

2012

LOCAL FLAVOURS

March 2012



Sweet March Issue

“A sap-run is the sweet good-bye of winter. It is the fruit of the equal marriage of the sun and frost.”

John Burroughs, Signs and Seasons, 1886

WHAT'S UP AT LOCAL FLAVOURS

Thanks to a new group of interns at the Biosphere office and some new members on our Local Flavours committee we are off to a quick start in this our 8th year of growing the local food community.

Several new businesses joined us in the late fall before we even got rolling with the new season and they are already listed on our website.

Because our interns will be leaving at the end of April and because we have been a bit late in the past in issuing our annual brochures, we will be launching our 2012 season at Wendy's Country Market on April 29th at the Earth Day & Easter Spring Celebration. We will have a display booth there and lots of our new brochures fresh off the press.



Local Flavours



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Savour the Arch
in Southeastern Ontario



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Man And
Biosphere
Programme

The sap is running! The earliest on record!

The seasons seem to change faster than I can deal with in trying to keep up with the local food cycle. I was determined to get this newsletter out ahead of the maple syrup run but I've been foiled once again. Just last week I started on this first issue of the Local Flavours newsletter for 2012 and had written "With climate change upon us who knows when the sap will run? Our maple syrup members will - that's who! They keep an eye on their woods so we should keep an eye on them ." And then I named the issue "Sweet February Issue"

Very witty, I thought, and then I had another thought. I wonder when it is *actually* going to start? So then I

consulted the Local Flavours website and telephoned Gibbons Family Farm and talked to Bill. How's it going. "Fine", he said "the sap has been running for several days." Oh great I'm late again! I asked him if this was the earliest ever and he said yes. Today I checked the situation and they are tapping all over the place - as far north as North Bay.

I'll be as quick as I can in getting the rest of this epistle (now called the Sweet March Issue) out to all of you. Next year I'll start to think about maple syrup around the Christmas tree.

At any rate, it is easy to find Local Flavours maple syrup at our many producers' farms, farmers' markets, B & B's



Another log goes into the fire at Gibbons Family Farm

and retail outlets year round. Search "Maple syrup" on our website to find them.

www.localflavours.org

For spring maple syrup festivities see our events notices.

One of Sarah Gibbons' favourite maple recipes:

BEACHCOMBER PIE

2 eggs beaten
 2 tablespoons melted butter
 1-1/2 cup maple syrup
 1/2 cup sugar
 1 teaspoon lemon juice
 1/2 teaspoon salt
 1-1/4 cup shredded coconut
 1 unbaked pie shell (9")

Mix all ingredients together. Pour into pie shell. Bake at 350°F for 50 minutes. Cool and serve. Enjoy!

Coming Events

Two months of eggs, pancakes and bacon at the Edgewood Farms Pancake Breakfast

7602 7th Concession Rd., New Dublin
613-345-7894
edgewoodfarms.mcgurri@gmail.com

Maple syrup, maple products Pancake House for pancake meals- sausage, beans and maple syrup.



**Edgewood Farms
Pancake Breakfast**

Gibbons Family Farm

Maple Sugar House & Museum

**FREE
Maple Taffy
on Snow**
SATURDAYS
MARCH 24 TO APRIL 14

FREE Admission

Musician
& Story Teller
Bear the Tinker
9:30 A.M.-1:30 P.M.
Saturday, March 31
& April 7

*Quality Maple Syrup
and Maple Products*

Open year round - 7 days a week.

West Winds Ranch
on site for
**PONY RIDES (\$3)
AND
PETTING ZOO**
Saturday, March 31 & April 7
9:00 A.M.-2:00 P.M.

For information call 613-275-2893
Toll free 877-440-7887

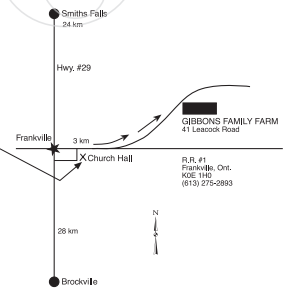
mail@gibbonsmaple.com
www.gibbonsmaple.com

Enjoy a Pancake Breakfast
provided by St. Thomas Anglican Church
in Frankville.

