

Organic food becoming more popular, says local butcher



By Nate Smelle

Last week Bancroft This Week spoke with Real World Food Prize winners and long-time owners of The Craftsman restaurant Ramona Tremblay and Jim Thomson. The next Real Food Heroes to be interviewed in this series are the Hanes family of York River Meats in Bancroft.

York River Meats is a family owned and operated Butcher shop that specializes in organic foods, fresh cut steaks and roasts, bulk meats, veggies, seafood and fish. Chuck and Leann Hanes first started paying attention to the food they were eating after their daughters Kelly Hanes-Covert and Tiffany Hanes-Trolley opened their eyes to the benefits of eating organic.

?Our daughters essentially wanted to choose a better path for their children and our grandchildren and we would like to live longer to see our grandchildren grow,? said Chuck.

?One alternative is to cut out all of the junk which we have done.?

Leann recalls how her daughters changed their lives.

?My daughter Kelly said to me, look mum you have to get off of the antibiotics,? said Leanne.

?She said to completely change my diet, start juicing and change everything...so I did. I was afraid that going off the antibiotics because I thought they were going to help me, but in actual fact they were not helping me because I was eating animals that have been given the antibiotics, and I was eating things that had [been sprayed with] pesticides and herbicides. Changing myself helped me within a month.?

Now nearly everything the Hanes family eats is organic. Since making the switch the family has noticed a huge benefit to their personal health.

?Even with me,? Chuck said, ?I have had severe allergies all of my life and in the last year and a half to two years since we have started eating pretty much all organic they have disappeared. Every last one of my allergies has disappeared, and something has to be said there, because that just doesn't happen for no reason. I am not taking any medications, or doing anything else differently.?

Both Chuck and Leann do their best to educate their customers on the benefits of eating organic when asked. When someone expresses interest they start off by telling them about the difference between eating factory farmed beef and grass-fed beef.

?The way I look at it is you either pay a little more now to eat organic, or you pay later with your health. It may cost bit more now, but if you don't have aches and pains and all of these other ailments later in life, and you ask yourself whether or not it was worth it [to eat organic] you will probably say it was. The good news is that the more people eat organic, the more the price will come down. It's all supply and demand.?

?Years ago when mad cow got started and we found out that they were feeding cows brains, blood and all that stuff I started asking myself what are we doing? It's wacky how this world has gotten so insensitive with what we put in our mouths.?

Chuck explained that there are two kinds of beef. There is stockyard beef [cows raised on a factory farm]that is force-fed with corn and grains; and there is grass-fed beef. Feeding cows foods they are not supposed to eat comes with consequences.

?They are not meant to eat corn and grains, they are meant to eat grass; that's the nature of the beast,? he said.

?When you start feeding them all of this corn and other stuff what it does is makes their stomachs upset and then they need antibiotics. They have to keep injecting them with antibiotics just to treat the inflammation.?

Chuck said the practice of feeding cows an unnatural diet began after World War Two when they had a surplus of corn, grains and other foods. After experimenting with this farmers observed that although the animals grew faster, they were sick. One of the biggest problems the Hanes family sees with consuming animals raised in extremely close proximity to one another on a factory farm is that the conditions they are kept in, breeds dangerous diseases that can be transferred to humans such as Listeria, E. Coli and Salmonella. This is why they are pumped full of so many antibiotics and chemicals. Furthermore when purchasing stockyard beef the consumer doesn't really know where the food they are eating is coming from.

?We make sure to do our homework before we purchase any products from a new farm."

?It is important to us that we are honest with our customers. If you are not honest with them you are dead in the water.?

Overall the couple believes that people are starting to learn what is good for them to eat is also good for the planet. Another important aspect of eating healthy for the Hanes family comes from supporting local farmers and food growers. With so many farmers' markets to pick from in the area, Chuck said it has never been so easy to shop locally.

?I am especially proud of the farmers markets in the Maynooth and Combermere area,? he said.

?What they are doing up there as far as the organics and good old-fashioned wholesome farming is tremendous. If you go up to Maynooth on a Saturday or Sunday it's packed everywhere. There is a really good market up in Comberemere as well, although I don't really go up there much since I am always working. My daughters always go there though and they love the produce. ?

The rumour of a big box grocer coming to town is of great concern to the Hanes family. They believe that if a retail giant such as Walmart enters the local market it could take away some of the opportunities people now have to buy local sustainable food in North Hastings.

?It's all about the bottom dollar with the bigger stores,? he said.

?To me all it does is bring in low paying jobs. Nobody makes a huge wage there. It doesn't make for a healthy town. It doesn't bring millionaires to town. It ruins the character of a town and it drains the downtown corridor. Especially in the off-season everybody has the same amount of money. Even if we are not competing on the same product, we are all competing for that dollar spent on it. If they go to Walmart and buy something?even if it is not food related?they won't have enough money l to come here and buy food. It just gets spread too thin. We are all competing for that same dollar whether it's me or the shoe store downtown or whoever we are all competing for the same thing.?

York River Meats is located at and is open from Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information contact 613-332-2325.