

this WEEK IN NIAGARA



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In Today's Edition of
NIAGARA this WEEK
* selected areas

This Week Newsroom, Thorold: 905-688-2444; Grimsby: 905-945-8392; Port Colborne: 905-834-5540

BY ASHLEY GUAY
STAFF

There seems to be a locavore outbreak in the Niagara Region — but that's not a bad thing.

A locavore is a term that was created two years ago in San Francisco when four women proposed that local residents should only eat food grown or produced within a 100-mile radius of their homes.

Now, with a new map created by the Niagara Culinary Trail, the ability for Niagara residents to become a locavore is at the tip of your fingers.

The Niagara Culinary Trail has more than 65 member farmers and producers. The map — a copy of which you can find in this edition of *Niagara This Week* — includes restaurants, retail, cafes, bakeries, bed and breakfasts, and wineries which offer Niagara grown produce.

"All of our members support the eat local initiative," said Magdalena Kaiser-Smit, project co-ordinator.

The map acts as a guide for residents and visitors to see where they can obtain locally grown produce or eat dishes prepared with local products.

**We want people to understand
how to buy and eat locally**

— Magdalena Kaiser-Smit

"We want people to understand how to buy and eat locally," said Kaiser-Smit.

Eighty-five-thousand copies of the maps were printed in June.

Kaiser-Smit said that buying local food is important for the economy because it keeps our dollars within our own community.

"It also strengthens our community," said Kaiser-Smit. "Pillars of community are established by supporting your neighbours."

She added that more people are buying local because of the way the food tastes — "local food is fresher" — and it places less strain on the environment when produce doesn't need to be imported. It also helps to build a trust relationship with the people around us who are growing our food.

The Niagara Culinary Trail is challenging Niagara residents to spend \$10 a week on local items.

"If the approximately 435,000 residents of Niagara spent just \$10 of their grocery budget on local foods each week, there would be a \$226 million influx into the local economy



Pascal Badaoul, executive chef at the Keefer Mansion Inn in Thorold, stands in his vegetable garden where he picks fresh veggies to add to his dishes.

ASHLEY GUAY/STAFF PHOTO

Long live the locavores

*With the help of the Niagara Culinary Trail,
eating local has never been so easy*

each year," said Kaiser-Smit. "Additionally, if visitors spent \$10 of their dining budget on local food when they came, there would be another \$120 million injected back into the local economy."

Another initiative the group is organizing

is the 100-kilometre kitchen. Kaiser-Smit said that this is done by Niagara College students and involves the creation of recipes for dishes which feature Niagara-grown food.

"We want to inspire residents and show them how to cook locally," said Kaiser-Smit.

One of the restaurants featured on the map is the Keefer Mansion Inn in Thorold. The menu shows dishes that feature local produce, such as Upper Canada gold cheese. This dish features golden fried cheese with a beet salad and vidalia onion dressing. Or there is the Ontario locavore salad which combines locally grown tomatoes, cucumbers, red onions, tri-colour peppers, feta cheese and romaine tossed in red wine and oregano vinaigrette.

The restaurant features a garden outside where people can watch as the chef picks fresh produce to create their meals.

Innkeeper Phil Ritchie said that a few months ago local inns decided to go to a more locally focused menu.

"It was primarily driven by two factors," said Ritchie. "To strengthen the local economy and to reduce the carbon impact of food transportation."

Ritchie said that the Keefer Mansion Inn has always had a local component — the trick was striking a balance between what guests want and making sure they can do it with enough supply.

"But quite frankly local food tastes better when it's fresh and picked when it's needed," said Ritchie, "as opposed to being stocked somewhere else."

Featherstone Estate Winery in Vineland has also jumped on board and is featured on the map. Mirroring vineyards in New Zealand, the winery has put spring lambs in their vineyards. The lambs basically do what people are paid to do and that is reduce the canopy growing on the grapes by eating the lower leaves.

"They're raising the lambs in a non-conventional way by allowing them to freely graze," said Kaiser-Smit.

Kaiser-Smit also said that there are particular chefs who strictly focus on utilizing local products and are already putting money down to purchase the lambs.

Cheryl Barnes owner of Inn the Pines, a farm on Seventh Street in St. Catharines grows vegetables for the simple fact that all her neighbours grow fruit. She runs a food stand everyday and says during the week she usually sees a minimum of 100 people a day.

"As well as having wine here, we have so much good food," said Barnes. "People should be eating out of their backyards. They shouldn't be eating from 3,000 miles away when the availability is right here."

The Niagara Culinary Trail also has a website to complement the map. For more information visit www.niagaraculinarytrail.com.