Saturday, March 24	8:00 A.M. to Noon
Saturday, March 31	8:00 A.M. to Noon
Saturday, April 7	8:00 A.M. to Noon
Saturday, April 14	8:00 A.M. to Noon

Adults — \$8.00 • Children (12 yr. under) — \$3.00

BAKE SALE EVERY SATURDAY



More Coming Events

EVERYONE CAN GROW FOOD ANYWHERE

Gardening Workshop **FREE** to All



Saturday, March 24th, 2012

1:00pm - 4:00pm

Community Room (RBC entrance)
Thousand Islands Mall, Brockville

FREE Gardening Kit for Participants

Refreshments will be available

Guest Speakers:

Gardening 101: Maria Breton

Growing Organically: Dave Alguire

From Seed to Table: Janette Haase

ALSO:

Displays & Resources from local partners

Space is limited,
so register online at www.healthunit.org
or call 1-800-660-5853

Food Bank Donations Welcome



Food for Thought

Wed, March 14 at 7 pm

Thurlow
Community Centre

516 Harmony Road
north of Belleville

The Hastings
Stewardship Council
presents



Thomas Pawlick

Local Author of *The End of Food*

The alarming facts on grocery store food. We thought it was nutritious.....
Also, local food supply and small farm operations

Thomas Pawlick is the 3-time winner of the Canadian Science Writers' Assoc. Award and author of 10 books, including *The End of Food* and *The War in the Country*. He lives on a local 150-acre farm.



Information: Jim Pedersen at 613-478-6875

A Short History of Local Flavours - Jerry Heath

I know it is traditional to review an organization at intervals such as the 10th anniversary. Well it is, in fact, the 10th anniversary of the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Network which initiated this program and we will have a number of celebration events this year to mark that milestone. Local Flavours itself was developed in 2004 by the Biosphere and launched in 2005, so we are only 8 years old. There are several compelling reasons to look back on our history before we reach 10. Many of our newer members, especially the outlets but also some of our producers are probably unaware of some of the critical decisions that were made during our formation. Please note the Recorder and Times editorial on page 9 which supported most of those decisions and which gave us a positive start.

Over the years Local Flavours policy has been set by our volunteer committee supported by the Biosphere's executive director Don Ross and manager David Bull. The committee has changed over the years with a membership of between 6 and 10 people, mostly producers and owners of outlets (which keeps us in

touch with our members needs) and some food activists. Several of our committee members are also on the Biosphere board of directors which insures that our work is compatible with the mandate of the Biosphere. It is a working committee assisted by a series of talented interns over the years.

We have avoided unnecessary bureaucracy as much as possible believing that, in a locally based organization where many of us know each other, we can operate in an atmosphere of trust. As we have become more successful and as "**Local**" food has become a successful marketing tool which could be abused, we have added some standards to maintain the integrity of the organization. In 2011 we introduced the following requirement:

"Outlets will notice an addition to their application form. Most local food groups have criteria for their restaurants, pubs, inns and B&B's governing the portion of their food serve that must come from local sources. They vary and some are quite complicated and ambitious. We are introducing a simple requirement modelled after one used in Vermont. Outlets must buy products from at least 3 producers or 1 distributor (or a variety of products from 1 large producer). Please list these on your application form."

Brockberry Cafe owner Josie Groniger and chef Seth O'Hara share a laugh with Local Flavours' co-ordinator Jerry Heath, at right, during a workshop Tuesday in Brockville. The Brockberry has joined the Local Flavours program which promotes the use of local farm produce by restaurants and retailers.

[Brockville Recorder and Times](#),

8 April, 2009

Photo by Nick Gardiner, Staff Writer



The Origins of Local Flavours (from an article in Canadian Organic Growers - 2006) - Jerry Heath

While the global steam roller of free trade continues to flatten out the local diversities of ecology and community, replacing them with monoculture, monopoly and monotony, there is a less obvious process going in precisely the opposite direction creating a few bumps in the road. It is called localization and the leading component of it is the local food movement. I am convinced that both the globalization and localization processes are gathering speed. If true, we are in for interesting times as the Chinese curse has it.

