



Local Harvest

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Features

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Local Farm Profile: Winroe Gardens

Ever wonder what you might find at Winroe Gardens? A better question would be what won't you find! This delightful one-stop retail shop located on Katherine Street just north of the hamlet of Winterbourne is owned by Jesse and Verna Gingrich and run with the assistance of their entire extended family. Winroe carries an array of in-season produce, most of which is grown on their farm just up the road, in addition to home-baked goods, meats and cheeses, preserves and a colourful assortment of seasonal planters and hanging baskets displayed outside the store.

It is not surprising that Winroe Gardens is so diversified. Jesse Gingrich is a man of extraordinary energy who is constantly seeking out new challenges and reinventing himself. He grew up on his parent's dairy farm but admits that he became 'bored with the cows' and began looking for something new to capture his imagination. He took a hiatus from farming and focussed on metal fabricating for a few years in the late '90s—a skill that continues to serve him well in his numerous building projects. After renting out his farm until 2003, Jesse finally decided to try his hand at produce farming in earnest. But even within this sphere he continues to explore new opportunities and push the edge of the envelope. For example, Jesse's latest venture has been growing greenhouse radishes!

Why radishes? "Why not?" says Jesse. "They are fast growing, easy to keep clean in the greenhouse and nobody else seems to be offering them as early as I do." The first harvest of beautiful red bulbs was available in back in March, when little other fresh local produce could be found. As a result, a number of local food retail shops began to source directly from Jesse. And of course, the ruby gems have been available at Winroe Gardens since the late winter!



Winroe Gardens retail shop opened in 2007.



Greenhouse radishes ready for harvest.

Jesse had an affinity for produce from an early age. "My mother always maintained a produce garden and as a youth I would ride my bike into Winterbourne to sell sweet corn," recounts Jesse. So perhaps it was destined that Winroe Gardens would eventually become a produce farm in 2004, the same year that Elmira Produce Auction Cooperative (EPAC) was launched. EPAC is Canada's first



Local Farm Profile continued



Winroe Gardens is a one-stop shop for fresh local produce, home-baked goods, deli items, Kountry Kitchen Cupboard preserves and much more!

wholesale produce auction run by Old Order Mennonites—visit www.epac.foodlink.ca for more info.

Jesse has witnessed a growing demand for fresh local fruits and vegetables but feels that it hasn't always been easy for folks to access the produce. This is something that he hopes to change. Winroe began growing and selling watermelon and cauliflower wholesale to EPAC and continued to diversify and augment their produce offerings. They also built six greenhouses over the past five years, one of which has recently been devoted exclusively to radishes. Today Winroe grows an ever-expanding array of produce including cauliflower, peppers, tomatoes, zucchini, onions, cucumbers, Brussels sprouts, cantaloupe, watermelon, sweet corn, turnips, beets, onions, garlic and much more.

Jesse has also recently partnered with a few other local growers to form a new wholesale produce coop. While he acknowledges that EPAC is a wonderful resource to have in the community, he points out that it is not always realistic or convenient for everyone to source from there exclusively because of time constraints. His new wholesale coop, operating out of Winroe's on site state-of-the-art storage facilities, is able

to compliment the auction and fill this niche.

While Jesse may be the impetus behind Winroe Gardens, he is by no means a one-man show. His entire extended family is involved, the older generation represented by Jesse's mother and the younger by Jesse and Verna's nine children. Jesse's daughter, with the help of the neighbour girls, runs the in-store bakery which features delicious fresh bread, pies, muffins and cookies all baked from scratch! In addition, Jesse's sister Nancy sells her line of homemade Kountry Kitchen Cupboard jams, jellies, relishes and preserves. Recently, Winroe even added a meat counter to their shop, with beef and pork products being sourced from Jesse's brother Emanuel Gingrich in Ariss.

Winroe Gardens has come a long way since the early days when produce was sold out of a self-serve tent at end of the laneway. This farm market retail shop has become a treasure trove of local food delights. Like the fast growing radishes they grow, Winroe has quickly flourished and become a colourful jewel in the community.

