitely a family affair. The farm and market support three families who work together tending the crops, managing the 25+ staff, overseeing the pick-your-own patch and running the store and bakery. The farm—just 6 kilometers west of Waterloo—was originally settled by Peter Herrle in 1858 and has been in the hands of the Herrle family for more than four generations. In the 1960's, Elsie and Howard Herrle started growing produce for sale. As the operation grew, their son James and his wife Michelle joined the business a couple of decades later, along with their daughter Joanne Herrle-Braun and her husband Trevor (another daughter, Karen, does not farm). All three families can see the Country Farm Market out their front windows. James and Michelle and their three children live in the original family farmhouse behind the market, Howard and Elsie live in a house adjacent to the market and Trevor and Joanne bought an additional farm property across the road.

While all the Herrles grew up farming, Trevor left a nine-year career as a funeral home director to return to farming full-time. He explained that the management of the diverse farm operation is divided among different members of the family. Trevor runs the market and manages a few crops like peas and spinach, James manages the larger field crops of sweet corn, strawberries and pumpkins, Joanne manages the bakery and the scheduling of the market staff, and Michelle trains staff and oversees the pick-your-own activities. Howard continues to be involved in the family business and enjoys planting the sweet corn and pumpkin fields. Most days at 10 AM you will find the Herrles taking a coffee break together—the conversation a mixture of business and family chit chat. These coffee breaks, along with regular planning meetings, strengthen the family's connection. Strong communication is key to the success of the Herrle operation. James credits his parents for listening to their children from an early age and now giving them equal voice in business decisions. The farm operation has grown over the past 10 years with the addition of crops like beans, spinach and strawberries. The Herrles actually farm 4 different properties—including one near Petersburg. Each farm offers a different soil type with different benefits. The sandy soil on the farm property just west

**...Story Continued Next Page.**



**Herrle's Country Farm Market**  
*"a local landmark"*

# Foodlink Local Harvest

JUNE 2004

## Farm Profile Cont...

of St. Agatha, for example, has excellent drainage making it perfect for early-season crops along with fall squash and pumpkins. Combined, the family has 400 acres of workable land (50 rented) and nearly 90% is irrigated. With 200 acres in produce, the Herrle's are kept busy in the growing season, and often put in 90-hour workweeks.



2004 marks the eighth year that the Herrles have grown strawberries. With seven acres in production, the strawberry crop amounts to about 10% of total farm market sales. In a good season—when the “weather gods” align—strawberries can be a profitable crop. It's a short season though, (normally lasting 3 weeks) and growing and picking berries is extremely labour intensive. Like many Ontario strawberry operations, the Herrles offer customers the opportunity to pick their own berries—roughly half the crop is designated as pick-your-own.

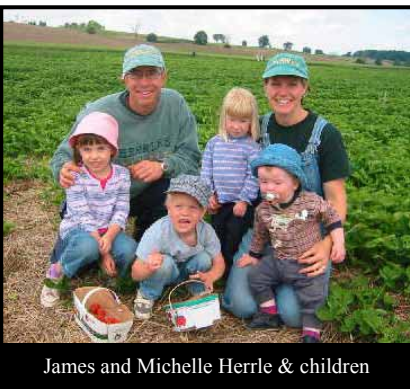
While “u-pick” reduces labour costs, the actual yield per acre can be diminished as the quality of picking will vary. When a row is not thoroughly picked, the overlooked berries can rot on the plant and thereby lose potential harvest income. In addition, customers are often influenced by the weather, preferring not to make the trip on rainy days or when temperatures are “too hot or too cold”.

Perhaps the largest challenge facing strawberry producers (especially those with farm-direct retail) is the ultra competitiveness of the market. The enormous popularity of strawberries makes them natural “loss-leaders” in supermarkets. Cases of strawberries adorn supermarket shelves at prices that are often 50 cents per quart cheaper than can be found at a local farmer's roadside stand. Most people who appreciate top-quality however, will recognize that the taste of a “fresh picked” strawberry is worth the extra money and more!

Over the short season the market strawberry supply can also exceed consumer demand—a further drag on prices. Many people do not realize how easy it is to clean and freeze fresh strawberries to use later so they buy only small quantities of strawberries. The Herrles make full use of their berries in jams and the homemade frozen yoghurt sold at their Farm Market.

Herrle's Country Farm Market sells a wide variety of produce as well as baked goods and canned goods. They also buy produce from other farmers to sell at their Market. There's always something new and interesting available such as the pickled sugar snap peas that Trevor Herrle claims are “selling like hot-cakes”!

Whether it is strawberries, peas or the sweet corn that “made the Herrle name famous”, the entire family works hard to provide top-quality, fresh produce from mid June to October 31. With road construction on Erb St. looming this summer, you may have to take a slight detour in reaching the store, but the drive will have been worth your while as you walk in and smell the cookies fresh out of the oven and see the “fresh-picked” produce just waiting make it to your table!



