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**DISCOVERING STRATFORD'S MANY CHARMS
BEST ANTIQUING SPOTS ACROSS CANADA
FARM TO TABLE IN PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY**



Farm Fresh

Thanks to its natural bounty, Prince Edward County is home to a thriving farm-to-table scene.

BY CATALINA MARGULIS



Not quite an island, there is still a sensation of leaving the big city behind when you cross over the Trent-Severn Waterway canal to what locals warmly refer to as The County. Prince Edward County is a place where so many seek respite from the hustle and bustle of city life—via summer vacation, second-career aspirations, quaint retirement or simply coming home after seeing the world. Here, people come to get away from it all, putting down roots as they discover that everything they truly need is right here. Perhaps that’s why all things local—especially food—is flourishing in this picturesque community, just two and a half

hours outside of Toronto. So much so that some of Canada’s top chefs and restaurateurs are setting up shop in The County, drawn by its promising terroirs and deep sense of community.

“Everyone has a really good, connected reason for being here,” says Laura Borutski, sommelier and partner at The Hubb Eatery & Lounge at the supremely charming Angeline’s Inn. Borutski, a sommelier from the Ottawa Valley, and husband Elliot Reynolds, who is the chef and who hails from nearby Stirling, Ontario, came to Prince Edward County for the Taste festival six years ago and fell in love with it. After befriending the owners of Angeline’s, the couple partnered with the Fida



family, reconceptualizing and rebranding the much-loved Angeline's restaurant as The Hubb Eatery & Lounge, now in its fourth season. "Prince Edward County has an energy about it—you can feel that things are going to happen, and we wanted to be part of that wave going forward," says Borutski.

"What makes it special is the little family that we've got going here," she says. "We help each other get noticed, and that's what PEC is about, that sense of togetherness. It's growing, and everyone should benefit from it."

To that end, at The Hubb during growing season, veggies come from Hagerman's and Vicki's and chickens from Prinzen Farms up the road.



Toronto chef Jamie Kennedy has a 115-acre farm and vineyard in Prince Edward County, where he grows some of the food for his new summer dining series.

The wine list, too, is 90 percent local. Sometimes, area farmers even stop by with a sample of their latest harvest, asking if they want some. “In a big city, you lose that momentum and community feel, of showcasing neighbours,” Borutski says.

“Putting the name or face of who grew it makes it easier for us to find that passion of treating that vegetable or product with care and showcasing it,” she adds. “Then, if people enjoy it, we can say they’re right down that road. It creates a bridge for it, that people can then go visit

those wineries and farms. It’s a great selling point for what’s going on here.”

On a dilapidated farm, a quiet storm is brewing. After 15 years of putting his dream of developing the property on the back burner, Toronto culinary wunderkind Jamie Kennedy has now abandoned all else in favour of his passion project.

“As a cook, sourcing local provenance, always trying to meet producers, I had an interest in that connection and fostering those relationships,” he says. “Here we are 15 years

“Certainly as I grow older, I appreciate the rhythm of the farm, observing the seasons and all the things that go along with that.”

– *Jamie Kennedy*

later—I gave up the last of my restaurants last March and put myself squarely on the farm now. It’s the source of my inspiration and direction from this point forward.”

Geoff Heinrichs is a neighbour and friend of Kennedy’s, and was among the first to discover The County’s promising terroirs, which were not unlike those of Burgundy, France. Heinrichs wrote about his experience in *A Fool and Forty Acres* and introduced Kennedy to this land and its potential to grow food and vines. The savvy chef then purchased all 115 acres of it.

“I think Prince Edward is a place with a strong agricultural past,” says Kennedy. “It was once known as the ‘Garden of Canada.’ People talked about how good everything tasted that came out of the ground here. Then in 2007, PEC was given its own VQA designation, which gave it a whole new dimension as a wine-producing area and really gave it a boost. Now more and more artisan meat, poultry and fish producers are eager to find their own niche.”

Kennedy adds, “The last four decades have seen such an evolution [on the farm-to-table trend], and a proliferation of farmers’ markets. I just think that people have a growing distrust of the industrial economy and large-scale farming. I think in the last 20 years or so, there’s been more and more focus, for lots of reasons—primarily the environment, the economy. Certainly as I grow older, I appreciate the rhythm of the farm, observing the seasons and all the things that go along with that.”

