

Member of Edible Communities

edible TORONTO®

AND THE GOLDEN HORSESHOE

No. 23 • Spring 2013

SPRING RENEWAL

The passage from little to plenty

A GOOD EGG

Tasting of fresh air and sunshine

IN THE SHADOW
OF A PERSIMMON TREE

Native edibles



Thyme Again Gardens Bed and Breakfast

A farm away from home

BY VAN WAFFLE

Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food. According to this prescription scribbled by Hippocrates, the best drug store is a farm. The ancient Greek physician, commonly referred to as the Father of Modern Medicine, could not have imagined the fake food so widely consumed some 2,500 years later. Lorraine Schmid regards the wholesome, delicious meals grown and served at her farmstead bed and breakfast as an agent of healing.

The ideal farm of any era would function on biodynamic principles, drawing nourishment directly from the earth. Rather than operating far away, it would employ the community in its own health system. This is what Thyme Again Gardens Bed and Breakfast in Prince Edward County brings to the table.

Although I have never lived on a farm, returning there already feels like going home. My partner Danny and I discovered it last May on our way somewhere else. We'd taken a weekend side trip to enjoy two things that make the County famous: bird migration and wineries. By word of mouth, we found this bed and breakfast.

We did not have a farm in mind, but places well rooted in the land have ways of rooting in the heart. Thyme Again Gardens offers many attractions – a spacious Victorian parlour, jaunty roosters, Gloria the llama guarding her sheep, a sprawling market garden and, especially,

delicious, expansive breakfasts. But it is hosts Lorraine and her partner Lori Aselstine who, through conversation, leave the most lasting impression.

On a winter evening, nearing Thyme Again Gardens for a second visit, our headlights pick up road signs with evocative names like Carrying Place and Gardenville. Scatterings of homes glimmer in the distance along Smokes Point Road, but the porch light of one particular rambling farmhouse shines like a beacon. Lorraine and Lori come smiling out to greet us. As soon as our bags are stowed upstairs, we convene in the parlour to discuss plans for the next two days. Conversation quickly turns to food.

Since we met last spring, Lorraine has been busy completing the program to become a certified nutritional practitioner through the Institute of Holistic Nutrition (IHN) in Toronto. Her studies – exploring food as medicine – have enabled her to offer meals for guests on restricted diets, including dairy- or nut-free, and to offer holistic nutritional counselling based on farm produce. It is the latest step in her creative progress from visual artist to landscape designer, farmer and healer. The kitchen is her health practice. “Food is what keeps us healthy. Food gives us joy,” Lorraine advocates.

Her breakfast table highlights farm flavours and aromas but also the alchemy of well-being. Last spring I inadvertently tested her aspirations. Being gluten-sensitive, I always travel with safe emergency rations. On our first visit, Lorraine welcomed the challenge to prepare



her first gluten-free meal. The results were golden. Her waffles were the best I had tasted in my five years on this diet.

Breakfasts here are designed to prepare guests for a day of mucking out the barn or perhaps tramping around Presqu'île Provincial Park to spy a migrating tanager. A typical menu might consist of lemon-lime waffles with pure local maple syrup, eggs poached in bacon cups, fruit salad, artisanal cheese, Paleo-diet muffins made with beets, carrots, raisins and apples, and tea or coffee with unpasteurized milk. Eggs, milk, bacon, and seasonal fruits and vegetables all come from the farm.

According to Lorraine, livestock play an integral role in nurturing the land and appealing to visitors. “Everybody here has a job,” she explains, “including the humans. The pigs are not just providing us with amazing meat but they are also rooting up new fields for us. They reduce our tractor hours. Not only that; there is the joy we get from them.” Chickens also provide valuable service in the garden: “Every year we have [fewer] insect problems.”

The B&B's market garden provides the bounty for a community-supported agriculture (CSA) program. Every week during the summer, local customers can order from an emailed listing of whatever vegetables are available. Eggs are optional. This year Lori and Lorraine plan to offer a basket drop-off program in Toronto.

Meanwhile the bed and breakfast brings people back in touch with the food they eat. I spoke with Lydie Labeca-Gordon, a repeat visitor to the farm who works in Toronto as a director of human resources. She has always lived in metropolitan areas, growing up in Paris, France, and then moving to Montreal and finally Toronto. She and some friends were looking for a girls weekend getaway location three years ago and found the Thyme Again Gardens website. She liked that guests are invited to participate in farm operations.

“It's almost primal,” says Labeca-Gordon. “You go back to your roots, being able to see things growing naturally. It's fully organic, but it goes even further. It is really the relationship [Lorraine and Lori] have, not only with their animals, but with what they are growing. It takes you on a different journey.”

Labeca-Gordon has stayed at the B&B at least ten times. “Now it is really hard to go anywhere else,” she admits. “You are spoiled once you go there. They make you a part of the farm family.”