James and Michelle Herrle & children

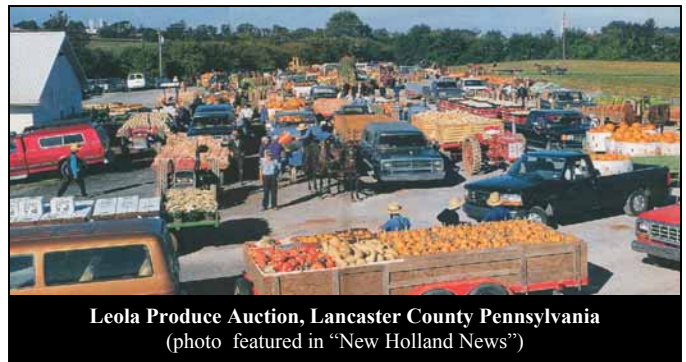
## Our Food, Our Community

### Elmira Produce Auction

Finding local fruit and vegetables in Waterloo Region is about to get a whole lot easier! The Elmira Produce Auction Coop. will be operating twice-weekly live auctions where restaurants, food distributors, farm stands and retail operations can buy wholesale lots of top-quality produce.

Lot sizes will range from ½ and full bushel boxes to “pallets” and field bins. Quantities like this won't necessarily attract the average consumer as buyers, however the existence of a consistent volume market for seasonal produce should make locally grown product a more popular choice with local restaurants and chefs, and could ultimately appear along produce aisles at local food retailers. With its potential to make locally grown fruit and vegetables much more accessible to the average consumer, Foodlink considers this new initiative one of the most positive boosts to the “*food localism campaign*”.

Patterned after successful produce auctions in the United States, the Elmira Produce Auction will be a tremendous support to local farmers, providing a new outlet for their farm fresh product. Facilitating the shift into higher value crops, the Elmira Produce Auction is expected to play a key role in stimulating the local, rural economy.



Leola Produce Auction, Lancaster County Pennsylvania  
(photo featured in “New Holland News”)

### First Auction, 2004

Tuesday July 20<sup>th</sup>, 10:00 am

Waterloo Farmers' Market (*temporary location*)  
845 Weber St. North, Waterloo ON

For more information and a brochure contact:

**Elmira Produce Auction Cooperative Inc.**

**Nelson Wideman, Auction Manager**

**(519) 669-9358**

## Local Tastes!

Check out Michelle Herrle's recipe  
for strawberry and spinach salad.

-last page, this issue-

# Foodlink Local Harvest

JUNE 2004



## “Berried Treasure”

“Doubtless God could have made a better berry,  
but doubtless God never did”

William Butler (1535-1618)  
Oxford Dictionary of Quotes

As June arrives in our seasonal calendar, Canadians from east to west wait in eager anticipation for word that strawberries are ready to be picked. The unique taste of this berry is only a memory for 11 months of the year, but with the advent of summer, you can practically hear the stampede of eager feet to the pick-your-own strawberry fields or to the market where a “locally grown” sign proclaims this year’s harvest. The perennial favourite has returned!

The delicate heart-shaped berry has connoted purity, passion, and healing for hundreds of years. Indeed, medieval stonemasons carved strawberry designs on altars and pillars in churches to symbolize perfection. Strawberries have grown wild for thousands of years in temperate regions of the Earth – they are indigenous to every major continent except Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. Although small, wild berries were cultivated in ancient Rome, it wasn’t until the 18<sup>th</sup> Century that strawberries developed into the luscious fruits we know today. In 1714, a French engineer sent to Chile and Peru to monitor Spanish activities in these countries was introduced to a native strawberry much larger than those found in Europe. He brought samples back to France. These plants did not flourish well until a natural crossbreeding occurred between this species and a neighbouring North American variety. The result was a large, sweet, juicy fruit that won over the hearts and taste buds of Europeans. Like other perishable foods of the time, strawberries remained a luxury item until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century when railways were able to transport them more quickly to markets.

Because the berries seem to be *strewn* among the leaves of the plant, the original name of this fruit was *strewberry*. Later, the name may have changed to *strawberry* since farmers would keep the berries fresh by transporting them to market on beds of straw.

## Strawberry Varieties

While there are more than 600 varieties of strawberries, they can all be identified by their red flesh pierced with yellow “seeds” on the outside, and a small, perky, green cap that adorns the crown.

Locally, producers can choose from more than 30 common varieties, matching their specific climate and soil conditions along with preferences for harvest yield, berry size, colour, sweetness and resistance to common pests and diseases. Many of the varieties such as Annapolis, Mira and Cavendish were developed in Nova Scotia, while others including the Veestar and the Governor Simcoe were developed right here in Ontario.



