

This year's Iron Chef secret ingredients Local road kill and illegal butter?

This year I asked my family to purchase ingredients that are grown or raised within 100 miles of Ottawa for our Christmas dinner. Mother's first response was "That's not really practical dear"

..... Some how I knew she would say that.

It took some convincing but I managed to bring Mom and my sisters on board. Everyone was slightly intimidated but excited by the task at hand. I figured with one sister being a chef and the rest of us being excellent cooks we could handle it. We began with the realization that we going to try to create the most important family meal of the year without being able to shop at the grocery store and even more terrible was the fact that there was no such thing as local salt! Being desperate, we wanted to sneak that ingredient in... make that our only exception, but in the end we decided to not have any exceptions.

Maybe dinner would be bland, boring and tasteless but there was no going back now. I tried to comfort everyone with the fact that I had found a locally produced wine that we could count on for drinking our way through the meal if it turned out to be that bad.

I knew we were all well connected to

outside the box food sources as we had many farming friends and frequented the local farmers markets. Mom had a stash of frozen herbs from her garden and suggested that she could get the vegetables and fruit from the Ottawa organic farmers market as well as some maple syrup from her friends in Stewartville. One of my sisters found organic King Eryngii mushrooms from a local organic grower near Wakefield, My other sister, bless her heart, offered the best portion of her prized road kill that she had in her freezer.

OK, I thought, maybe I'm related to the Beverly Hillbillies and didn't know it. Turns out that she and her boyfriend had been driving near Masham Quebec when they spotted a doe who was an unfortunate victim of vehicular homicide, or should I say animalicide? not sure.

Recognizing that the deer was dead but warm, they cut into action. Yes, pun intended. She recounted the whole story, including her premonition of the entire incident in a dream she had about a puppy... let's not go there. I find it all a bit too unsettling to tell the rest, all I can say is that they now have a freezer full of the most delicious venison you have ever tasted. Backing up that story was my other sister, the chef, who finds the kamikaze partridges who kill themselves by



100 mile Christmas dinner menu:

🌀 Salads:

Dicon radish and Chinese lettuce slaw with honey and herbed kefir dressing

Roasted beet, red onion and goat cheese salad

🌀 Vegetables:

Roasted Squash with butter and herbs

Roasted Potatoes with caramelized onions and herbed goat cheese

Steamed green beans with butter and herbs

Roasted honey garlic carrots

Pan fried King Eryngii mushrooms with butter and garlic

🌀 Meats:

Roasted garlic chicken au jus with pesto

Grilled Venison medallions

🌀 Deserts:

Strawberry, kefir and maple syrup sorbet

Baked apple and strawberry compote with meringue

🌀 Wine:

Mead (honey wine)



flying into her front window meaningful offerings that must be eaten and has the wings displayed on her living room walls to prove it.

I'm sure if I checked with the proper authorities, I would find that receiving offerings this way, slightly illegal in today's society. It seemed that it was also the case with the butter that I acquired after talking to a raw milk advocate farmer from Golden Lake who told me I needed to buy a cow in order to get any of his local, organic, and raw dairy products.

I knew there was something fishy going on when Farmer X (seriously folks, I have to protect his identity) showed up with a trench coat full of butter at our pre-arranged meeting place no where near the grocery store.

OK maybe it was a snowmobile jacket but it seemed strange that he was satisfied with the cashless transaction of one of my large cranberry apple pies for 2 pounds of his butter.

Christmas day had arrived and we all showed up at Mom's with our local bounty in hand ready to take on the task of preparing a gourmet Christmas dinner using only local foods. Preparation was fun and we had to be creative as most of the cooking decisions we made were on the fly much to the chagrin of our sister chef as lots of her instructions went unnoticed in the chaos, including the sorbet idea that somehow miraculously came to me and my other sister. After much self-congratulations we realized that it had actually been mentioned a number of times to us during the dinner preparations by our leader.... Oh well, que sera.

We all gathered round the table, and thanked the once living things on our plates for their sacrifice to be at our table for Christmas and raised a glass of mead in congratulations to ourselves on the surprising success of our fine

gourmet 100 mile Christmas dinner. The missing salt was not a problem, proven by the fact that my son, the salt fiend, asked for salt and didn't get it but ate his whole dinner anyway without complaint.

