

'Huge culinary wealth' in Ontario, says author

City Green speakers tell people to eat locally and healthy

Ray Martin

Published on Apr 01, 2008



Left to right: Peter Katona of Waterloo Region Food Link, author Anita Stewart and farmer Steve Martin were the keynote speakers at Thursday's 15th annual City Green workshop. The event's theme promoted buying local produce like that found at the Cambridge Farmers' Market.

Members of Cambridge's City Green subcommittee want residents to look at the big picture the next time they go to the supermarket.

At Thursday's 15th annual workshop, the theme was eat locally, eat wisely and promoted buying domestic farm produce whenever possible.

Anita Stewart, one of three keynote speakers for the evening, told the 60 people in attendance that Canada's biodiversity is its greatest asset and in Ontario there is "a huge culinary wealth".

Stewart, who has authored 14 cookbooks, said Ontario now produces world class wines, beers, cheeses as well as a wide range top quality fruits, vegetables and grains.

"We have so much here, we are only limited by our imaginations," she said. "Ontario is an edible playground, strong, proud and delicious."

Apple grower Steve Martin added a farmer's perspective to the evening's theme.

"It's amazing in a society where we can send a man to the moon that the general public knows so little about their food," he said.

Martin said Canadians have forgotten their farming roots and there is now "a major disconnect" between farmers and urban people.

"We as farmers have to educate the people we come in touch with about what's involved in getting food here," he said.

Martin said eating locally doesn't come cheap and people can expect to pay a little more, but that cost is offset by the quality of the product. He also urged people to ask their supermarkets to buy locally whenever possible.

"I'm not suggesting we go back in time," he said. "We don't grow coffee or oranges, but we should buy Ontario whenever we can get it. Supermarkets will stock it if their customers demand it."

Peter Katona, executive director of Waterloo Region Food Link, echoed those sentiments noting that the 1,400 farms across the region provide one of the most diverse ranges of products available anywhere in Canada.

Over the last decade "there has been an awakening about local food - it's fresher," he said.

"A recent poll has found that people want to support local producers," he said.

"There is a guaranteed freshness with buying locally. A two-day old tomato grown here will taste fresher than one from overseas."

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