Annapolis



Cavendish



Governor Simcoe



Mira

## NUTRITION FACTS

Serving Size 1 cup (approx. 8)

### Amount per Serving

48	calories
1g	protein
0.6 g	fat
11g	carbohydrates
	3.8g fibre
0.6 mg	iron
2 mg	sodium
22 mg	calcium
30 mg	phosphate
421 UI	vitamin A
90 mg	vitamin C
200 mg	potassium
0.2 mg	zinc
92 mcg	vitamin B6
28 mcg	folacin

## Heart Smart!

Not only are strawberries the world’s most popular berry, they are also nutritional jewels. Studies presented at the 2003 American Dietetic Association Food and Nutrition Conference and Exhibition revealed that in addition to being low in fat and calories, strawberries are high in fiber, potassium, vitamin C, folate, and antioxidants. They not only resemble the shape of a heart, strawberries are packed with nutrients that promote a healthy heart!

## Horticultural Facts

The strawberry is a small plant of the *Rosaceae* (Rose) family and all varieties belong to the *Fragaria* genus. Despite its name, it is not a real berry or fruit in the botanical sense, but instead the enlarged end of the plant’s stamen. The strawberry is actually an aggregate fruit – the real fruit are the tiny yellow “seeds” clinging to the outer skin. The plants do not tend to reproduce through their seeds, but rather through long runners that root themselves into the soil and produce new plants, which grow and bear fruit.

## Selecting Strawberries

Berries are best picked in early morning or evening when the temperature is cooler. Choose plump, firm, deep red berries with bright green caps and no signs of mold. Strawberries without caps should be avoided as they may be overripe and not good quality.



## Storing and Preserving Strawberries

Fresh strawberries are highly perishable and delicate. If not using immediately, remove the berries from their containers, arrange in a single layer in a shallow pan, loosely cover, and refrigerate. Use fresh berries within one to two days for best quality. Wash strawberries gently in cold water just before you are ready to use them as the washing action removes their natural protective outer layer.

Leave caps on during washing to prevent water from soaking into the strawberry, diluting the flavour and changing the texture. Let the sand and soil sink to the bottom and then lift the strawberries out with your fingers. Let the berries air dry, or gently pat with a towel.

To freeze berries, simply lay them in a single layer on a tray and place in the freezer. Once frozen, quickly transfer them to freezer bags and place back into the freezer. It is *not* necessary to add any sugar!

# Foodlink Local Harvest

JUNE 2004



## Buying local strawberries direct from the farm

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

It's often a good idea to call ahead for picking times and availability.

## 2004 Buy Local! Buy Fresh! MAP

### Joel Bauman

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

### Brubacher's Produce

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

### Dettweiler Family Farm

5015 Fountain St. N., Breslau  
Tel. 648-3989 Map Listing # 21



### The Farmarket

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

### Herrle's Country Farm Market

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



### Rolling Acres Pick Your Own

1235 Martin Creek Rd., Waterloo  
Tel. 664-1337 Map Listing # 61



### Stoll Farms Ltd.

2118 New Dundee Rd., Kitchener  
Tel. 696-3411 Map Listing # 71



## Did you know?



The average strawberry has 200 "seeds"



One serving of strawberries has more vitamin C than an orange

## Local Tastes

### Spinach and Strawberry Salad

*"This salad is perfect for our family gatherings."*

*I hope you enjoy it as much as our family does"*

- Michelle Herrle

#### Salad Ingredients: (4 servings)

8 cups fresh spinach  
2 cups sliced strawberries  
1 cup toasted almond slivers  
1 cup shredded mozzarella

#### Sweet Poppy Dressing

$\frac{2}{3}$  cup olive oil  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup sugar  
 $\frac{1}{3}$  cup lemon juice  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp salt  
1 tbsp poppy seeds  
2 tps finely chopped onion  
1 tsp Dijon mustard

#### Directions

**Sweet Poppy Dressing:** In small container, combine ingredients and stir well. Dressing can be prepared ahead and refrigerated.

**Salad:** Toast almonds till golden brown. Combine spinach, mozzarella cheese, strawberries and dressing in bowl and toss. Add almond slivers, serve and enjoy!

## Strawberry Production in Ontario and Waterloo Region

The strawberry is considered to be one of the most important small fruits grown in the Western Hemisphere. Today, every province in Canada grows the strawberry plant, both wild and cultivated.

- In 2003, Ontario strawberry farms covered about 3,600 acres. Fresh sales resulted in 16 million pounds of strawberries with a farm value of \$17,500,000. A further 100 acres were cultivated for processed sales, with farm revenues of \$425,000.
- In Waterloo Region, statistics for 2002 show that 85 acres of strawberry fields were under cultivation, providing an average yield of 3,900 pounds per acre. At about \$1/lb, this netted area farmers approximately \$334,000 (OMAF).