As fibre artists, Danny and I cannot complete our pilgrimage without visiting the sheep. Several come bleating to meet us. Guard llama Gloria regards us with her careful, honest gaze. Back at the house, Lorraine and Danny compare notes about the wool qualities of different breeds and how to wash fleece.


The farm also serves as a great base from which to tour the County and Bay of Quinte area. Sandbanks Provincial Park invites you to explore unusual wetlands and one of the world's outstanding freshwater

dune systems. In spring and fall, avid birders should make the longer drive to Prince Edward Point to see large flocks of migrating shorebirds, waterfowl and other species.

Wineries are numerous. Sandbanks Estate Winery and Huff Estates offer some of our favourite local wines, but it is well worth the time to follow the Prince Edward County Winegrowers Association wine tour map and scour back roads for something remarkable from a smaller vineyard. Rose Haven Farm Store in Picton is a favourite shopping destination for knitters, spinners, weavers and knitwear-lovers alike. The Port Bistro Pub in Trenton features seasonal local food, most notably pork from our hosts Lori and Lorraine.

At the farm, guests are encouraged to gain firsthand experience in growing food. Ask the hosts what kind of help is needed. Every spring, Thyme Again Gardens holds a farm day when friends and community can participate. Lorraine and several helpers spend the morning in the kitchen preparing lunch while Lori supervises the outdoor crew. One year a friend from IHN brought a team out for the day. It was cold and snowy but the volunteers were undeterred. "In one day we cleaned out an entire barn," Lori says.

Come lunchtime it is hard to get people to leave the work behind. "I look at it as free labour," Lori admits, but to their guests it is a unique day out of their lives. Everyone finally goes inside, where a feast covers one long table across the parlour.

Some months later, thick snow covers the fields. In that same, now-quiet parlour, I am content to put my feet up beside the woodstove and catch up on my knitting. I daydream about warblers and fresh asparagus. This afternoon Danny and I will try snowshoeing in the woods and consider dropping by some local wineries. This place affords both solitude and community, a balance of new experiences, and time to reflect. That is what draws us back from city to farm. 

Thyme Again Gardens B&B

403 Smokes Point Road, Carrying Place, Ontario
613-394-1139 • www.thymeagain.com

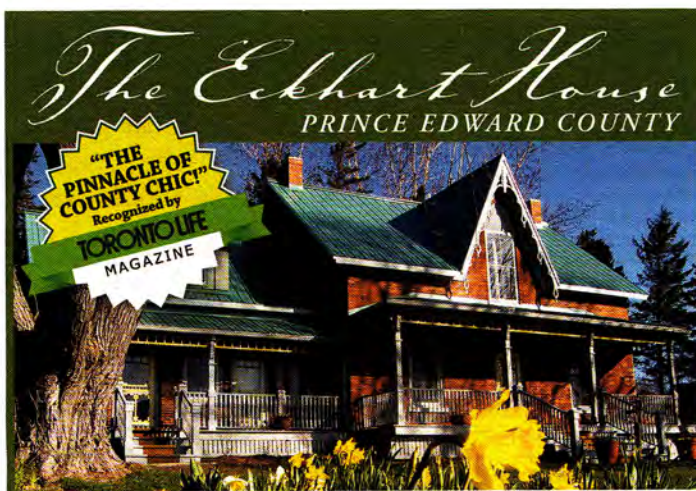
Raised and rooted in the rural Ontario landscape, Van Waffle learned basic composting from *Ranger Rick* magazine in the 1970s. Now a Guelph-based freelance journalist, he records adventures in urban nature, local food and gardening at "Speed River Journal" (www.vanwaffle.com). His work has also appeared in *Gluten-Free Living*.

LORRAINE SCHMID'S GLUTEN-FREE WAFFLES

1/2 cup	potato starch (not flour)
1/3 cup	brown rice flour
1/3 cup	coconut flour
1/3 cup	quinoa flour
2 tsp	gluten-free baking powder
1 tsp	salt
1/4 cup	organic coconut oil
2	eggs (optional)
1 1/2 cups	milk
1 tsp	pure maple syrup, plus more for serving
1 tsp	lemon or lime zest, plus more for garnish

In a medium bowl, whisk together the potato starch, rice flour, coconut flour, quinoa flour, baking powder and salt. In a small bowl, whisk together the coconut oil and eggs. Whisk in the milk, maple syrup and zest. Add a little more milk if the batter is too thick, or rice flour if too runny. If making the waffles without eggs, substitute a little more liquid.

Make the waffles in batches, according to the waffle maker's instructions. Garnish with more zest and serve with maple syrup.



Spring Flowers, Warmth & Century Old Hospitality!

The Eckhart House provides our guests with a luxurious country atmosphere, an ideal location to connect with family & friends over local county food & wine. Indulge your love of cooking and sharing in the comfort of a fully equipped country kitchen and welcoming century home.

Book your local county vacation stay today!
Contact Sandbanks Vacations **877 399-2508**

Weekly Rental Country Home
www.theeckharthouse.com