

# SAVOUR

SERVE UP THE JEWELS OF ONTARIO'S FARMLAND  
 ALSO IN THIS ISSUE: ONTARIO HARVEST • HOW LOCAL IS UBER-LOCAL? •  
 GASTRO TRAVEL • FARM FRESH MARKETING • VQA RESTAURANTS

## Entrepreneurship of the Land



Duke blueberries, above; Killarney raspberries, right.

"Technology. It's got to stop!" declares Morris Gervais, referring to his unrelenting email, voice mail and faxes. Gervais owns Barrie Hill Farms, and he grows strawberries, blueberries, raspberries and vegetables, but essentially, what he does is run a small business, he says.

The romantic notion of the farmer as a dusty guy or gal on a tractor is outdated, he continues.

"The modern farmer is an entrepreneur," but before long, business ideas take a back seat to what really gets him going.

"I love growing things," he rhapsodizes. "I love the science of the soil, the wind and the rain, and the long spring and summer days. I wouldn't trade this life for anything." But he quickly adds that a farmer needs to have the stomach for risk. At the complete mercy of the weather, Gervais watched an entire crop of blueberries wiped out in 45 minutes by a hailstorm in 2005. The year before, it was an Arctic front.

Still, Gervais has full control over which varieties he plants. This year, there are two dominant strawberry varieties: Annapolis, bright red in colour, an early-harvest variety bred in Nova Scotia; and Jewel, deep crimson and bred more for its luscious shape and flavour than shelf life. In raspberries, he's planted Killarney, which is cold-resistant and was bred in Manitoba, and Prelude ripens early and was developed at Cornell University. Prelude gives Gervais an overlap season, with both strawberries and raspberries ready to pick at the same time. Five blueberry varieties are currently producing fruit: Blue Jay, Blue Ray, Northland, Patriot and Duke. Of these, Blue Jay tells the best story. It was the variety originally planted by Gervais Senior over a quarter century ago.

Today, the farm supports he and his wife, and their four children. The operation employs two full-time people who keep

Morris Gervais

the place humming. For planting, growing, pruning and picking season, 25 to 30 field workers join the team, as well as another 25 employees, mostly students, to help with the "pick-your-own" side of the business.

Local restaurants have become huge fans. "I love working with local chefs," says Gervais. "They all mention the farm as the source of their raw ingredients." Randy Feltis, chef-owner of Oscar's, stops by a couple of times a week to see for himself what he'd like to take back to the kitchen. Chef Kent Smith of Michael and Marion's serves his popular peak-strawberry mille feuille every year. Smith also takes his family to the farm for berry picking, which he says is just an excuse for a picnic.

Back in his office, Gervais is reconsidering what a pain technology is when he learns that Twitter is connecting communities of small farms, agricultural agencies, foodies and local-food enthusiasts. He signs up on the spot.

Within the hour, he is connected to Local Food Plus, Foodland Ontario, Ontario Field Crops, Holland Marsh, numerous small farms, a food writer or two, and a couple of pro-local chefs—and Coldplay. For Gervais, it looks like technology can keep going, for a little while at least.

[www.barriehillfarms.com](http://www.barriehillfarms.com)  
[www.oscarsrestaurant.ca](http://www.oscarsrestaurant.ca)  
[www.michaelandmarions.com](http://www.michaelandmarions.com)  
[www.twitter.com/BarrieHillFarms](https://twitter.com/BarrieHillFarms)





# Ontario Harvest

## Spreading the Goods, Spreading the Word

“One man, one truck,” says Neil Vandendool. That’s one of the ways he describes his new venture, Ontario Harvest—a restaurant distributor who gets local, unique and naturally raised meats into the hands of discerning chefs who care about flavour and sustainable animal husbandry.

“I see myself as a facilitator,” he continues. “I simplify sourcing of local Ontario meat products. Chefs see me every week. We talk about what’s coming up, and a trust develops,” explains Vandendool. Nothing proves trust better than good word of mouth.

He began connecting with chefs when the only thing he had for sale was his own elk meat. He started Rising Elk Farm in 1996 with a dozen or so animals. Today, he has a herd of 55, with 18 new ones on the way.

Vandendool is an aerospace engineer by training. He spent 15 years in technical sales and marketing, but it didn’t stick. Vandendool is a self-taught farmer [“I’m a multiple-interest kind of guy.”] and what developed at the same time is an impassioned stewardship of the land. “Sustainable, environmentally friendly, pasture-based agriculture is very important to me,” pronounces Vandendool. Who doesn’t listen to a guy who walks the talk?

