

## Does supporting local farmers in Ontario help reduce poverty and improve food security in the city? By Mark-Jan Daalderop

This article is dedicated to showing the long term effects of purchasing seasonal produce from local farmers. Certainly in Canada, due to our harsh winters, purchasing locally is difficult. This doesn't however mean that we shouldn't buy locally whenever possible. Here are some reasons why purchasing local can decrease poverty and increase food access to city folk.

**The first reason:** purchasing produce directly from local farmers helps reduce poverty by employing farmers and by circulating money in the local economy.

Based on Statistics Canada 727,130 people lived/worked full time or part-time on farms in Canada (2001). In 2001 there were a reported 246, 923 farms in Canada (Stat. Can 2001). From 1995 to 2000 Ontario saw a decrease of 7792 mostly small farms. Farmers are being forced to leave their livelihood due to insufficient sales and little government support. We can assume, based on the number of rural ghost towns and the growth of major cities that farmers are leaving the farm and moving to the city. Of the 1 million people who moved to the city from 1996-2001, 20-25% were from rural areas. Loss of farms results in more people in our cities who are vying for limited jobs.

Purchasing local produce not only helps farmers to stay employed but it helps rural business stay open and keeps money circulating in our localized economy therefore increasing spending and employment.

**The second reason:** local farmer's knowledge of growing food represents our nation's ability to sustain ourselves if we should not have the ability to import food at a fair price. Here is a current example about how favoring cheaply imported produce over locally produced vegetables has created a national crisis in Mexico:

In Mexico, since the inception of NAFTA in 1994, cheap U.S. grain imports, heavily subsidized by U.S. taxpayers, have been undercutting local Mexican farmer's prices and this has subsequently destroyed the livelihoods of farmers and has driven millions of them off the land. In essence consumers and businesses chose to purchase cheap imported grains

instead of supporting their local farmers which resulted in massive job loss. Now with US corn prices rising to almost double in 6 months (due to ethanol production pushing up demand) and a loss of local corn farmers within Mexico, most Mexicans, who depend on corn for most of their dietary calories, must purchase imported corn at double the price. They now face serious issues of starvation, crime and increasing poverty.

Supporting local farmers is, in essence, an insurance policy that helps to a) keep the skills of farming within the country b) makes sure that even in times of global crisis and unstable global prices that we can feed ourselves.

**The third reason:** Continued support of farmers in Ontario will likely result in a lower cost of produce than imported produce due to rising oil prices.

With oil reserves and oil discoveries diminishing, oil prices will continue to rise. A report by FoodShare called "Fighting Global Warming at the Farmer's Market" shows how imported produce often travels 50 times the distance of local produce. Supporting organic agriculture is also important if oil prices are on the rise. Non organic farmers often use as much fossil fuel energy to produce corn as the food energy the corn releases. Unless we find another source of cheap energy to grow and transport our crops, local and local organic will be the less expensive choice.

Building a food system that is proactive, one that addresses some of the underlying causes of low-income and food insecurity, is important. Just as it is important to have agencies offering access to cheap or free food in emergency situations, it is equally important that some agencies address the causes of these food emergencies and put in place projects and systems to address them. This is why purchasing local is important to FoodShare.

**What's Local this week in our boxes:** Fingerling Potatoes (Eddy Pattyn Farm), Yukon Potatoes and Asparagus (Glen Huron Apples Ltd), Organic spring mix (Plan B farms), Organic Rhubarb, Chives and Spinach (John Wilson), Apples (Norfolk fruit growers) and cucumber, mushroom (food terminal).

# Food Share

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# recipes

## Persian Meat & Rhubarb Stew Serves 4

- 1 TBS Vegetable Oil
- 675 g/1-1/2lb Stewing Beef or Lamb
- 1 Large Onion, chopped
- 600ml/20fl.oz. Water
- 2 TBS Tomato Paste
- 1/2 tsp Turmeric
- 3 TBS Freshly chopped Parsley
- 3 TBS Freshly Chopped Mint
- pinch Saffron dissolved in 1 TBS hot water
- 450g/1lb Rhubarb, cut into 2.5cm/1 inch pieces
- 3 TBS Lemon Juice
- Salt and Black Pepper to taste

Heat the oil in a very large saucepan until hot. Add the meat and onions and brown. Add the water, tomato paste, turmeric, salt and pepper. Mix well, bring to the boil then reduce the heat, cover and simmer for 1 hour, stirring from time to time. Sauté parsley and mint in a little vegetable oil until wilted and beginning to crisp then add to the stew together with the with saffron. Continue to cook a further hour, stirring from time to time, or until the meat is beginning to fall apart. Add lemon juice and rhubarb mix well and cook until the rhubarb is tender but not falling apart, 5-10 minutes.