Winroe Gardens is located at 221 Katherine St. North, Winterbourne 519-664-0556. The store is open year-round Monday to Friday, 9:00 am-6:00 pm, Saturday 8:00 am-5:00 pm; closed Sunday. ♦



Finding Local Radishes in Waterloo Region

Many local farm markets in Waterloo Region sell radishes in the spring and early summer. Why not consult Foodlink's new *Buy Local! Buy Fresh!* Map for a listing of farms close by that grow and sell radishes? Please call for hours and availability.



Diversity Gardens
1528 Notre Dame Dr, St. Agatha
519-885-9584
www.cogwaterloo.ca



Pfenning's Organic Vegetables
1209 Waterloo St., Baden
519-662-3468
www.pfenningsfarms.ca



Brian & Ann Martin
1261 Lobsinger Line., Waterloo
519-664-1358



Fertile Ground Market Garden
1560 Carmel-Koch Rd., St. Agatha
519-569-8690
www.fertilegroundcsa.com



Martin's Family Fruit Farm
1420 Lobsinger Line, Waterloo
519-664-2750
www.martinsapples.com



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



Herrle's Country Farm Market
1243 Erb's Road West, St. Agatha
519-886-7576
www.herrles.com



Ravishing Radishes

Crisp, crunchy, tangy, zippy, zesty, snappy, peppery, pungent, piquant and sparkly are just some of the adjectives that describe the radish, an edible root vegetable of the brassica family (which also includes mustard, horseradish, broccoli and cabbage, to name a few). But when it comes to a visual picture, round and red are the usual descriptors. However, if you look at the abundance of radishes grown around the world, it soon becomes apparent that this narrow picture is far from adequate.

Wild radish plants can be found across western Asia and Europe, suggesting that domestication of a tap root precursor took place in this geographical area. We do know that radishes were enjoyed in ancient Egypt and Greece and likely began to be cultivated in Western Europe sometime in the sixteenth century. The radish was valued for medici-

nal attributes such as stimulation of the appetite, prevention of indigestion and constipation, and the treatment of melancholy and liver complaints. During the middle ages, it was also consumed to treat rheumatism and insanity.

Modern radishes are quite different than those grown in Greek and Roman times. Then, the root was grown for winter storage and could easily tip the scales at 50 to 100 pounds. They were often eaten raw or cooked, seasoned with honey and vinegar. Cultivation of wild radish species led to the development of spring and winter varieties that, today, come in a range of shapes, colours, and sizes.

Radish Varieties

Most familiar to Canadians are the radishes that are planted in the cool, spring weather and make their appearance in June and July. Sometimes referred to as European radishes, these spring radishes are generally small, round or oblong, with skin of varying shades of red, pink, white, grey or yellow. Another variety of spring radish is the White Icicle, which resembles a long, white carrot but with the pungent flavour of red radish. These radishes are most often sliced into salads or cut into flowers as part of a relish tray. In France, a meal might begin with an aperitif accompanied by radishes served with butter, sea salt and crusty bread. Radishes also pair well with chives, lemon, oranges, parsley, salt, vinegar. For a more unusual side dish, radishes can be

steamed, sautéed, or roasted in a little olive oil and salt. Radishes are more than just a root. Other edible parts include thinned out seedlings (sprouts), which can be added to salads, and the more mature leaves that can be cooked like spinach or chard.

Winter varieties include Black Radish and Daikon. The Black Radish was a common variety in nineteenth century England and France and was valued for its peppery white flesh encased in a rough black skin. It is generally round or pear shaped and grows to about 10cm in diameter. In contrast, Daikon refers to a variety of winter radishes originating in East Asia but now grown in Ontario that include Daiko (Japan), Lo Bok (China) and Green Radish (Korea). Asian varieties typically have very long, white roots. Daikon radish has more heat than its smaller cousins and is most often grated or sliced and added to stir fries and stews, or pickled and preserved.