Dropping off his elk orders, chefs began asking him for other meats, like

bison and fowl. “So I started sourcing them,” he says, which is how his distribution business got going.

Last year, to signify an official shift, he incorporated Ontario Harvest to create a distinct identity. He created a supply chain that includes high-quality beef, pork, veal, lamb, game and fowl, partnered with such suppliers as Top Meadow Farms, Conestoga Meats, Perth Pork Products, Everspring Farms, Rowe Farm Meats, Grass Roots Farms and Horizon Meats. On the receiving end are the Who’s Who of Ontario fine-dining. “I attract the high-end artisan chef,” reports Vandendool, “people who are big on locally produced, non-factory farm, unique, quality tastes.”

It’s not surprising that Toronto is very well represented on his customer list. “I just started delivering to Frank at the AGO,” he reports. Outside of the metropolis, Vandendool stops in at The Millcroft Inn, Elora Mill Inn, both Savour Ontario restaurants, Cucci and Trattoria Timone in Oakville, La Toscana in Milton, The Blacktree and Spensor’s in Burlington. He also has customers in Kitchener-Waterloo, Guelph, Fergus, Mississauga, Alton and Erin. Little wonder Vandendool is thinking about adding a second truck soon.

[www.ontarioharvest.ca](http://www.ontarioharvest.ca)

*Rising Elk Farm, top; Vandendool, centre; kitchen butchery, bottom.*

# On-Farm Sales Rocket

## Better and Better Each Year

The Ontario Farm Fresh Marketing Association has been working with farmers to develop the entrepreneurial strength of their on-farm markets since 1973. The heart of the association’s work is to promote direct sales and provide the knowledge required to run a customer-oriented business at a profit. A recent study shows that 72 per cent of the participating farms had better sales last year than they did the year before; and 17 per cent of these farms have annual sales of \$1 million or more. “We’re particularly excited about the loyalty and support we’re seeing from consumers,” remarks OFFMA’s Cathy Bartolic, “and farms are really excited about the growth.” [www.ontariofarmfresh.com](http://www.ontariofarmfresh.com)

*Young family visits Springridge Farm, Milton.*





Grand historic residence reborn as Keefer Mansion Inn, left. Ontario beef tenderloin with potatoes Dauphinoise, above.

## How Local is Uber-Local? Grand Mansion Becomes Foodie Boutique Inn

When the talk around the town turned to demolishing Maplehurst, a grand 19th-century mansion that had seen many better days, Phil Ritchie was living two blocks away and working, a little unhappily, as a management consultant. Luckily for Ritchie, an exciting prospect began taking shape in his mind.

He had an idea and gathered around it the emotional momentum of some heritage activists and the mayor herself, and by the time they were done, a sweet spot of local history became modern and well-appointed once again.

"The city played a critical role," explains Ritchie, giving the municipality of Thorold due credit. It took three years to restore the mansion and turn it into a boutique inn, with many new flourishes, including its name. Maplehurst became Keefer Mansion Inn, named for the illustrious family of enterprising engineers and builders

whose contributions to the province include Welland Canal, the Maple Leaf Flour Mill, the federal Parliament buildings and the country's first suspension bridge, which connected Ottawa to Hull.

So close to wine country, Ritchie knew that the inn would have to have some serious culinary chops, which explains why Chef Pascal Badaoui runs the kitchen. Badaoui is a native Frenchman with five-star training in his hometown of Toulouse, and experience cooking in Paris, Spain and California. "Sixty per cent of what I cook here is French in style," says Badaoui, and his local buying is done mostly at the Welland Farmer's Market. "I live in Welland," he explains, "so I'm always dropping by to see what's looking good."

From meat to cheese and all the fruits and vegetables in between, Badaoui's menu is abundant with local food: Ontario beef from The Butcher

Shoppe, greens from Tree and Twig Farm, artisan vegetables from Dave Irish, fruit from Whitty Farms, fresh herbs come from Daniel, maple syrup from White Meadows and Upper Canada Cheese Company brings the best of its products for Badaoui to work his magic. From May to October, the only item that's not local at the inn is seafood. "You've gotta give your guests a sea scallop or two every now and then," jokes Ritchie.