### Rhubarb Crisp

- 6 cups rhubarb, diced
- 2/3 cup light brown sugar
- 2 TBS melted butter
- 3 TBS flour
- 1 tsp cinnamon

#### Topping:

- 1/2cup flour
- 1 cup quick oat meal
- 1 cup light brown sugar
- 1/2 cup melted butter

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. In a mixing bowl, combine rhubarb, brown sugar, butter, flour and cinnamon. Spoon into a buttered medium casserole dish.

For topping: Combine the topping ingredients and a bowl. Sprinkle evenly over rhubarb mixture. Bake for 30 to 40 minutes. Test center to make sure rhubarb is cooked. Makes 8 servings

### Savory Rhubarb Sauce

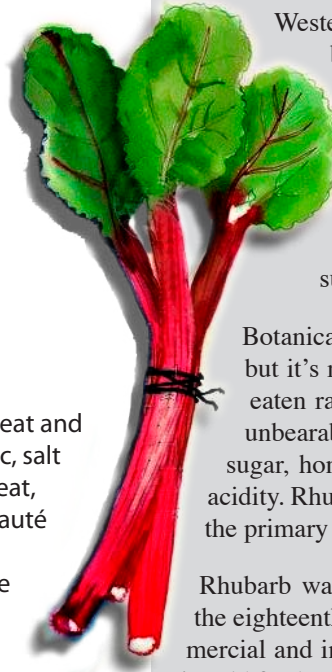
*This sauce goes really well with roast pork or pork chops.*

- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 2 cups rhubarb, chopped into 1cm lengths
- 1 cup white wine
- 2 TBS grated fresh ginger
- 1 TBS honey
- olive oil
- salt and pepper

In a medium saucepan, gently fry the onion in a little olive oil until softened. Add chopped rhubarb, wine, ginger and honey. Season and cook over low heat for 8 to 10 minutes until the rhubarb is cooked and the sauce is reduced.

## featured this week: RHUBARB

Rhubarb is a relative of buckwheat and has an earthy, sour flavor. Rhubarb thrives in cold climates and originated in Western China, Tibet, Mongolia, Siberia and neighboring areas. The traditional role was medicinal—the dried root was a popular remedy for a wide range of illnesses. Its primary function was to induce vomiting, although rhubarb is also a mild astringent. This medicinal role caused the price of the dried root to rise. Beginning in the eighteenth century, rhubarb began to be consumed in foods, primarily drinks and meat stews.



Botanically speaking, rhubarb is considered a vegetable, but it's most often treated as a fruit — though it's rarely eaten raw. Just like fresh cranberries, rhubarb is almost unbearably tart on its own and needs the sweetness of sugar, honey, or fruit juice added to it to balance out the acidity. Rhubarb's nickname is the "pie plant" because that is the primary use for this vegetable.

Rhubarb was introduced to the United States at the end of the eighteenth century. Today most rhubarb is frozen for commercial and institutional use; only about a quarter of the crop is sold fresh.

Fresh stalks are flat, not curled or limp. When stalks that have been pulled-not cut-from the field are available; choose them. Pulled stalks dry out less rapidly. Size is no indicator of tenderness. Deep red stalks are sweeter and richer.

Wrap rhubarb in plastic wrap and store it in the coldest part of the refrigerator for up to one week. Cooked and raw rhubarb both freeze well.

Cut off and discard and leaves (see warning). Rinse and trim from base and tip. You may peel or cut with the skin intact. Remember to cook only in non-aluminum pots only due to the acidic nature of rhubarb.

#### WARNING

Never eat rhubarb leaves, cooked or raw. Eating the leaves can be poisonous because they contain oxalate. This toxin, plus another unknown toxin also found in the leaves, has been reported to cause poisoning when large quantities of raw or cooked leaves are ingested.

## DELIVERIES

for the week of: May 22nd.  
orders are due 5 pm Tues. May 15th

for the week of May 29th  
orders are due 5pm Tues. May 22nd

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