We all shared our stories about how we got the dinner's ingredients. Much of which were funny, some were gross, but all gave extra meaning to our dinner. I then realized what most people don't have in their lives today.... the stories behind their food.



We all just go to that big surreal food place with it's lights, fridges and freezers containing attractively packaged now dead or almost dead things to eat. This food holds no connection for us that says these things came from the earth and were once alive. We don't even want to know its story before it became presented at the grocery store all wrapped up in shiny packaging.

The story of my sister's road kill made me think about the pre-existing life of what's on display at the refrigerated meat counter. That all these once living animals had to have been killed and butchered by someone and maybe until you experience it for yourself, like she did, are you able to make that connection.

grocery stores hide that bit of gross reality that's going on all the time. We don't like to see that anyway, just that well presented red stuff in the refrigerated displays. No blood and guts thank you very much. But what does that do to us as a society when we are removed from the reality of our food growth and preparations? When we are without any connection to our food, I believe it makes us disrespectful of our farmers and our land.

The grocery store insulates us from this very important concept which I believe our children need to understand if we want them to become future stewards of our earth.

Through the 100 mile diet we can begin to solve many of today's environmental problems. Not only can we can truly understand the concept of "eat local, think global", we can live it by supporting and encouraging a diverse local agricultural environment.

The best way to describe the beneficial concept of diversity is by looking at your own garden. The more diverse our garden, the healthier and more productive it becomes. One of the things that I have learned from David Suzuki is that diversity is Mother Nature's way of staying healthy. Companion planting and natural pest controls through native planting habitat encouragement make a huge contribution to a successful organic harvest. We need more local farms producing smaller diverse crops practicing these techniques but this won't happen until the consumer creates that demand.

Not only do we need to demand organic food, even better, local-organic should become the standard for the ultimate in a healthy food supply. I would suggest that a local demand encourages organic growth and the two terms work hand in hand. Questions we need to be asking ourselves about the current state of organic foods are; How much emissions are produced in getting a kiwi from New Zealand to our local grocery store? Is it really good for us to support that? Maybe we can live without kiwis anyway. I have a

sneaking suspicion that native species of food is the best thing for our bodies anyways.