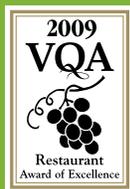
The inn's food is also über-local, a term that could apply to the chef's on-site vegetable patch. A gardener tends to it so that it will yield a full season of Keefer vegetables, and it does. Last year, the garden produced enough beans for the entire high-season months.

Beginning in May, the inn hosts "Foodie Fridays," inviting local farmers, cheese-makers, charcuterie artisans and wineries to showcase their work. They engage the curiosity of Ritchie's guests and their appreciation of food, and Badaoui chooses something to feature that night for dinner, connecting the guest and the producer in an authentic local food experience.

Ritchie's proud of his efforts to keep the food as local as possible and is pursuing an LFP [Local Food Plus] designation this year. Explains Ritchie about how he connects local product to his guests' plates: "It's our way of connecting the dots."

[www.keefermansion.com](http://www.keefermansion.com)

## VQA Restaurants Get Recognized



As consumers develop their taste for local food, their taste for local wine grows, too. The bottom line proves it. Our wine industry generates \$529 million in revenue and employs nearly 7,000 people. The sale of one litre of Ontario wine puts \$8.48 into the province's economy. Foreign wine sales contribute only 67 cents.

To recognize restaurants that contribute significantly to these sales,

Wines of Ontario bestows a VQA Restaurant Award of Excellence every year. To qualify, a restaurant must meet a set of criteria concerning how many and what kind of VQA wines are sold. Stand up and be counted. Get the recognition you deserve. The application can be downloaded from the website. The deadline is June 19. [www.WinesOfOntario.org](http://www.WinesOfOntario.org)

# Member Restaurants



## Greater Toronto Area

### Toronto

360 The Restaurant @ The CN Tower

Amuse-Bouche

Canoe Restaurant and Bar

Chez Victor

Cowbell

Crush Wine Bar

Czechoski

EPIC

Frank Restaurant / Art Gallery of Ontario

George Restaurant

Globe Bistro

Il Fornello

Jamie Kennedy at the Gardiner

Jamie Kennedy Wine Bar & Restaurant

Pangaea

Reds Bistro

Sequel Restaurant & Catering

Six Steps

Splendido

The Drake Hotel

The Harbord Room

The Old Mill Inn and Spa

Veritas

Vertical

## South Central

### Ancaster

Ancaster Old Mill

### Burlington

Spencer's at the Waterfront

### Grimsby

13 Mountain Street

### Jordan

On the Twenty

### Niagara-on-the-Lake

Escabeche, Prince of Wales Hotel (Vintage Inns)

