

"One cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well." - Virginia Woolf (1882-1941)



Nanaimo Foodshare: Local Food Matters

by David Morrison

Like anyone, I think about food a lot. This year I have pondered it more than usual, simply because for the first time in my life last year I started growing my own vegetables. Yet when I think of food I have always done so well beyond the everyday ways we all naturally think of it. Obviously far from unusual in this regard, I have made many political and/or lifestyle decisions concerning food, such as opting not to purchase or consume this or that because I do not agree with how it might reach my plate, or which company is responsible for delivering it there, so to speak.

And I think a lot about the inexcusable failings of our species when it comes to food: gluttony, hunger and waste. Although the issues behind the scenarios are often complex, like any right-minded individual I remain bewildered as to how people anywhere – including my community and yours – can go hungry when across the board we waste so much. Food is, of course, a human right, as it is to be free from hunger, so I loudly applaud such as the recent French legislation demanding

that supermarkets give unsold food to charities in dire need of it, rather than destroy it. And I utterly despair that Canada as a whole wasted an estimated \$31 billion worth of food in 2014. Although this would include retailers, restaurants and so forth, this equates to over \$865 worth of wasted food for every single person in the country. Read those figures again, and be outraged!

It is clear that even in the year 2015 we have so much to learn about managing our food resources, and even what is and is not healthy and nutritious for us, but at least we are fortunate to have proactive individuals and organizations out there committed to educating us to this end. In my city, the non-profit charity Nanaimo Foodshare is one such organization.

Founded in 2000, Nanaimo Foodshare is a multi-faceted body with an all-volunteer Board that through its various programs and activities is fully engaged with the community in respect of its over-arching aims. As General Manager Jen Cody explains, their mission is "to help people to develop the skills they need to have good food." That may

look simple enough on paper, but that there is a need for organizations of this nature at all is proof enough that it is not.

"We build community food security and our focus is to build a local sustainable community food system," Cody continues. "Education is the most important part of what we do." If the term 'food security' is unfamiliar, the World Health Organization defines it as a situation that 'exists when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life.'

Nanaimo Foodshare and their contemporaries across Canada look to increase food security in their respective communities. This ongoing process involves educating people to prioritize purchasing locally or provincially grown - and organic - produce whenever possible; patronizing stores and farms that sell local food (a mentality that I preach should be applied to any kind of local product);

continued on page 16

using fresh food over processed or convenience food, and also sharing any excess food.

Since launching it in 2003 one Nanaimo Foodshare initiative concerning the latter aspect has been the promotion of the ancient practice of gleaning.

For the uninitiated, gleaning is quite simply the perfect way to deal with an excess amount of vegetables, fruits or nuts grown in backyards or on farms. Nanaimo Foodshare volunteers pick or gather the produce and haul it away to be responsibly distributed, such as to family and friends and donations to the food bank. With such an abundance of it grown locally, right there is one easy way to combat waste in the form of saving produce from needlessly rotting. In just twelve years gleaning organized by Nanaimo Foodshare has collected over seventy metric tons of vegetables, fruits and nuts, benefiting thousands of people directly, and even more via twenty-one community agencies.

Other educational initiatives that Nanaimo Foodshare have introduced apply a 'get 'em while they're young' philosophy. The Farm 2 School program, for example, aims to improve nutrition and educate elementary schoolchildren (within School District #68) as to the importance of eating healthily via an 'All You Can Eat' salad bar of locally grown produce, for just \$4 per child. Guest speakers from local farms talk to the kids about their produce and how it is grown, thereby sowing seeds of interest in healthy living at an impressionable age. What's more, the concept is adaptable, so also available for parties and all manner of other functions, for children and adults alike.

In operation for ten years now, the Summer Lunch Munch is another program aimed squarely at keeping children eating healthily during the months when school is out. Aimed at 9 to 12-year olds, as the name implies Kids Get Cooking provides children with the skills to prepare delicious,

healthy meals, while an additional gardening component takes the kids from planting seeds to cooking with what they have grown.

In partnership with John Barsby Community School, a similar, free eight-week after-school Nanaimo Foodshare program named Scratch teaches students in grades 8 to 10 how to plan and prepare meals.

This is all very good work, yet there is much more to the services and programs Nanaimo Foodshare

and their ilk provide (such as the Lush Valley Food Action Society in Courtenay: lushvalley.org / (250) 331 0152. Contact the organizations directly for full information.). Additionally, Nanaimo Foodshare is hands-on involved with several high profile, food-oriented annual events in the city. Most reading will have heard of Seedy Sunday, taking place at various locations around Vancouver Island from January to March each year, but next up for 2015 is the wonderful Harvest Festival.

From 11:00 am to 5:00 pm on Saturday September 12, Wesley Street in Nanaimo's Old City Quarter will host this celebration of the bounty of the season with lots of live music, guest speakers, fun activities for the whole family and, of course, lots of fresh produce and other goods on sale. Entry is by donation, with collected donations going to Nanaimo Foodshare.

Then on September 26, a brand new event named Feastival is to be held at the Vancouver Island Conference Centre (VICC) on Commercial Street. From 8:00 am to 4:00 pm, just about every aspect of all things locally culinary will be packing three rooms of the VICC in a showcase being labelled the 'mid-Island's premiere food-to-fork event.' It promises to be excellent.

I hope to be at both Feastival and the Harvest Festival, but in the meantime I have been taking notes, if you will, and continuing to apply Nanaimo Foodshare's core philosophies to my daily life. Indeed, for dinner this evening my wife and I had wholemeal pasta with homemade pesto from our own basil, cherry tomatoes and zucchinis from our garden, and some green beans 'gleaned' from a friend's garden. Delicious, nutritious, and as locally grown as can be achieved.

Nanaimo Foodshare is located at 271 Pine St., Nanaimo, and open 8:00 am to 4:00 pm daily, Monday to Friday. For further information please visit www.nanaimofoodshare.ca or telephone (250) 753 9393.

FUNERAL SERVICE & CREMATORIUM

Yates



Ron & Jo-Anne Yates

Our family has proudly served the Oceanside communities since 1998. We believe in providing the highest level of service in a professional and affordable manner, without compromising our commitment to reliable and respectful service to our families.

Family-owned. Funeral provider for Members of the Memorial Society of B.C.

1000 Allsbrook Road, Parksville • 250-248-5859
www.yatesfuneral.ca