Many Usages

If you grow radishes in your own garden, you will likely have noticed how quickly they tend to bolt with the advent of warmer weather. This is an excellent opportunity to expand your culinary repertoire so don't pull out the plants yet! Once the little pinkish white flowers have been replaced by tender, young, seed pods, pick them for a crispy and piquant addition to salads and stir-fries (cook them like snow peas). Some varieties of radish are grown specifically for their seeds or pods rather than their roots. The tree radish (or rat-tailed radish) is an old European variety that has long, thin, curly pods of about 20cm in length. These pods can be pickled and served with meat, cheese, and other vegetables. The München Bier variety, grown for its spicy seeds in a light green pod, is sometimes served as a snack in German taverns.

The peppery taste of all radishes has long been used to stimulate the production of saliva and pique the appetite. As with any

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Brassica vegetable, mustard oils are responsible for the tangy flavour. As radishes age, the tang gets stronger so for the mildest flavour, choose small, young radishes. To store, remove any leaves, and place roots and leaves in separate plastic bags in the refrigerator for up to a week. To enhance their crispness, spring radishes can be soaked in ice water for an hour.

Nutritional Powerhouses

No matter the kind, radishes are a very good source of the antioxidant, vitamin C, and a good source of sulphur, potassium and folate. Radishes, like other members of the cruciferous family (cabbage, kale, broccoli, Brussels sprouts), contain cancer-protective properties in the form of glucosinolates. Furthermore, the bright, red skin indicates the presence of anthocyanins, another potent antioxidant. A half cup serving (58g) of spring or winter radishes provides about 9 calories, 0.1g fat, 2g carbohydrate, 1g dietary fibre and 0.4g protein.

Ontario radish production in 2007 yielded 1700 tonnes (4 million pounds) from 134 hectares (330 acres) for a farm value of 1.6 million dollars. This little vegetable has got bite! ♦

Did You Know?

The scientific name for radish, *Raphanus sativus*, has its origins in the Greek word for “quickly appearing” (*raphanus*), which refers to the rapid germination and maturation of the small, red varieties. The Latin word for root is “radix” and likely contributed to this vegetable’s common name.

For a fun look at how radishes grow check out:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d26AhcKeEbE>



Radishes are all about colour, crunch and zip. Here are a couple of simple recipes that showcase all of these characteristics and only takes minutes to make:

Radish Slaw in Lettuce Cups

Ingredients:

- 2 tbsp rice or cider vinegar
- 1½ tsp granulated sugar
- 1 tsp vegetable oil
- ½ tsp sesame oil
- ¼ tsp each dry mustard and salt
- 1 bunch radishes
- 2 green onions, sliced
- 4 lettuce cups



Method:

In bowl, whisk together vinegar, sugar, vegetable oil, sesame oil, mustard and salt.

In food processor or by hand, coarsely grate radishes; add to bowl along with onions. Toss to coat. Using slotted spoon, spoon into lettuce cups.

Adapted from Canadian Living Magazine: June 2006

Here’s a unique, delicious appetizer that pairs radishes with a tangy, nut-rich dip for dunking:

Rainbow of Radishes with Cheese and Pecan Dip

Ingredients:

- ½ cup mayonnaise
- ⅓ cup sour cream
- 1 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
- 1 garlic clove, finely chopped
- ¼ tsp. salt
- freshly ground black pepper to taste
- 3 ounces blue cheese, crumbled
- ¼ cup pecan pieces
- 1 tbsp. chopped fresh parsley
- 24 mixed, coloured radishes, washed and trimmed

Method:

Place the first 7 ingredients in a mixing bowl and whisk to combine. Stir in the cheese, pecans and parsley. Transfer the dip to a decorative serving bowl and set on a platter. Surround with the radishes. Cover and store in the fridge until ready to serve; can be prepared a few hours in advance. Makes: 6 appetizer servings.