Hillebrand Estates Winery Restaurant

LIV

Niagara Culinary Institute

Restaurant Oban Inn

Riverbend Inn

Shaw Café and Wine Bar

Peller Estates

The Charles Inn

Zee's Patio & Grill

### Port Dalhousie

Treadwell – Farm to Table

### Thorold

Keefer Mansion Inn

### Waterford

The Belworth House

## North East

### Cobourg

Woodlawn Inn Restaurant

### Eagle Lake

Sir Sam's Inn

### Fenelon Falls

Eganridge Inn, Country Club & Spa

### Gananoque

Gananoque Inn

The Athlone Inn

Trinity House Inn

### Huntsville

Birches Restaurant, Hidden Valley Resort

The Eclipse at Deerhurst

### Keene

Elmhirst's Resort

### Kingston

Luke's Gastronomy

### Merrickville

Sam Jakes Inn

### Ottawa

Absinthe

Courtyard Restaurant

Domus Café

Fraser Cafe

Murray Street

Perspectives

The Capital Dining Room

### Port Severn

Severn Lodge

### Sudbury

Ristorante Verdicchio

## Prince Edward County

### Bloomfield

Angeline's Restaurant, Inn & Spa

Bloomfield Carriage House Restaurant

### Pictou

Amelia's Garden at The Waring House

Clara's Fine Dining at the Claramount

Harvest

Merrill Inn

## West

### Alton

The Millcroft Inn and Spa

### Bayfield

The Little Inn of Bayfield

### Cambridge

Langdon Hall Dining Room & Terrace

### Elora

Elora Mill Inn

### Exeter

Eddington's

### Fergus

The Breadalbane Inn

### Goderich

Benmiller Inn & Spa

### Guelph

Artisanale

Borealis Bar and Grille

### Kincardine

Harbour Street Brasserie

### Kitchener

Verses

### London

Garlic's

Idlewyld Inn

### Paincourt

Stargazers on the Thames

### Port Stanley

Kettle Creek Inn

M.E. & Suzie's

### Southampton

Grosvenor's of Southampton

### St. Marys

The Westover Inn

Woolfy's at Wildwood

### Stratford

Bijou

Foster's Inn Restaurant

Rundles

Sophisto-Bistro

The Church Restaurant

The Old Prune

### Waterloo

Charbries

Hannah's Bella Bistro

Rushes – Waterloo Inn and Conference Centre

### Wellington

The Devonshire Inn on the Lake

Declare your commitment to the quality & sustainability of local food.

**Join Savour Ontario.**

## Why buying local is good for business:

“Buying local forces everyone to put their best foot forward. You're a better buyer because you don't order by formula, even though it's more convenient. You're a better cook, because local food tastes better. You're a better operator because contributing to your community's economic growth brings business back to your door. You're a better global citizen because you support sustainability.”

*Jonathan Gushue*  
Executive Chef, Langdon Hall  
[www.langdonhall.ca](http://www.langdonhall.ca)

## Gastro Travel

In 2005, the Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance identified five regions that were primed as gastronomic destinations: Niagara, Prince Edward County, Muskoka, Ottawa and Toronto. At the time, Rebecca LeHeup-Bucknell was promoting Prince Edward County, and her success in attracting visitors can be measured in the tens of thousands. In late 2008, she became OCTA's Executive Director and is working that same magic across the province, which makes OCTA a valued Savour Ontario partner. “We are working towards the same goal,” says LeHeup-Bucknell, which she characterizes as “ensuring sustainable agricultural resources by getting producers and chefs to re-engage, to support the distribution process, develop tourism experiences and to share our story and tell it with pride.” [www.OntarioCulinary.com](http://www.OntarioCulinary.com)



# Savour Ontario



# Ontario

The Savour Ontario Dining program was developed in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the Ministry of Tourism, and the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation, and is part of the Pick Ontario Freshness initiative. The program is designed to promote fresh, high-quality Ontario foods and to make them the preferred choice of consumers, retailers and restaurants. Contact us at [Savour@Ontario.ca](mailto:Savour@Ontario.ca)

# SAVOUR SUMMER SIZZLER

Hot on grilling, Savour Ontario's marketing plan for Summer 2009 makes June all about Beef, July about Berries and August about Tender Fruit. Get inspired for your warm-weather promotions.



**JUNE:**

## Meat Matters

When grill meets meat, no one is paying more attention than your clientele. Expectations are high, and they want to eat local. No worries. The quality of the meat does the lion's share of your work.

Summer is green, fresh and bright. So is chimichurri, the rich Argentine herb sauce created especially for grilled meat.

Basic ingredients: fresh parsley, oregano, thyme, cilantro, onions, capers, red wine vinegar, lemon juice, olive oil, pulsed like a nut-free pesto.

Best served the same day at room temperature.

To style the flavours, play with proportions. Make it strong on cilantro, with less vinegar and lime instead lemon juice, and you have the start of an Asian plate. Make it Latino with jalepeño and chopped green olive. Cut the cilantro and oregano and go Provençal.

Chimichurri loves lamb, as well as chicken and fish. Go lighter on the acids, capers and thyme for these latter two. For Berkshire pork, pull out all the stops. This newly beloved dark meat can take it.



**JULY:**

## Small is Big

Berries are summer's tiny, brilliant reminders that there are never enough days in the summer, so make the most of every morsel. Berries in season are so exquisite, they're really best naked, with maybe a touch of cream. Nothing else. Let some wine do the rest.



**AUGUST:**

## Wonderful Soft Savoury Fruit

A quirky, colourful savoury fruit salsa is a beautiful hot-weather finish to a piece of grilled chicken or fish. Basic ingredients: cherries, apricot, red onion, basil, lime juice, lime zest, olive oil. Season the fruit with coarse salt and a touch of cracked black pepper. Best made close to service. Keep refrigerated.

Grilled peaches, nectarines, pears and plums made savoury give

the plate great contracts in flavour, temperature and texture. For best results, use very cold fruit on the hottest spot of the grill. Sprinkle with coarse sea salt just off the grill, and basil chiffonade on its way to the table to release the herb scent. As a salad, go with arugula, tarragon vinaigrette and chili-glazed almonds. As a main, add rapini, and couscous with currants and olives.