One of the more recent examples of the local food movement in Canada was officially launched on July 23rd, 2005 at the Brockville Farmers' Market on a bright sunny day. It is called "Local Flavours" and is an initiative of the UNESCO Frontenac Arch Biosphere which occupies a triangular area in the Thousand Islands/Rideau region of Eastern Ontario. At the founding AGM of the Biosphere in early 2004 a proposal for a Buy Local project was made. Out of this a committee was formed

that decided to focus on the promotion of locally produced foods. We started meeting in the summer of 2004.

Our main sources of inspiration were the Local Flavour project operated by ecoPerth in Lanark County, just northwest of our area and the Local Heroes campaign run in three counties in western Massachusetts by Community Involved In Sustaining Agriculture (CISA). They were both started in 1999.

While all the groups involved in the local food movement encourage and help to develop the production and marketing of local foods they vary as to which issues they concentrate on. For instance, ecoPerth has a strong emphasis on local food as a means of reducing greenhouse gasses, FarmFolk/CityFolk in B.C. gets involved in social issues, Vermont Fresh Network is interested in preserving farms for their scenic value as well as their food. Besides linking producers and consumers, many also include chef/farm partnerships. Some of these groups focus entirely on organic foods but

an increasing number are more inclusive, putting an emphasis on local small and medium producers whether they use organic, certified organic or conventional methods of production. A number of recent magazine and newspaper articles have referred to the local food movement as the "new organic".

The numerous advantages of a strong locally-based food production system are generally agreed upon by its proponents, regardless of their primary focus. These include:

- building a healthier community - creating relationships between producers and customers.
- making farming more profitable by direct marketing - farmers' share of the food dollar has declined from a range of 40 to 60% to about 8%.
- developing a stronger local economy - the multiplying economic factor of locally-owned businesses which spend more of their money in the community. Plugging the economic leaks which creates more permanent jobs.

The Origins of Local Flavours - continued

- reducing greenhouse gases and climate change by reduction in transportation and refrigeration. Average food travels about 2000 km. It could be reduced to less than 100 km.

- security of food supply.
- fresher food and more variety.

The primary focus of the Local Flavours project is on supporting local producers and building a stronger local economy and community. The following principles were used in developing our program:

- All types of producers would be included - conventional, organic, certified organic. We did not want to divide the farm community or expend energy in endless debates.
- The program would initially be free for producers. We would raise funds to run it.
- Our emphasis would be on action rather than advocacy.
- Our method would be to encourage consumers to buy locally produced food by identifying and removing barriers to do so. We would do this by providing them with useful information not by preaching.



OLD AMERSHAM,
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
Local green-fingered veg growers can swap their produce for a couple of glasses of wine at this fine establishment. "It's an informal arrangement," say the owners, "but it's good for community relations." Last year, wild garlic and quinces were bumper crops.

Ah, the Brits are at it **again!** Produce traded for wine this time.

- Local producers are not really competitors; they are collaborators. By cooperating and working together they will all sell more product. Competitors are in California, Florida and around the world.
- We will create a partnership between producers and customers. We really are all in this together.

Our main purpose is to increase the economic viability of local food producers. The only realistic way to do this in the current economic and political system is to improve the profit margin for them through direct marketing whereby they capture a much larger portion of the food dollar.

Therefore we had to concentrate on promoting farm gate and farmers market sales. Having established this we got to work. Following the example of established local food groups we decided that our first year priorities were to produce a brochure with a list of all the producers who wished to participate and a map showing where to find them. This would be backed up by a website. The deadline for the brochure was the late spring of 2005 in order to catch that crop year.

But first we needed to create a data base of the producers. We collected the information with the help of Rural Leeds

The Origins of Local Flavours - continued

2000, a local NGO, and then mailed letters to these producers with a copy of the ecoPerth Local Flavour brochure to show them what we intended to do. This was followed up with telephone interviews to see if they wanted to join the project and to obtain all the pertinent details of contact information, location, products, hours of business and production methods. We ended up with 55 participants which was a higher number than we expected because the process of establishing the data base had turned up producers we were unaware of. Products included herbs, vegetables, meat, fruit, preserves, honey, maple syrup and baked goods.

We held a meeting in January for the producers to give them information and get feedback from them. As a result, ten producers joined our committee and took an active part in determining what information should go into the producers list in the brochure and the website. According to my research, local food programs are seldom organized or operated by the producers

themselves but usually by community activists or NGO's. If they get past the startup phase they normally evolve into staff-operated organizations. We hope to move to that stage next year if we can obtain adequate funding.

