



WENDY'S COUNTRY MARKET

Feeds Mind, Body and Soul

This unpretentious former 1860s schoolhouse is the home of Wendy's Country Market

By Lorraine Payette

Food, glorious food! Everyone enjoys it, everyone needs it and for those who demand the best in quality, there's nothing like a good slow food meal. Imagine sitting down to beautiful baked honey custard and knowing the name of the cow that produced the milk, the chickens who gave the eggs and the bees that collected nectar from a particular pasture of flowers to get the sweetener.

This is the joy of shopping at Wendy's Country Market and Wendy's Mobile Market, on Fortune Line Road in Lyndhurst. Wendy Banks and Rick Trudeau have established this tiny independent business on Corn Acre Farms, a large and successful farm owned by Banks' parents. Everything they sell comes right from the local area.

"I'm a sixth generation farmer who has always had a strong interest in agriculture

and our local economy," said Banks. "I spoke with the group Local Flavours and a number of the local food producers, and saw there was a real need to be able to connect consumers and restaurants with them. Knowing where your food is from and how it is produced helps give us a healthier food system for everyone."

Things started modestly in 2006 when Banks and her husband, Trudeau, were able to unite 10 farmers with 10 customers using a van and two freezers for cold storage. Simple roots grow strong, and their hard work and dedication continue to pay off. Today they have more than 70 producers and hundreds of customers in a roughly 100-mile radius. They serve not only the individuals and families who drop in or order on-line, but also restaurants and independent retailers throughout

Leeds-Grenville and west to points like Kingston and Napanee.

"It's all about keeping agriculture alive and well in our area," said Banks. "When farms and farmers do well, local people do well. The food they get is fresh and high quality. Unlike the big chain stores who import their products from huge corporate farms far away, we know our growers and producers personally. If I want to know more about a piece of meat, or a basket of vegetables, I pick up the phone and call the producer directly. I can ask all of my questions, get the right answers, and pass this knowledge on to my customers. The large stores can't do that."

For years the trend had been away from agriculture, moving instead into subdividing the land, bringing in houses and development and depending on food from unknown sources. However, young people are beginning to see this as a threat to everything they hold dear – their independence, their health, their ability to survive in the areas in which they grew up – and they are starting a return to the farms.

Many of the new farmers have had little or no experience, so they reach out to the older generations for guidance. Banks often receives calls asking for advice, anything from which seeds produce best in the local soil to whether animals vaccinated against certain illnesses can still be considered organic.



There are many reasons to go organic. Several years back, Banks had been running a greenhouse and became aware of the chemical/environmental sensitivities which were wreaking havoc on people's bodies. She looked for foods that could be eaten safely and which would restore health. She became acquainted with local farmers and suppliers who could produce everything that was needed right in the local area. Soon after, she found that there were local restaurants and private individuals all looking for this safer, healthier alternative. This quickly grew into a network of suppliers and consumers all happy to not only meet and know each other, but to have Banks and Trudeau there to bring them together and keep the connections moving along.

The store is a wonderful place to browse, to visit and to find food and craft items you weren't quite expecting. Nestled in among the jars of honey and homemade preserves are fresh fruits and vegetables in season, locally made cheeses waiting to be cut and wrapped to order, and freezer after freezer of the highest quality

locally produced meats. Supper getting a little blasé? There are a myriad of meats to choose from for that special entrée – perhaps some venison patties or bison filet would strike your fancy. Something smaller and sweeter perhaps, rabbit might be just the ticket, or locally caught perch. Other meats in the listing include wild boar, elk, lamb, and goat as well as the traditional beef, pork and chicken. Rainbow trout is available, and you can throw in a little lamb, bacon, or sausage to add that special touch. Banks' parents supply a large quantity of the vegetables for sale, and are proud to continue the local foods tradition by bringing in an 8th generation of family members to work on the farm.

"We're all about variety while bringing the community closer together through food," said Banks. "Fresh ideas, fresh perspectives, and good quality, wholesome food produced right here at home. We need a food system that's based on farmers in our communities growing healthy, sustainable food. We need a food system we can trust!" LH

Clockwise: Always time for a joke and a smile; The store is filled with locally produced food items; Locally produced gourmet cheeses and sausages; It's fun to feed the animals

EDITOR'S NOTE: For more on Wendy's Country Market and Wendy's Mobile Market, go to <http://www.wendysmobilemarket.com/> and http://www.wendycountrymarket.com/_index.php. Contact them at (613) 928-2477, by e-mail at wmobilemarket@ripnet.com or visit the store at 408 Fortune Line Road, Lyndhurst, Thursday – Saturday, 11:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m., Sunday 11:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.