

Local, environmental “king” at grocery show

Farmers also have several new products they are trying to use to create value for their farms

BY GLENN POWELL
Ontario Farmer

It's often referred to as the trade show “where grocers do their food shopping.”

New products by the hundreds are introduced to the trade each year here at Grocery Innovations Canada, presented by the Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers (CFIG), a group of retailers that combined will account for more than 40 per cent of Canada's \$76 billion dollar grocery industry.

The good for you, good for the environment theme is ‘king’ at this show. “All natural,” “recyclable” “organic” “antioxidant” and “buy local” shout out from sampling exhibits throughout this conference centre. Maple syrup and honey are popular sweeteners – refined cane sugar is out. Easy, fast preparation seems to maintain its popularity.

So if you're a farmer wanting to move up the value chain and get a larger share of the consumer dollar why not head to this trade show where you can meet and talk shop with grocers and food distributors from across the country?

Pork producers Paul and Rosie Hill from Mitchell, Ontario were among a small but enthusiastic group of farmers exhibiting local or home-grown food products to the more than 6,000 members of the CFIG.

With their unique Willowgrove Hill nutritionally enhanced pork products, developed through a special breeding program and a feed ration that includes omega-3 and organic selenium, the Hills are focused on farm fresh, delicious and “the healthy choice.”

“We wanted to differentiate ourselves from the traditional products and market,” said Rosie. The company's product line-up includes a tasty “pulled pork” that was one of Rosie's grandmother's favourite recipes and is available in 500 grams and 1 kg frozen packs. The Hills are hopeful that showcasing their products here will break the barrier that makes it so difficult to move to high volume production.

“It's been tough to get a foot in the door with the major retailers,” Rosie said as she explained the difficulty in convincing major retailers that “your products” deserves shelf space in their stores. Most of the Hill's sales



Rosie Hill shows off some of her pork enhanced with Omega 3 and selenium

continue to be from their shop at the farm.

Potato grower Ryan Albright of Hartland, New Brunswick, is making his first visit to this trade show to promote their ‘Covered Bridge’ potato chips. Ryan, his brother Matthew and cousin Shawn have 500 acres of potatoes in the St. John River Valley and are trying to find a market opening that will return more than a commodity price.

“We are looking for value-added,” said Albright as he described the family's plans to market their kettle-cooked chips in major markets in Canada and

the U.S. In addition to flavours such as Sea Salt, Smokin' Sweet Barbecue and Sweet Potato Chips with cinnamon and brown sugar, the Albrights package their chips in a distinctive burlap bag to bring back memories of the old-fashioned style of packing and marketing potatoes.

With the world's longest covered bridge near the farm and processing plant Albright also has an eye on agri-tourism.

“We have several thousand tourists on our doorstep every year and we hope to link the famous bridge with visits to the farm and our chip factory.”

TV show to highlight Ontario food

The show, on Sun TV, will have top chefs compete to cook Ontario-grown produce

BY GLENN POWELL *Ontario Farmer*

With \$10,000 cash on the line several of Canada's top chefs will match wits and talents on an elimination TV series airing this fall on Sun TV.

“The Pressure Cooker” was filmed at the Niagara Culinary Institute and in nine one-hour episodes brings together the top chefs in a head-to-head competition. Each challenge begins with two chefs receiving a mystery bag containing all Ontario-grown food. The competitors' task is to

create unique dishes, paired with Ontario wines, that will be critiqued by three top chefs.

The TV challenge provides an opportunity to showcase promotions such as Pick Ontario Freshness and Savour Ontario.

In addition, the weekly pro-

gram will highlight Flavours of Ontario – vignettes that feature a range of Ontario food products, producers and retailers.

Who will be the chef to capture the red ribbon? Catch “The Pressure Cooker” Sunday night at 10 on Sun TV.

Chicken sales continue to increase

Despite steep price increases by Canadian farmers, chicken sales continue to increase this year.

Total sales are up by 2.8 per cent. Imports are down by 4.4 per cent, exports are up by 9.5 per cent and ending stocks were 35.8 million kilograms, an 8.7 per cent increase, at the end of September.

It's an open question if and when the price increases will run into consumer resistance. The industry may soon find out because the marketing boards hiked prices by another 6.6 cents per kilogram in mid-September. That pushed them 25.6 cents higher than a year ago in most provinces.