Providing information about the availability of local produce is one way to reduce the barriers to customers buying from them, but it is also crucial to motivate people to actually do so. This means that the marketing efforts must engage their interest and support. We had purchased a very informative book published by CISA and FoodRoutes Network entitled "Harvesting Support For Locally Grown Food: Lessons Learned from the Be a Local Hero, Buy Locally Grown Campaign" which I strongly recommend to any group planning a campaign.

Extensive customer polling by them indicated that:

- Advertising messages that highlight the personal contribution a person makes to the Local economy and to his or her neighbours when buying locally grown foods will be more successful than messages that communicate

concerns for the environment, safety, the future, and personal health and individual well-being.

- It is important to incorporate into advertising the widely held beliefs that locally grown food is fresher.

- The major obstacle to the sale of locally grown food is the perception that it is inconvenient to buy. A lack of information about where locally grown food can be purchased... reflects and reinforces this perception of inconvenience."

These three messages were then combined into the following slogan: "Support your local economy and neighbours by buying locally grown food that's fresher and tastes great. Available at many locations throughout your area."

A slogan we use is: In the mood for local food? It just got easier with Local Flavours.

Meanwhile we were seeking financial support and were fortunate that the Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition provided initial funding for design of a logo. The major breakthrough was our successful application to the Laidlaw Foundation for a

The Origins of Local Flavours - continued

grant of \$5,000 which paid for the design and printing of 20,000 brochures in May and the creation of a website <www.localflavours.org> in July.

Most of our producers' operations are small and almost all of the organic ones are non-certified.

Considering that our program is open to everyone I am surprised and encouraged that the proportion of organic producers is significantly higher than the national average. Ten out of 13 meat producers are organic, 11 out of 19 vegetable growers are organic, but only 4 out of 15 fruit producers use organic methods.

The larger, longer established producers are almost all conventional but it should be noted that there is a gradual movement within the conventional group to incorporate more organic and sustainable techniques for both economic and environmental reasons. Also organic food generally brings a premium price. I believe the proportion of organic producers will continue to increase.

The response to Local Flavours has been very positive: from the local media,

"One of the better ideas that's come along recently is the plan by a local group to promote the sale of locally grown produce." began a favourable editorial in the Brockville Recorder and Times in January 2005.

Producers have welcomed the concept and the majority have signed on. Typical comments from the public at the launch in July were "What a great idea" and "They should have done this years ago".

We plan to follow the pattern of established local food programs and form links with restaurants, inns and B and B's and smaller supermarkets in our region as we become better known. We also hope that, as successful local food campaigns have shown, the increased community pride and loyalty to local businesses generated by Local Flavours will serve as an incubator for entrepreneurs who will develop processing ventures utilizing local produce. This has certainly been the case

in places as far apart as Vermont, Prince Edward County, the Eastern Townships in Quebec, Salt Spring Island in B.C. and several counties in the U.K.

It is much too early to determine the impact of the Local Flavours campaign but several of our members have told us that they already have new customers who said they found them because of the brochure. While we have been successful in doing everything we planned to do in the first year, we will have to wait until next year to see if we have been successful in achieving our goal - increasing the production and consumption of locally produced foods and hence helping our producers, the local economy, the environment and building a more sustainable community.

We are only at the beginning and there is much to do before we achieve our goals. In the meantime, almost all of the food on my table comes from within 50 km, much of it is organic and all of it is tasty. So please join me and, **bon appetit**.

**Published in the Saturday, January 8,
2005 edition
of the Brockville Recorder & Times.**

Laudable plan

One of the better ideas that's come along recently is the plan by a local group to promote the sale of locally grown produce. The Local Flavours initiative hosts a meeting for producers on January 20 in Elgin.

Local Flavours is a subcommittee of the Thousand Islands-Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve. The biosphere's mandate is to promote the nature, culture and economy of the region. Local Flavours certainly qualifies on all three grounds.

The proposal has merit beyond any links to the biosphere, however.

Participation is free and the group will publish a brochure and map outlining locations for local producers.

Jerry Heath, the chairman of the subcommittee, says his aim is promoting local food production.