Today, as Percheron horses Pippin and Lilly look on, Kennedy and his friends are building a brand-new greenhouse. It’s an unseasonably beautiful March day, and the earth looks rich and ready to proffer up the lettuce, tomatoes, beans, onions, garlic and potatoes he grows. But the greenhouse will allow him an earlier start on harvests, as well as the chance to grow some of the more delicate varieties—some of which he’ll include in his five-course menu as part of his



summer dining series, starting this June.

Every Saturday, from 5 p.m. on, guests will be wined and dined—harvest table style—on Kennedy’s serene farm property. They’ll also have the chance to meet and speak with local growers and producers about their goods, including Fifth Town Artisan Cheese Co., Kendall Dewey for fish, Vader’s (Mill Creek Farm) for lamb,

Thyme Again Gardens for pork and Vicki’s for vegetables.

“The idea,” he says, “is [to give] a bit of the farm experience, drawing people’s attention to the possibility of terroir gastronomy—the food and the wine, as well as the effort of the people involved. The takeaway is an exciting discovery when you look at it through the land.”

Indeed, it’s an evolution of the Knives & Forks movement



Cynthia Peters (centre) offers lessons and local culinary adventures from her heritage kitchen and From the Farm cooking school.

Kennedy, an early pioneer of farm to table, started almost 30 years ago, when, in 1989, he organized a coalition of environmentally informed chefs and farmers to foster southern Ontario cuisine.

“I began to feel that celebrating what we are capable of producing in our climate, seasonally, throughout the year, was a good place to start in terms of helping to evolve an identifiable food culture for southern Ontario,” says Kennedy. “It was an opportunity for conversation as well—[one] that had to do with awareness, featuring local producers and what was possible here, and establishing an identity, a point

of differentiation, away from cultural homogeneity.”

Another person who’s been championing Prince Edward County for years is Cynthia Peters, who runs From the Farm, a cooking school that showcases local foods and wines. As part of her culinary adventures, Cynthia takes participants to area markets to meet local growers and producers, picking up some of the ingredients along the way that they’ll use in their meal.

“I think the appeal of PEC is all that it has to offer, from the wine to the recreation and the heritage,” says Peters. “It draws people with a lot of opportunity to have a great experience while



Thyme Again Gardens

they're here. We all become friends, too. There's a small-island feel to the community."

Peters started From the Farm seven years ago, after moving here from Toronto, drawn by the food and wine. "Slow foods has been a big movement and helped people think differently about their foods," says Peters. "People want to know where their food comes from. It's great to see that people are making those choices."

At organic farm Thyme Again Gardens, the question arises: Local is great, farm to table, yes,



but what about best practices? Once the people know where their food comes from, the next logical question to ask is, How was it raised and grown?

Lorraine Schmid came here 18 years ago. A former Toronto landscaper, she set out to grow her own perennials and soon graduated to growing her own food.

Drake Devonshire



“All of it works synergistically together. We all need each other.”

– *Lorraine Schmid*

“I moved here and met some organic farmers and really connected with them,” says Schmid as she walks me through her not-so-quiet farm—cawing roosters, grunting pigs, clucking hens, buzzing bees and the family Doberman, Clarence, all fight to claim our attention.

As a result, Schmid and partner Lori Aselstine run their 115-acre certified-organic farm using organic farming practices and biodynamic principles. “All of it works synergistically together,” says Schmid. “We all need each other.”

Above a cacophony of guests arriving, music playing and plates being consumed and removed, the smell of freshness wafts in the air at the Drake Devonshire inn, an outpost of the popular Drake Hotel and resto bar in Toronto. A Cobb salad arrives deconstructed, as if to say, help yourself and make it to your liking. Weathered painted-wood floors, mix-and-match chairs and local greens gathered for centrepieces give it all a slightly homey—albeit carefully curated—vibe.

If not for the beautiful waterfront view, it would seem a family gathering like any

other. And a love for The County is evident here too, with ingredients sourced from as many local suppliers as possible—something chef Matt DeMille has valued since the beginning.

The farm-to-table and lake-to-table menu celebrates seasonal eating and locally sourced ingredients, using bread from Humble Bread, cheese from Fifth Town Artisan Cheese Co. and lamb from Dana Vader, along with produce from Hagerman Farms and Vicki's Veggies. Drake Devonshire has even collaborated with local winery Rosehall Run Vineyards to create their house wine, Vintner's Daughter.

Tasty salad and gourmet burgers consumed, the bill arrives. On the bottom of the receipt, a quote from author and naturalist Henry David Thoreau serves up more food for thought:

“Live each season as it passes; breathe the air, drink the drink; taste the fruit, and resign yourself to the influence of the earth.”

In Prince Edward County, we wouldn't dream of doing anything else.