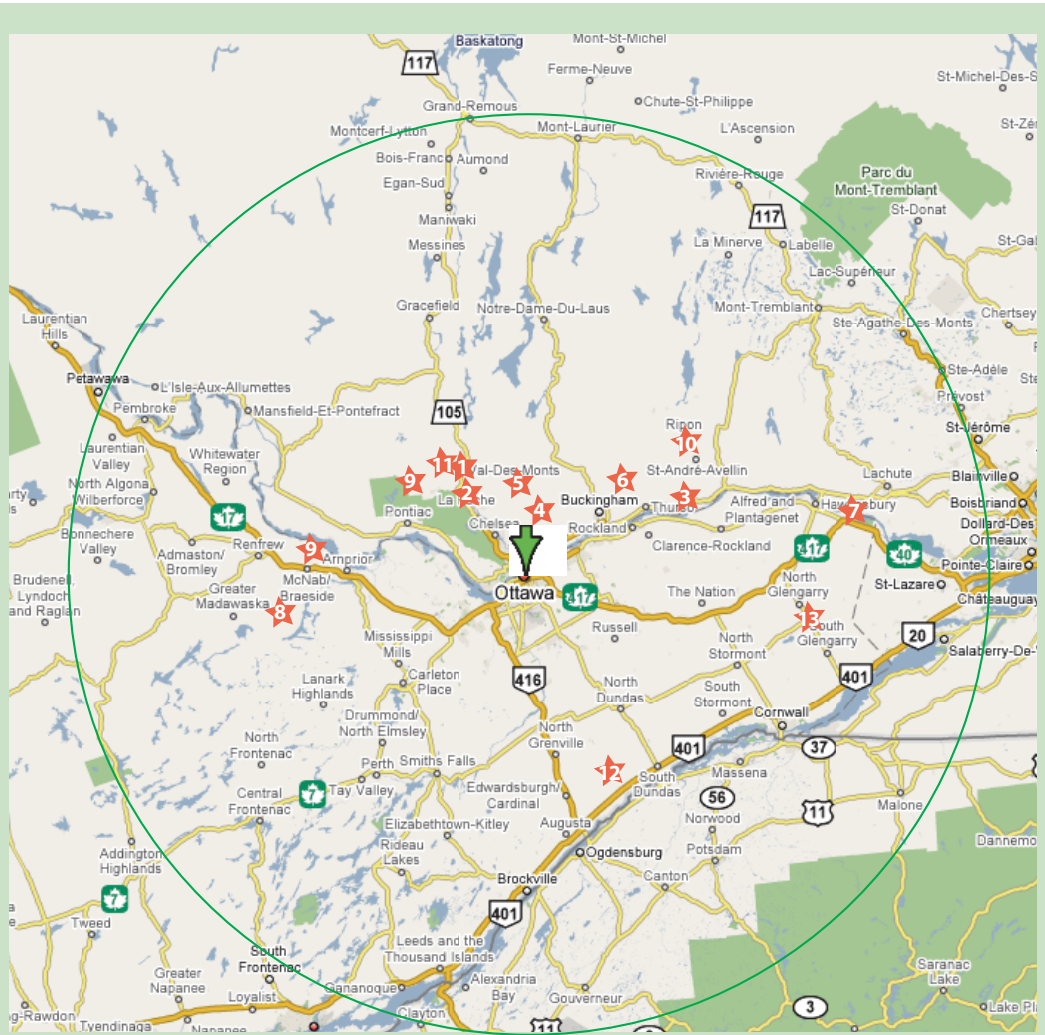
When we eat local we create a demand for a diverse organic farm food supply. Currently our farms are mostly huge mono-cultures that require chemical fertilizers and pesticides to grow crops that are harvested and shipped out to far off places, leaving them dependant on fossil fuels and chemicals. Imagine if the only thing we planted in our garden was corn and in order to get our potatoes we had to ship the corn to our buddy in PEI in trade for his potatoes instead of doing something completely sane, like growing your own. Imagine how messed up you would be if your corn crop somehow failed one year... no corn or potatoes for anyone. If your garden was diverse, you could say oh well, this year we eat potatoes, beets, onions and carrots, just no corn... we'll survive anyway.

What better way to support our local agriculture and share food experiences than through the practice of the 100 mile concept, from the wonderful people that we met along the way to the strange, funny, beautiful, gross and somewhat illegal experiences we received in gathering the food that we ate that Christmas day.

Until putting the 100 mile diet into practice through this Christmas meal did I realize that I did not truly have a connection to all that goes on behind the scenes in the production of our own food supply and how important it is that everyone, especially our children, should experience the 100 mile diet in order to create the change necessary for our own healthy food future.



The final "local" result - Bon Apetit



1. Honey and Mead

Ferme Berg en Dal Farm
Alcove QC
819-459-3539

2. King Eyrengii Mushrooms

Champignons Le Coprin
Christophe Marineau
C.P.402, Wakefield QC
(819) 329-4986

3. Goat Cheese

Ferme Floralpe
Papinaueville, QC
819-983-6662

4. Eggs

Helen and Walter
Ferme Lastholm Farm
Poltimore QC
819-457-9001

5. Chicken

la Ferme Aux Saveurs de Monts
Val-des-Monts QC
819 643-4363

6. Butter

Ferme X, Quebec

7. Kefir

Pinehedge Farms
St. Eugene, ON
The Heinzle Family
1 800 668 4427

8. Maple Syrup

Harvey and Jackie
Leeman's Maple Products
Stewartville, ON
613-623-7062

9. Venison

Road kill somewhere
near Masham QC

9. Herbs

Anderson house garden
Rhoddy's Bay, ON

10. Potatoes, green beans, onions, strawberries, beets

Les Productions TERRE à TERRE
David Charette
Ripon QC (819) 983-6247

11. Carrots, garlic, chinese lettuce, diacon radish

Ferme Juniper Farm
Alex Mackay-Smith
and Juniper Turgeon
Alcove QC
(819) 422-1894

12. Herb and Garlic Cheddar Cheese

Organic Farm House
Iroquois, ON

13. Apples

Berhanu Wassiaun
Alexandria, ON

Article by

Christine Anderson
who spends as much time as possible in her garden, baking pies, volunteering in school gardens, talking to farmers and sharing food with her family