Heath is a former Green Party candidate, but he stresses that participation in Local Flavours does not depend on organic production.

"You let the producers choose how they're going to produce and the buyers decide who they're going to buy from," he said.

That's a sensible approach and prevents Local Flavours from getting bogged down in some kind of left versus right, or organic versus non-organic dispute. There are well-intentioned, responsible farmers on both sides of this debate.

We'd prefer not to wade in to some of the arguments advanced by Heath: that locally grown produce is more nutritious, or that it is better for the environment because it will reduce the carbon monoxide emitted by trucks bringing food in to the area.

In fact, these issues are exceedingly difficult to sort out, due to the number of variables involved in food production. For example, perhaps more efficient agricultural practices elsewhere more than make up for the carbon monoxide resulting from trucking.

And Now for the Tricky Part!

A Discussion of Production Methods.

We have no regrets about our inclusive approach described in the preceding pages. Our organization is focussed on supporting and promoting LOCAL FOOD in our area in all its rich variety. As our method of promotion is the removal of barriers by first creating a network of producers and outlets and then providing accurate information about what is available and where to find it.

The only down side to this approach is that, because we are promoting food produced by a wide variety of methods, there can be some confusion on the part of both producers and customers. Our producers are not confused about how they are producing the food but how to describe it in the small space allotted in our brochure can be a challenge. The producer's application form includes the following guidance to avoid any confusion on their part.

Disclaimer:

We are using 3 terms for a general description of your operation

- **Certified Organic** – meets Canadian Organic standards and has been certified.
- **Non-Certified Organic** – meets Canadian Organic standards but has not been certified.
- **Conventional** – may use some organic practices along with pesticides, herbicides, chemical fertilizers, etc. Can state “No pesticides”, “No Hormones”, etc. if this is true. Do not use terms like “natural” which have no precise meaning.

Local Flavours does not guarantee production methods or do inspections. Our system is based on trust and our customers are encouraged to ask questions if they have food sensitivities, allergies or other health concerns. Proof of misrepresentation would lead to exclusion from Local Flavours.

The “Organic Production Systems General Principles and Management Standards” [CAN/CGSB-32.310-2006 are available here](#)

I Understand and Agree with the above terms.

Our goal is to match up consumers and producers who have the same priorities, whether philosophical, dietary or what ever else. For some customers, price is the priority because they can't afford expensive food. For others who have medical issues such as allergies, ingredients may be crucial and a group will want certified organic food. We can satisfy all their needs if we have enough accurate information to provide them. But we are a modestly funded organization with a large volunteer component so there is a limit to what we can do. The main area of challenge is in so called "conventional" farming or market gardening where a wide range of methods are used. The same farm may have organic cattle and conventional fruit or vegetables. The list includes such items as ***no antibiotics for growth, no hormones, free range, pasture fed, no chemical fertilizers, no pesticides, no herbicides, integrated pest management (IPM)***. There is limited space on our brochures in which to describe all this. The priority for Local Flavours in all this is to provide honest, accurate information to all our customers whether outlets or individuals. We are working on developing a set of abbreviations to try and deal with this issue.

The government of course has a role in all this. Some statements may be dishonest or misleading, but some break the law, for example, calling food "organic" which is not certified or doesn't meet certification standards.

We believe that a community which is diverse is strong and we have worked hard for 8 years to create a vigorous local food system in our area. We think we have succeeded. We hope you agree.

Town Aims for Total Food Self-sufficiency within 7 Years

Carrots in the car park. Radishes on the roundabout. The deliciously eccentric story of the town growing ALL its own vegetables.

By [Vincent Graff](#)

Admittedly, it sounds like the most foolhardy of criminal capers, and one of the cheekiest, too.

Outside the police station in the small Victorian mill town of Todmorden, West Yorkshire, there are three large raised flower beds. If you'd visited a few months ago, you'd have found them overflowing with curly kale, carrot plants, lettuces, spring onions — all manner of vegetables and salad leaves.

Today the beds are bare. Why? Because people have been wandering up to the police station forecourt in broad daylight and digging up the vegetables. And what are the cops doing about this brazen theft from right under their noses? Nothing.

Well, that's not quite correct.

