

Food for Thought

York Region Food Network has joined the broad alliance of community partners convened by United Way Greater Toronto to advocate for a province that is fair, equitable and inclusive for everyone - an Ontario for All. We need to address the debilitating problems that arise when people are living in poverty. Our organization was started by the food banks in York Region in the late 1980s to raise awareness of hunger and poverty in our seemingly prosperous area. Although awareness is increasing, the problem of food insecurity continues. Modern-day food banks were created as a temporary solution for people struggling to purchase enough to eat. Now, the PROOF research project (proof.utoronto.ca) has shown that only 20 – 25% of people who are food insecure access food banks.

After more than 35 years of operating, food banks are more prevalent than ever and the need continues to grow. At our agency, we get calls regularly from people looking for help to get food. The vast geography of York Region can make getting to the food bank a challenge. We try to have grocery cards available to give to people that come to us seeking food but we are not always able to do so, and there is still the challenge of getting to our location. For example, I had a call from another agency that was working with a client who had no food and was very distressed as it was the Friday before a long weekend, their cupboards were bare, and there was no simple solution.

We need to be able to address these immediate needs effectively, but we cannot do so without addressing the systemic issues that keep people in poverty. The provincial government Basic Income Pilot is an encouraging attempt to address poverty. Early reports from participants talk about the dramatic positive impacts on their health and well-being of having more money available.

The research around the social determinants of health is clear about the devastating effects of poverty and the by-products of poverty, like food insecurity and social isolation. Community food programs create connections for people which have positive effects on health. We see the benefits of people coming together to grow, share and cook healthy food but these programs are not able to address the causes of food insecurity. We need to change the mindset that food programs or charity will solve the problem. The cost of poverty is greater than the cost of eliminating poverty. Upcoming elections provide us the chance to ensure that our elected representatives know that we want to live in an Ontario that is fair, equitable and inclusive.

Joan Stonehocker
Executive Director



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Meet our new Garden-to-Table Coordinator

Please join us in welcoming Chantal McCallum to York Region Food Network. Chantal is a passionate and enthusiastic gardener who started gardening with her parents as a young child. Her love for growing and preparing nutritious food has been a big part of her life and inspired her to coordinate a Student Nutrition Program and lead York Region's You're The Chef program at Maple Leaf Public School. She is thrilled to be part of YRFN's team and working to support accessibility to nutritious and sustainable food.



All harvests begin with seeds

The peas in YRFN's new logo can be seen as SNAP peas, our acronym for Skills, Nutrition, Access, Programs. An illustration of all of these comes from the humble lentil in our life skill program MAKE A LITTLE GO A LONG, LONG WAY!, where we present simple, basic, foundational recipes that can be used as a springboard to more elaborate meals.

The program has been presented to a variety of groups, but presently is scoring success with clients from Rose of Sharon in Newmarket.

It was very gratifying to present this program recently when one student in particular really "got it!" She understood how important nutritious food is for everyone, especially a rapidly growing child. Until that day, she had been buying soup from a coffee shop at a price of several dollars per visit. After making the recipe, she soon realized that she *can* cook, she *can* feed her child, she *can* afford this, at a price of next-to-nothing. In fact, she will save a substantial sum by cooking for herself, with the added benefit of eating in a more healthful way.



We have been informed that this same client now often brings in soup that she has made at home to share with others. She is sharing the life skill she learned.

It is hearing stories such as hers that makes working at YRFN as satisfying as eating a tasty, healthy, nutritious, economical meal in the company of friends and family.

**David Lightwood,
Good Food Hub Coordinator**

Eat for the Season

The weather has finally warmed up and growing season in Ontario has officially begun! One of the first crops to peek up its head after a long winter is Rhubarb. This fruit (or is it a vegetable???) has a tart and tangy flavor similar to a green apple crossed with celery. Rhubarb is widely used in sweet preparations such as jams, cakes, pies, and compotes but in this month's recipe, the star of the season, will be used to create a sweet and tart salsa that goes well with fish or chicken. Since Rhubarb is pretty tart it usually needs some sweetness to balance out the flavor. It is often found paired with Strawberries but in this recipe, I have paired it with Mango as a celebration both of the season and of my Caribbean cultural background.

Let us know what you think. Share a photo and tag us when you make this soon to be favourite recipe!

Cooking tip.... the darker red stalks of rhubarb tend to be more tart. The lighter green stalk, less tart.

Happy cooking!

Chef Maxine



Grilled Chicken Breast with Rhubarb Mango Salsa

Prep Time: 10 minutes Cook Time: 25 minutes Yield: 4 cups

Ingredients

- 4 Boneless chicken breast (can use skin on or skinless depending on preference)
- 2 1/2 cups Rhubarb, thinly sliced
- 1 cup Bell peppers: red, yellow or orange seeded and medium diced
- 1 cup Cherry tomato, quartered
- 1/2 cup Ripe mango
- 1/4 cup Red onion, small dice
- 1/4 cup Extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp Garlic, minced
- 1/2 tsp Sea salt + extra for seasoning the chicken
- 1/4 tsp Black pepper + extra for seasoning the chicken

Directions

For the Salsa

1. Prepare an ice bath (a bowl of ice and water with a strainer sitting inside of it)
2. Bring a small pot of water up to a boil. Add the rhubarb and cook for 10 seconds. Scoop out rhubarb using a slotted spoon and put into the ice bath to stop the cooking process.
3. Chop the bell peppers, tomato, red onion and mango. Combine with the extra virgin olive oil and garlic, and season with salt and black pepper.

For the Chicken

1. Season the chicken breast with sea salt and black pepper.
2. Grill on the BBQ or pan sear on the stove until the chicken breast reaches an internal temperature of 165F (74C)
3. Allow the chicken breast to rest for 10 minutes and top with the Rhubarb Mango Salsa.

Join us for our

Aurora Community Garden Open House and Annual General Meeting

Thursday, June 14, 2018

**Open House
5:00 - 7:00 PM**

**Aurora Community Garden
Alliance Parkette, 372 Industrial Pkwy S
Aurora, ON**

**AGM
7:00-7:30 PM
350 Industrial Parkway S
Aurora, ON**

RSVP to kima@yrfn.ca by June 11, 2018

Kids in the Kitchen

The best way to get your child to eat healthier foods - and actually enjoy them - is to have them help with meal preparation. While cooking, kids build math skills, comprehension, self-esteem, communication, life skills and, most importantly, they have fun!

Since Fall 2017, York Region Food Network has been piloting Kids in the Kitchen workshops to get kids, age 7 to 12, excited about cooking and learning new skills in the kitchen.



This program has been overwhelmingly popular, and we're thrilled to announce that we'll be offering Kids in the Kitchen workshops in the summer and on school PA days in the Fall and Winter.

Spaces will be limited in our Kids in the Kitchen classes – keep your eyes glued on our social media for upcoming workshop and registration details.

Kate Greavette
Food Charter Coordinator

Thank you to our funders



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York Region

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 \$25. Registration 87044 7315 RR0001

Name: _____

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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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