

## Waste Not, Want Not

The day in May I came for my interview at YRFN was freezing. I had put away my down jacket thinking spring was here, but had to bring it back into service that day. We sat and shivered and talked about food and food production and how to get food to the people and many other angles, all about food. And that is what my job of Community Food Hub Coordinator is all about, the many aspects of food. It is clear there is plenty of it in Canada, but it is also clear that there are a growing number of people unable to buy it.

I was raised in the sixties in Scotland where the post-WW2 austerity lasted a very long time, and genuine shortages were well within the collective memory. Food was never to be wasted, we must be thankful to have it and always say thank you to whoever provided it. This is pretty much the way I still regard food, both a human right and something we are lucky to have.

We received a 1/3 pint bottle of milk per day when at school – the tail end of rationing - to help the growth of our teeth and bones. It is well known that the health of the British public was seldom better than during the period of rationing because all of the food was shared out equally, even the royals had ration cards!

At YRFN I coordinate three programs, Drop-In Breakfast, Community Kitchen and Reclamation that are based on getting food to people without

them needing to pay for it. Today's shortages are based on inability to pay, not the absence of food. Why can't people afford food? Because so many jobs are minimum wage and that wage is so low that it is not enough to cover basic needs.

One of the great advantages of having been raised in a time of need (probably the only one) is being able to make small amounts go a long way. This sounds a little trite, but has served me well for forty years. Presently I am using this ability in our Community Kitchen Program which is known as "Common Stock". The name is based on the story of Stone Soup where lots of individuals contribute a small amount to the communal pot with the end result being hearty soup for all. We don't just make soup, we do whole meals. When we do this, there is a kind of multiplier effect and cooking as a task is replaced by a social cooking experience and the resulting meal is much more than the sum of its parts.



*David helping harvest crops at upStream*

The tagline on our flyer is "Seasonal Foods – Perennial Topics". Food is often the first thing to cut back on when times are hard. People buy cheaper, lower quality foodstuffs which have empty calories and little nutrition, resulting in weaker bodies, minds and ability to cope. Finding ways to provide healthy food to all at a low cost provides many benefits. Cooking is a basic skill which should be taught to everyone from a very early age. It is fundamental to home economics and indeed, life economics.

**David Lightwood, Food Hub Coordinator**

## Bring food home

Sustain Ontario, the alliance for healthy food and farming held its biennial conference Bring Food Home from November 17 to 19 in Windsor-Essex County. Integrating practice, projects and policy, this conference brought together many leaders in Canada's food system to share ideas and innovations, while also aligning our efforts in the vision of a healthy, sustainable and just food system.

This conference came in the wake of Bill 36, Local Food Act 2013 passed by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on November 4, 2013. A first of its kind in Canada, this Bill passed unanimously, demonstrating the role food can play in bringing together different groups of people with differing opinions, to share a common vision of food's impact in developing a healthy economy and vibrant community. This is an inspirational Bill, respecting producers' donations to community food programs such as student snack programs through a tax credit, emphasizing the need for food literacy among all Ontarians, and outlining specific local food targets in public institutions.

The vision of food at the provincial level can also be seen at our Regional level, with the enthusiasm and support for the York Region Food Charter. Endorsed by the City of Markham and York Region Agricultural Advisory Liaison Committee, we will continue to put food on the agenda as we seek endorsement by all of York Region's municipalities for the Food Charter.

*Kate Greavette, Food Charter Coordinator*

### Have you heard?

Aquaponics is an innovative and modern approach that brings together the techniques of aquaculture and hydroponics to raise fish and cultivate fresh produce in a highly productive and environmentally sustainable system. A project of York Region Food Network, upStream aquaponics contributes towards food security, while offering job skills development and food security education for residents in York Region. Specifically, we will be training in green technologies, composting, waste management and safe food handling. All of these components will also be used for community engagement and teaching about food security and urban agriculture to our community at large.

Stay tuned!

*Tricia Richens,  
Program Coordinator*

### It has been an exciting time at upStream!

We've gone from construction to harvest and sales in less than 6 months!

#### **Construction May 2013**



#### **Our first crop - September 2013**



#### **Our first harvest - October 2013**



### Thank you to our funders



*Finding answers. For life.*



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*Imagine*  
a garden in every school

The mission of the Imagine a Garden in Every School Campaign is to link a groundswell of groups across Ontario working to connect children and youth to healthy living and the natural environment.

