

NETWORK NEWS

What's happening at York Region Food Network



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

by Kate Greavette, Executive Director

It's hard to believe that it's been over a year since the world changed and York Region Food Network (YRFN) shifted our priorities to focus on vital services. As the longest running food security organization in York Region, YRFN's approach to food security and food insecurity is evidence-based. Our values and actions are rooted in our belief that good food is crucial for physical, mental, emotional and cultural wellbeing and that food is a powerful tool for community building.

During the pandemic, our approach to food hasn't wavered. We have seen a dramatic increase in demand for fresh produce and this has reaffirmed our belief that we must continue pushing for sustainable solutions to food insecurity so people can access the foods they want, when they need them, in respectful and dignified ways. This means we have prioritized grocery gift cards; we have a menu that people can choose from every Tuesday morning for our takeaway breakfast; we have purchased tens of thousands of dollars of food from York Region farmers and producers; and we

have partnered with dozens of community organizations who serve people who are disproportionately impacted by food insecurity by reaching folks who haven't traditionally had equitable access to food supports.

Our approach to food is universal and although we have been working tirelessly to ramp up our food service programs, we know that a year in, a lot of work still needs to happen around food insecurity. We are committed to staying focused on the need for food secure communities and to ensure every person's right to food is respected. That is why, as we move ahead, we will continue to operate programs and services that focus on now, while also thinking ahead to the future by prioritizing research, building collaborative networks and inspiring initiatives where food is centralized in a Just Recovery from COVID19.

Join our network and support this crucial work by sharing this newsletter with others or offering a financial contribution to this work.

Thank you for your continued support.

IN THE KITCHEN

Old Don

by David Lightwood

When my mum died a few years ago my dad, over 80 years of age, was left high and dry. He had no idea how to feed himself, and furthermore, had no appetite whatsoever. His grief was intense and clouded out all other emotions. Because he did not eat, he lost a lot of weight and his clothes hung on him like a scarecrow.

Neighbours and friends brought hearty things, like casseroles. They all went in the freezer, and most stayed for quite a long time. Initially, my sister and I started making soups and stews too, until we realised that he wasn't making much headway through his supplies, far less cooking for himself. In fact, he was overwhelmed by too much choice, unable to pick one out.

Later I realised that we and others were "enabling" him. He didn't want to cook and he didn't have to, the freezer was full. But he was missing out on one of the greatest pleasures in life; creating and sharing a nutritious meal.

It occurred to me that there might be other people in a similar boat and that was where the idea of "Cooking for One, Catering for the Self" came from. This 12-session program provides a support network of individuals who are dealing with similar issues.

In our most recent session, we had a participant remark that this program introduced them to the concept of 'having a relationship with one's kitchen' and it's now a place to remember family members' who have passed away through their cooking pans, cooking their dishes and so on.

Our next session will launch in early Fall.

*There was an old man called Don,
Who shrank when his wife was gone,
But by and by,
He gave cooking a try,
And discovered that life goes on.*



David's father, Don



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

June 10, 2021
7:30 PM
via Zoom

RSVP to
kima@yrfn.ca

IN THE GARDEN

Gardening feeds the soul!

by Marissa Wiltshire

Have you ever stepped into a garden and felt a rush of well-being, that feeling of being recharged? That sense of healing?

Gardens are so much more than somewhere we plant food and flowers. They are a place for us to connect to ourselves, away from the bustle of the busy world.

When we plant, weed, water and harvest in our gardens, our senses are fully engaged. The feel of the soil in our hands and fresh air on our faces, the sight and smells of the vibrant plants and the earth, the sounds of birds chirping and bees buzzing... all of these senses ground us into the present.

We spend so much time in our heads, analyzing, planning and worrying about things we often have no control over. Gardening gives us a moment to clear the noise and the fog and focus on the now. They invite us to drop the constant doing and allow us to just be.

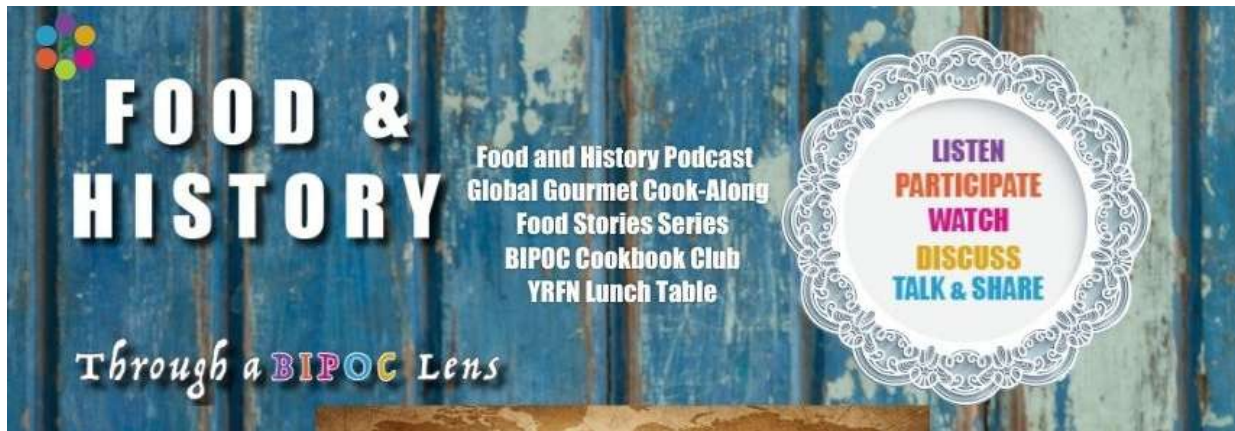
When we enter a garden, time slows down a notch. Our minds and our bodies relax and we connect with spirit. We give ourselves the recharge we don't always even know we need!

York Region Food Network's community gardens serve so many purposes. Growing plants, spending time outdoors in a supportive environment, being active and bringing home and sharing fresh produce can contribute to positive physical and mental health outcomes. In these times of isolation, self-care and mental health are so important. Gardening is a wonderful way to lift and renew our spirit.



IN THE COMMUNITY

by Maxine Knight



As we settle into the spring of 2021, we reflect on the launch of our Food and History, through a BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) Lens program. Weekly, folks from a cross section of cultures have been gathering virtually to explore the histories, lived experiences and recipes from a featured cookbook written by a BIPOC author.

Recipes are like a window into the soul of a culture. Each ingredient a storyteller of its history. Through the pages of these cookbooks (*Provisions* and *In Bibi's Kitchen*), we have gained a better historical understanding of Caribbean plantation society, the origins of the provision ground and the strength of the female entrepreneurial spirit. We've traveled the Indian Ocean's spice trade routes and observed the impacts of colonialism on coastal countries while celebrating the vast food knowledge obtained from the matriarchal elders of East Africa. Our Food Stories series featured Wendie Poitras as she shined a light on the 400-year history of African Canadians living in Nova Scotia, Canada. With Chef Bashir Munye, we went on a nomadic culinary journey that took us from Somalia to Italy to Canada.

While we have been inspired by the compilation of recipes, we have only just started to scratch the surface of the world's cuisines and the powerhouse of food knowledge available.

Follow us on social media or visit the Upcoming Events calendar on our website to travel the world with us through Lunch Tables, Cook-alongs, Cookbook clubs and Food Stories.

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR FUNDERS



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