

Food & Culture in Huron County

Breaking bread

“Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you what you are.”

*— Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin,
French lawyer and food writer*

Food is a basic part of everyone's daily life. Breaking bread with others is something we all do. The rules and rituals of food preparation and meal sharing reflect gender or family roles, religious beliefs, and ethnic traditions. Food provides nourishment and gives us opportunities to share with family and friends. Eating is a social experience that reveals a person's cultural identity.

“Food is a vital part of history and culture,” wrote Canadian Chef Jennifer Ogle in the Ontario Seasonal Cookbook. “It reflects a place and the people who live there. Ontario's food producers have a rich history that ties their origins with their present place to create a unique and diverse culture. People from all over the world have settled in Ontario and brought their traditional foods with them.”

Food has meaning in all cultures. At first glance, what you or I eat may seem unimportant. Yet, our everyday diet speaks loudly about who we are and where we come from. What we eat, how our food is prepared and served, and when and with whom we eat, are all important parts of food culture. Our food traditions and customs explain who we are, where we have been, how we see ourselves, and what we value.

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Huron's fertile ground host to variety of food events

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Huron County, with its history of pioneering settlers, has a diverse community made up of different ethnic groups. These different groups brought their own food traditions and added to the local cuisine across the county. Add this to the fact that Huron County is the most agriculturally productive county in Ontario and you have fertile ground for the creation of food festivals and events.

Our enjoyment of community events, particularly those with a food focus, is indicative of Huron's agricultural backbone and our own awareness of the importance of breaking bread together as a community and an appreciation for the home-grown bounty all around us. Food is important. It nourishes both the person and the community. It brings people together.

Huron County has a number of interesting, fun, and delicious food-related cultural festivals and events. These events are open to all and are a great way to experience Huron's food and culture for yourself. Visit www.OntariosWestCoast.ca or pick up your copy of the Ontario's West Coast tourism guide for complete event details.

A sampling of Huron's Food Festivals and Events

- Belmore Maple Syrup Festival
- Zurich Fish Fry
- Lion's Club All-Canadian Breakfast, Bayfield
- Spring Breakfast, Egmondville
- Brussels Firefighter's Breakfast
- Huron's International Festival, Goderich
- Grey Firefighters' Breakfast, near Brussels
- Seaforth Firefighter's Breakfast
- County Breakfast, Egmondville
- St. Joseph Breakfast in the Park
- Zurich Bean Festival
- Taste of Huron
- Latin Mini Fiesta, Exeter
- Exeter Harvest Celebration
- Ciderfest, Egmondville
- Thanksgiving Market, Grand Bend

New multicultural events

Huron's International Festival and the Latin Mini Fiesta are two very recent additions to the above list. Both events, held for the first time last year, celebrated Huron's cultural variety, and welcomed residents and visitors to celebrate Huron's diversity.

Huron's International Festival, Goderich

In June 2012, the Huron Arts and Heritage Network (HAHN) organized the first-ever internationally-themed celebration, Global Games Day, hosted at Goderich's main beach. The day featured international food, music, and games.

Following the success of last year's event, the renamed Huron's International Festival was once again hosted at the Goderich beach June, 2013. The event welcomed a large crowd who enjoyed a variety of multicultural activities for all ages, including crafts, dance, music, artisans, and food.

Latin Mini Fiesta, Exeter

The Latin-themed Mini Fiesta held in Exeter in September 2012 was a celebration of good food, culture, and friendship. The event featured Mexican food, music, and cultural displays. Held a day before Mexican Independence Day, the fiesta was a celebration of the strong ties of friendship between Canada and Mexico as well as an expression of appreciation for South Huron's cultural diversity. "There are people from many cultures who live in the Exeter area and this is a celebration of the diversity that enriches us here and the friendship and community we share." said event coordinator Mark Cassidy.

Agricultural roots shape Huron's food culture

Huron's roots are in agriculture and the pioneering lifestyle, so food and community are very important to us. Whether it's a community breakfast, a multicultural celebration, a fish fry, or a maple syrup festival, breaking bread together is a well-established Huron County tradition. Just as the original pioneers enjoyed celebrating together at the county fairs, present-day Huron County residents enjoy the bounty of a region that nourishes both our bodies and our communities.

Taste of Huron

Taste of Huron is a local food exploration experience. A 12-day festival of flavours and feasts, Taste of Huron is a yearly, much-enjoyed celebration. Taste the very best of local food created by the best restaurants in Huron County. Enjoy delicious dishes made from locally produced ingredients: seasonal fruits, vegetables, fish, maple products, and organic meats. For more information, visit www.TasteOfHuron.ca or contact Huron County Planning & Development at 519.524.8394 ext. 3.

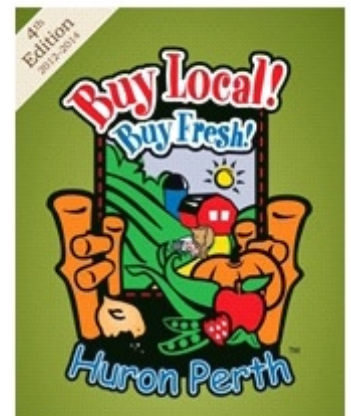


- Brussels Farmers Market
- Duncannon Farmers Market
- Exeter Farmers Market
- Goderich Farmers' Market
- Gorrie Line Produce
- Howick Farmers' Market

Visit www.OntariosWestCoast.ca or pick up your copy of the Ontario's West Coast tourism guide for detailed information about our local farmers' markets.