'I watch 'em on camera as they come up and pick them,' says desk officer Janet Scott, with a huge grin. It's the smile that explains everything. For the vegetable-swipers are not thieves. The police station carrots — and thousands of vegetables in 70 large beds around the town — are there for the taking.

Locals are encouraged to help themselves. A few tomatoes here, a handful of broccoli there. If they're in season, they're yours. Free.

So there are (or were) raspberries, apricots and apples on the canal towpath; blackcurrants, redcurrants and strawberries beside the doctor's surgery; beans and peas outside the college; cherries in the supermarket car park; and mint, rosemary, thyme and fennel by the health centre. The vegetable plots are the most visible sign of an amazing plan: to make Todmorden the first town in the country that is self-sufficient in food.

'And we want to do it by 2018,' says Mary Clear, 56, a grandmother of ten and co-founder of Incredible Edible, as the scheme is called. 'It's a very ambitious aim. But if you don't aim high, you might as well stay in bed, mightn't you?'

So what's to stop me turning up with a huge carrier bag and grabbing all the rosemary in the town?

'Nothing,' says Mary.



Food for thought: Todmorden resident Estelle Brown, a former interior designer, with a basket of home-grown veg

© Claire Wood Photography Ltd

Town Aims for Total Food Self-sufficiency - continued

What's to stop me nabbing all the apples?

'Nothing.'

All your raspberries?

'Nothing.'

It just doesn't happen like that, she says. 'We trust people. We truly believe — we are witness to it — that people are decent.'

When she sees the Big Issue seller gathering fruit for his lunch, she feels only pleasure. What does it matter, argues Mary, if once in a while she turns up with her margarine tub to find that all the strawberries are gone?

'This is a revolution,' she says. 'But we are gentle revolutionaries. Everything we do is underpinned by kindness.'

The idea came about after she and co-founder Pam Warhurst, the former owner of the town's Bear Cafe, began fretting about the state of the world and wondered what they could do.



Incredible Edible is about more than plots of veg. It's about educating people about food, and stimulating the local economy (pictured Vincent Graff and Estelle)

© Claire Wood Photography Ltd

They reasoned that all they could do is start locally, so they got a group of people, mostly women, together in the cafe.

'Wars come about by men having drinks in bars, good things come about when women drink coffee together,' says Mary.

'Our thinking was: there's so much blame in the world — blame local government, blame politicians, blame bankers, blame

technology — we thought, let's just do something positive instead.'

We're standing by a car park in the town centre. Mary points to a housing estate up the hill. Her face lights up.

'The children walk past here on the way to school. We've filled the flower beds with fennel and they've all been taught that if you bite fennel, it tastes like a liquorice gobstopper. When I see the children popping little bits of herb into their mouths, I just think it's brilliant.'

She takes me over to the front garden of her own house, a few yards away.

Town Aims for Total Food Self-sufficiency - continued

Three years ago, when Incredible Edible was launched, she did a very unusual thing: she lowered her front wall, in order to encourage passers-by to walk into her garden and help themselves to whatever vegetables took their fancy.

There were signs asking people to take something but it took six months for folk to 'get it', she says.

They get it now. Obviously a few town-centre vegetable plants — even thousands of them — are not going to feed a community of 15,000 by themselves.

But the police station potatoes act as a recruiting sergeant — to encourage residents to grow their own food at home. Today, hundreds of townspeople who began by helping themselves to the communal veg are now well on the way to self-sufficiency.

But out on the street, what gets planted where? There's kindness even in that.

'The ticket man at the railway station, who was very much loved, was unwell. Before he died, we asked him: "What's your favourite vegetable, Reg?" It was broccoli. So we planted memorial beds with broccoli at the station. One stop up the line, at Hebden Bridge, they loved Reg, too — and they've also planted broccoli in his memory.'

Not that all the plots are — how does one put this delicately? — 'official'.

Take the herb bushes by the canal. Owners British Waterways had no idea locals had been sowing plants there until an official inspected the area ahead of a visit by the Prince of Wales last year (Charles is a huge Incredible Edible fan).

Estelle Brown, a 67-year-old former interior designer who tended the plot, received an email from British Waterways.

'I was a bit worried to open it,' she says. 'But it said: "How do you build a raised bed? Because my boss wants one outside his office window."'