The goal is to foster strong links between garden initiatives so that we can celebrate together, share common challenges, share resources and support one another. *There is so much exciting work going on in Ontario's school gardens – let's learn from each other and come together to advance our cause!!!*

Please visit their website at <http://agardenineveryschool.ca> to sign up your garden project. You can also visit us on Facebook "Imagine a Garden In Every School" or follow us on Twitter @GardInSchools.

## Discovering the bounty in our own backyards

When I was growing up, I barely noticed my parents' beautiful sour cherry tree in their backyard. The tree has always gotten more attention from squirrels and birds, who hungrily feast on the abundant crop of cherries it produces. In the past, my parents have mostly grumbled about the tree as a nuisance, racing to pick up the ground fall before their dog discovered the rotting fruit.

This summer, I decided to do something different. To my parents' relief one sunny summer morning, I decided I'd harvest as many of the cherries as I could. Picking for hours became a meditative experience that I thoroughly enjoyed. At home, I turned the bounty into preserves and gave many of the cherries away to grateful friends.

I was thinking about the fruit that might be wasted in York Region

backyards when Liz from the local food pantry called me: "A lady just dropped off plums from her tree," she said. "There's way more than we can possibly use. Do you think you can take some?" I immediately said yes and the homeowner brought down a Rubbermaid tub full of perfect, fragrant Italian plums. A couple of hours later, a local man came in with three bushels of freshly picked Russet pears. "Liz told me you can make use of my fruit," he explained. David and I set to work turning this beautiful fruit into jam and sauce to be used in the breakfast drop-in and community kitchen programs. I knew immediately that we had to figure out a way to make use of the available fruit in the community.



To capture the bounty, York Region Food Network is starting a neighbourhood gleaning program.

Similar to Not Far From The Tree in Toronto, our program will invite homeowners to register their fruit and nut trees in our database. When the tree is almost ready to pick, registered homeowners can call us and we will mobilize our volunteers to pick the

fruit. We then give a third of the fruit to the homeowner, a third to community food programs and a third is split between the volunteer fruit pickers. The homeowner doesn't need to lift a finger and the extra fruit is put to good use.

YRFN will officially launch this program in the 2014 growing season. If you would like to register your tree, please email Bronwen at [bronwenf@yrfn.ca](mailto:bronwenf@yrfn.ca) for more details.

### Name the gleaning program!

Our new neighbourhood gleaning program needs a name! Send an email with your name suggestion and "Name the Gleaning Program" in the subject line to [bronwenf@yrfn.ca](mailto:bronwenf@yrfn.ca) You could win some great preserves made at YRFN!

**Bronwen Fitzsimons,**  
Urban Agriculture Coordinator

## Food for Thought

We are very grateful for the support we receive from the York Region community for our work. Each year presents new challenges and opportunities as we pursue our vision of **Food for Health – Food for All**. As the holiday season approaches, and people's thoughts turn to helping those less fortunate, I encourage you to think about supporting our efforts to support sustainable change: to move people out of poverty and to help build a healthy food system.

Wayne Roberts, a respected food policy analyst says "Ask not what the city can do for food, but what food can do for the city" Food is a lever to help achieve many important aims and

can help lead the way to a vibrant, healthy, ecological and equitable community. The unanimous passing of the Local Food Act by the Province of Ontario this fall speaks to the growing recognition that healthy local food is an important part of our economy.

We can all contribute to this movement by enjoying healthy local food this winter and beyond. Please join us for a fun filled evening at our second annual WinterFresh Trivia Challenge event at Madsen's Greenhouse on January 30, 2014.

*Joan Stonehocker, Executive Director*



### 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual WinterFresh – Trivia Challenge

*with Trivia Master Fil Martino*

Thursday, January 30, 2014 - 6:30 pm  
Madsen's Greenhouse  
160 Bayview Parkway, Newmarket

*What is WinterFresh? It's an evening of dinner, trivia, team building, fun and laughter. There will be prizes, a fantastic dinner and silent auction. Tickets are \$40*

*Watch for more details on our website at [www.yrfn.ca](http://www.yrfn.ca)*

### Join York Region Food Network's Fundraising Campaign

*I support YRFN's work to improve access to affordable, nutritious food for all people of York Region.*

I have enclosed my donation of:     \$20             \$50             \$100             Other

*Please make cheques payable to York Region Food Network.*

YRFN will issue a charitable tax receipt for all donations over \$20. Registration 87044 7315 RR0001

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**To donate by credit card, visit our website at [www.yrfn.ca](http://www.yrfn.ca) and click on the link to CanadaHelps.org, a secure website where you can make a tax deductible credit card donation to YRFN.**

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