Huron Perth Buy Local, Buy Fresh

The Huron Perth Buy Local, Buy Fresh 2012-2014 map is another unique way to discover Huron and Perth food producers and farmers' markets. Over 100 farms and food retailers in Huron and Perth are listed on the map, helping consumers find local produce and goods. From fruits and vegetables, meat and cheese, and coffee and bread, the Buy Local, Buy Fresh map has it all. The maps are free and are available at various locations throughout Huron County. The map is a project of Huron Perth Farm to Table, a network of community organizations that believe in the importance of public access to local, healthy food and the continuing vitality of agricultural-related activities in the region. Visit www.HuronPerthFarmToTable.ca for more information or call Huron-Perth Farm to Table at 519.482.3416.



Farmers' Markets in Huron County

If you enjoy shopping in the open air, Huron boasts many farmers' markets located throughout the county. You will find fresh fruit and vegetables, a variety of local produce such as goat cheese and free-range eggs, plus the ever-popular homemade baked goods and preserves. The local farmers' markets are very popular with residents and visitors as they provide the chance to socialize, meet local farmers, producers, and artisans, and shop in the fresh air.



An amusing reflection from the history books

In 1832 Dr. William 'Tiger' Dunlop, one of the founders of Huron County, wrote a guide for newcomers entitled, *Statistical Sketches of Upper Canada for the Use of Emigrants*. Written under the pseudonym of 'A Backwoodsman', the book mixes practical advice and humorous anecdotes. Tiger included a small section on food and culture in *Statistical Sketches*.

Here is an excerpt from his book along with a recipe for pickles:

"Our inns are bad: that is to say, many of them clean and comfortable indeed enough, and the landlords almost uniformly civil and obliging, but the proverb of 'God sending meat and the devil cooks' never was so fully illustrated as in this country; for, with a superabundance of the raw material, the manufactured article of a good dinner is hardly to be found in a public-house in the province. The radical cause of this defect seems to me to be, that the cookery of America is derived from that of Holland; so they are inferior pupils of an indifferent school; —for, though both countries have produced painters of great eminence, I never have yet heard of either producing a cook of even moderate genius. Soup is unknown in these parts. The gridiron, if to be found at all, is only an ornamental, not a useful implement of an American kitchen; its place is usurped by the frying-pan, and everything is deluged with grease and butter...."

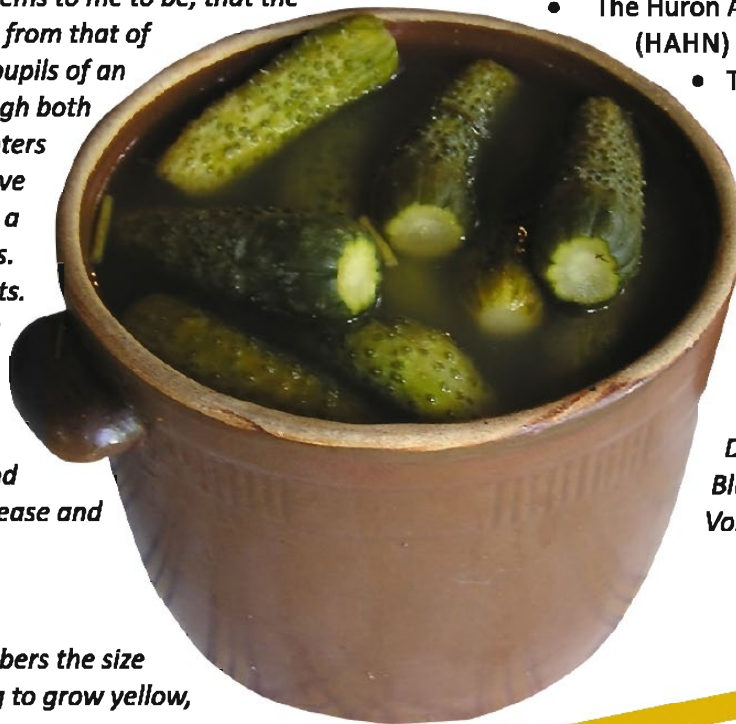
To Pickle Cucumbers

Select for this purpose cucumbers the size of a man's foot,—if beginning to grow yellow,

so much the better; split them in four, and put them into an earthen vessel—then cover them with whiskey. The juices of the cucumber, mixing with the alcohol, will run into the acetous fermentation, so you make vinegar and pickles both at once; and the pickles will have that bilious, Calcutta-looking complexion, and slobbery, slimy consistence, so much admired by the Dutch gourmands of this country."

Today, visitors and new residents continue to be attracted to the culture and lifestyle of Huron County. If you would like to learn more about Huron's culture and the various food events and festivals mentioned above, we have included the following list of resources:

- www.OntariosWestCoast.ca
- www.HuronPerthFarmToTable.ca
- The Huron County Library
- The Huron Arts and Heritage Network (HAHN)
- The Huron County Museum



Statistical Sketches and the Ontario Seasonal Cookbook are available for loan from the Huron County Library. Other reference materials mentioned were found online. With files from Mark Cassidy, Coordinator Economic Development, Municipality of Bluewater; and Tim Cumming, Volunteer, Exeter Mini Fiesta.

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