## Berries & Wine

Sparkling Wine is a natural, classic match, balanced and refreshing.

Sparkling Rosé gets its berry qualities and colour from contact with grape skins.

Red Wine Ice Wine has distinctive berry characteristics and the sweetness to give the meal a dulcet finish.

# What's in Season When

FRUITS	JUN	JUL	AUG
Apples *			x
Apples**	x		
Apricots		x	x
Blueberries		x	x
Cherries, Sweet	x	x	
Cherries, Sour		x	
Currants, Red & Black		x	x
Gooseberries		x	x
Grapes, Blue			x
Muskmelon			x
Nectarines			x
Peaches, Freestone			x
Peaches, Semi-freestone		x	x
Pears, Claps, Favourite, Bartlett			x
Plums, Yellow		x	x
Plums, Blue, Prune			x
Raspberries, Yellow		x	x
Rhubarb, Field	x		
Strawberries	x	x	
Watermelon			x

VEGETABLES	JUN	JUL	AUG
Asparagus	x		
Beans, Green & Wax	x	x	x
Beets, With Tops		x	x
Beets, Without Tops		x	x
Broccoli	x	x	x
Cabbage	x	x	x
Carrots		x	x
Cauliflower	x	x	x
Celery		x	x
Corn, Sweet		x	x
Cucumber, Field & Greenhouse	x	x	x
Eggplant			x
Garlic		x	x
Leeks			x
Lettuce	x	x	x
Mushrooms	x	x	x
Onions, Green & Cooking	x	x	x
Parsnips			x
Peas, Green	x	x	
Peas, Snow	x	x	x
Peppers, Sweet Green		x	x
Peppers, Sweet Yellow/Red			x
Peppers, Hot Green, Yellow, Red			x
Peppers, Greenhouse***	x	x	x
Potatoes		x	x
Radicchio	x	x	x
Radishes	x	x	x
Rapini		x	x
Rutabaga	x	x	x
Spinach	x	x	x
Sprouts	x	x	x
Squash			x
Sweet Potatoes	x	x	x
Tomatoes, Field		x	x
Tomatoes, Greenhouse	x	x	x
Zucchini		x	x

## Did you know?

The Crusaders found raspberries on their way to Jerusalem and wrote odes to their beauty and perfume.

The word "apricot" comes from *praecocia*, Latin for "precocious," because it ripens earlier than the other summer fruits.

Pears are sometimes referred to as the "butter fruit," for the soft, buttery, melting quality of their flesh.

Blueberries are blue thanks to anthocyanin, the water-soluble pigment that ranges from blue to red.

The blush of a peach indicates variety, not ripeness.

For botanists, strawberries are sometimes referred to as a "false fruit," because the gold "seeds" on the outside are technically the fruit, and the true seeds are the miniature white specks at the berry's core.

### Sources:

Ontario Tender Fruit Producers; [www.ontariotenderfruit.com](http://www.ontariotenderfruit.com)  
 Ontario Berry Growers Association; [www.ontarioberries.com](http://www.ontarioberries.com)  
 Foodland Ontario; [www.foodland.gov.on.ca](http://www.foodland.gov.on.ca)  
 Balsillie's Fruit Farm; [www.mnsi.net/~dbalsill](http://www.mnsi.net/~dbalsill)  
*The Food Encyclopedia* by Jacques L. Rolland and Carol Sherman,  
 Robert Rose Books



## New varieties for 2009

### Strawberries

V 151 & Wendy: early-season large-fruited berries  
 Valley Sunset: late-harvest variety, producing very large fruit  
 Albion: produces large fruit and can be picked into October

### Raspberries

Prelude: medium-sized fruit, very early fruiting  
 Autumn Britten: fall-fruited; picking from mid-August to frost

### Blueberries

Draper & Aurora: because blueberries take longer to fruit, it will take a few years before we can know how these two perform.

Source: Kevin Schooley, Executive Director, Ontario Berry Growers Association  
[www.ontarioberries.com](http://www.ontarioberries.com)



\*Jerseymac, Tyderman, Paulared, Early McIntosh  
 \*\* Red Delicious, Northern Spy, Golden Delicious, Ired, Crispin  
 \*\*\*Greenhouse Red, Yellow, Orange

Source: Foodland Ontario

Savour Ontario