

Food for thought

Earlier this year the Globe and Mail reported on Brazil's proposed new dietary guidelines. The key points are summarized as follows*:

1. Prepare meals using fresh and staple foods.
2. Use oils, fats, sugar and salt in moderation.
3. Limit consumption of ready-to-eat food and drink products.
4. Eat at regular mealtimes and pay attention to your food instead of multitasking. Find a comfortable place to eat. Avoid all-you-can-eat buffets and noisy, stressful environments.
5. Eat with others whenever possible.
6. Buy food in shops and markets that offer a variety of fresh foods. Avoid those that sell mainly ready-to-eat products.
7. Develop, practise, share and enjoy your skills in food preparation and cooking.
8. Decide as a family to share cooking responsibilities and dedicate enough time for healthy meals.
9. When you eat out, choose restaurants that serve freshly made dishes. Avoid fast-food chains.
10. Be critical of food-industry advertising.

This is so refreshingly simple. We don't need to constantly count servings of several different food groups or have complicated charts with examples of serving sizes and suitable choices. Cook from scratch, limit pre-made and processed foods, focus on fresh and local, and take time to share, prepare and enjoy meals. This will help keep you healthy and help build a healthy food system.

Advertising has been telling us for years that preparing food is too complicated and time consuming. Therefore we should let the food industry do the prep work for us. Unfortunately, processed foods are produced for profit rather than health, and contain many ingredients that we would never think of putting into our food or our bodies.



Being mindful of healthy eating not only provides benefits to us individually, it also has spill-over effects in other areas: food waste (the most costly waste stream municipalities deal with) is reduced, projects like community gardens build community by bringing people together to grow healthy food and get some outdoor exercise, agricultural land can grow food rather than the raw materials for processed sugars and fats, and it supports our local economy.

Joan Stonehocker, Executive Director

**Guia Alimentar Para a Populacao Brasileira (2014)*

Get Your Ducks in a Row!

What makes you buy what you buy? Have you ever thought about your decision making process when you are shopping? If so, what are the elements that are the most important to you? Here is a short list of some possibilities:

- price
- freshness
- in season
- local
- quality
- “foreign” (to me)
- familiar/new
- to support a cause
- health/diet reasons
- ethical reasons (boycott v. favoured buying)

Did you know? The agriculture and food industry is Ontario’s number one employer and a major driver of the economy, generating more than \$40 billion annually.

When you start to think about it, there is a lot more to food than “just food.” The dollars that you spend can be directed in various ways and you can choose what they are. This is the origin of *ethical purchasing*, sending your dollars to the destination of your choice. Ethical consumerism is a growing trend, long established in Europe. More and more people are voting with their dollars, partly because there is a feel good factor, but also because they can see the results. One example is not to buy crated veal because of the perceived cruelty to the

calves. Another is to avoid chicken and eggs from factory farms. The alternatives are free range, grass fed, and organic.

An easy way for us to use our purchasing power is to buy local. The effects are obvious. Local jobs are maintained, keeping you or your neighbour in work. People who work locally spend locally. When dollars are sent out of the region, so are jobs!

Buying locally produced food makes a lot of sense for the above reasons, but also because it takes a lot less fuel and other resources to get it to your kitchen. It is the heavy consumption of fossil fuels that has led to the accelerated warming of the world and the wild weather swings that are becoming more common now. It seems like a giant leap to make the connection, but if we choose to buy local, we are contributing less to atmospheric pollution and, therefore, to climate change.

York Region Food Network is working in a variety of ways to provide quality, locally grown, healthy food to people of limited means. This includes community gardens, community kitchens and, most recently, the establishment of upStream Aquaponics in Newmarket, where salad crops can be grown all year.

David Lightwood, Community Food Hub Coordinator



Our Mission: upStream is a unique social enterprise that promotes innovative methods for food growing. We cultivate community by providing opportunities for engagement, education and inspiration. upStream improves the world around us... one bit, one bite, one belief at a time.

Things are growing here! We have fifty new Blue Nile Tilapia fry. We continue to experiment with various lettuce types and we hosted a successful open house in March. Our vermicomposting corner is assisting us with our zero-waste strategy and the tilapias are looking forward to a new diet: worms and duckweed. Thus, our system’s loop will be closed.

If you are interested in learning more, please come and visit us on Wednesday June 4th for our Spring Training, Teaching and Tour event. Doors are open 3pm to 7pm. We will be conducting teaching tours as well as mini-training modules for people interested in becoming a volunteer.

Follow us!

Facebook: upStream Aquaponics

Twitter: @upstreamAP

Website: www.upstreamaquaponics.com

York Region Food Charter: deepening our roots in urban agriculture

Urban agriculture is making headlines around the world – rooftop farms in Montreal, underground food growing in London, hydroponics in Australia. Food growing – in both policy and practice- is also emerging rapidly in towns and cities across York Region.

The York Region Food Charter is embracing this interest in food growing. We are about to launch a community food assessment, focused on urban agriculture. The purpose of this work is to continue to

build partnerships within the community, deepen our roots and to learn more about what is happening in urban agriculture (e.g. community gardens, household composting) in York Region.



We're looking for interested residents and groups to join this project. We have many types of volunteer opportunities available, including joining the project advisory team, conducting primary and secondary research on urban agriculture, or volunteering to lead a focus group or workshop. For more information about this project, and to get involved, contact us at foodcharter@yrfn.ca

Kate Greavette,
Food Charter Coordinator

New Program! The Ripe Idea

The Ripe Idea, York Region Food Network's new community gleaning program, is up and running! We are looking for fruit trees to pick and volunteers to pick them.

Fruit on backyard trees across York Region is going to waste, often because the trees produce so abundantly that the homeowner can't use it all. The Ripe Idea hopes to change this by connecting volunteer pickers with trees that need picking. Picking usually lasts 1-2 hours. Volunteers show up at the address and learn about proper picking technique before beginning; the homeowner is welcome to participate as well. We divide the picked fruit into thirds: a third for the homeowner, a third for the volunteers and a third for community food programs across the Region. We always try to leave the yard better than we found it, so we'll tidy up some of the fallen fruit, too!

We are beginning to pick in Newmarket, Aurora and Markham. If you are interested in participating, either as a picker or a homeowner, please contact Bronwen at bronwenf@yrfn.ca



Thank you to our funders!



Are you interested in getting more involved with food growing in your community?

Deepening Our Roots, a panel discussion on community gardens and food growing in York Region is being held on Friday, June 13th from 10am to 2pm at the Markham Museum. Bringing together gardeners, policymakers, organizations, interested residents and students, this event is a day of conversation – sharing best practices, policies and programs in urban food growing throughout York Region.

To register for this event, contact Seeds For Change at lynne@seedsforchangegardens.org

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

“Have Food Banks Reached their Best Before Date?”

A Panel Discussion

Thursday, June 19th, 2014

- 6:30 Networking and light refreshments
- 7:00 Panel and Discussion
- 8:00 AGM
- 8:30 Wrap-up

350 Industrial Parkway S., Aurora, ON L4G 3V7

Please RSVP to kima@yrfn.ca by June 12th to confirm your attendance

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: \$50 \$100 \$250 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 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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350 Industrial Parkway S., Aurora, ON L4G 3V7

Phone: 905-841-3101 • Toll-free: 1-866-454-YRFN (9736) • Fax: 905-841-3789

4moreinfo@yrfn.ca • www.yrfn.ca • Facebook: York Region Food Network • Twitter: @YRFoodNetwork