Incredible Edible is also about much more than plots of veg. It's about educating people about food, and stimulating the local economy.

There are lessons in pickling and preserving fruits, courses on bread-making, and the local college is to offer a BTEC in horticulture. The thinking is that young people who have grown up among the street veg may make a career in food.

Crucially, the scheme is also about helping local businesses. The Bear, a wonderful shop and cafe with a magnificent original Victorian frontage, sources all its ingredients from farmers within a 30-mile radius.

There's a brilliant daily market. People here can eat well on local produce, and thousands now do.

Meanwhile, the local school was recently awarded a £500,000 Lottery grant to set up a fish farm in order to provide food for the locals and to teach useful skills to young people. Jenny Coleman, 62, who retired here from London, explains: 'We need something for our young people to do. If you're an 18-year-old, there's got to be a good answer to the question: why would I want to stay in Todmorden?'

Town Aims for Total Food Self-sufficiency - continued

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there’s got to be a good answer to the question: why would I want to stay in Todmorden?’

The day I visit, the town is battered by a bitterly-cold rain storm. Yet the place radiates warmth. People speak to each other in the street, wave as neighbours drive past, smile.

If the phrase hadn’t been hijacked, the words ‘we’re all in this together’ would spring to mind.

So what sort of place is Todmorden (known locally, without exception, as ‘Tod’)? If you’re assuming it’s largely peopled by middle-class grandmothers, think again. Nor is this place a mecca for the gin-and-Jag golf club set.



In under two years, Todmorden has transformed the way it produces its food and the way residents think about the environment. Compared with 18 months ago, a third more townspeople now grow their own veg; almost seven in 10 now buy local produce regularly, and 15 times as many people are keeping chickens.

Set in a Pennine valley — once, the road through the town served as the border between Yorkshire and Lancashire — it is a vibrant mix of age, class and ethnicity. A third of households do not own a car; a fifth do not have central heating. You can snap up a terrace house for £50,000 — or spend close to £1 million on a handsome stone villa with seven bedrooms.

And the scheme has brought this varied community closer together, according to Pam Warhurst. Take one example. ‘The police have told us that, year on year, there has been a reduction in vandalism since we

Town Aims for Total Food Self-sufficiency - continued

started,' she says. 'We weren't expecting this.'

So why has it happened?

Pam says: 'If you take a grass verge that was used as a litter bin and a dog toilet and turn it into a place full of herbs and fruit trees, people won't vandalise it. I think we are hard-wired not to damage food.' Pam reckons a project like Incredible Edible could thrive in all sorts of places. 'If the population is very transient, it's difficult. But if you've got schools, shops, back gardens and verges, you can do it.'

Similar schemes are being piloted in 21 other towns in the UK, and there's been interest shown from as far afield as Spain, Germany, Hong Kong and Canada. And, this week, Mary Clear gave a talk to an all-party group of MPs at Westminster.

Todmorden was visited by a planner from New Zealand, working on the rebuilding of his country after February's earthquake.

Mary says: 'He went back saying: "Why wouldn't we rebuild the railway station with pick-your-own herbs? Why wouldn't we rebuild the health centre with apple trees?"'



TETBURY,
GLOUCESTERSHIRE
Director Dave Kelly says that last year's veg-bartering brought kale, pears, quinces and courgettes. This summer he's asking local growers with surplus fruit and veg to take them to the kitchen where they can be exchanged for vouchers to use at this well regarded gastropub and inn.

Local Food bartered for beer - Only in England you say?

'What we've done is not clever. It just wasn't being done.'

The final word goes to an outsider. Joe Strachan is a wealthy U.S. former sales director who decided to settle in Tod with his Scottish wife, after many years in California.

He is 61 but looks 41. He became active with Incredible Edible six months ago, and couldn't be happier digging, sowing and juicing fruit.

I find myself next to him, sheltering from the driving rain. Why, I ask, would someone forsake the sunshine of California for all this?

His answer sums up what the people around here have achieved.

'There's a nobility to growing food and allowing people to share it. There's a feeling we're doing something significant rather than just moaning that the state can't take care of us.

'Maybe we all need to learn to take care of ourselves.'

Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2072383/Eccentric-town-Todmorden-growing-ALL-veg.html#ixzz1nX4MMvXG>