

CELEBRATE KINGS: *Pride in our people, places & products*

Breaking tradition with “un” traditional, locally grown crops

Guylon, tatsoi, callaloo, bokchoy, arugula? These are...what's that? Vegetables grown in Kings County?

Yes, they are! These and many, many more unique-sounding vegetables can be discovered growing locally on the North Mountain's lower slopes behind Lakeville. On Ted and Debra Hutten's farm, the crops being grown are definitely not typical Kings County vegetables.

Becoming a grower of such distinctly unusual product was a gradual process for Ted. Twenty years ago, while holding a full-time job on a local dairy farm, he started his farming career by growing apples and basic vegetables. “I started with the vegetables we ate growing up,” he says. He marketed that produce every Saturday morning at the Farmers Market in

Halifax.

It was at the market Ted first entertained the idea of growing untraditional vegetables. He knew he couldn't make a living on his own growing mainstream produce because there was too much competition.

“I noticed a lot of Asian and Lebanese people walking through the market. So I began researching what they might like. People tend to buy food that reminds them of where they grew up.” So about 13 years ago, he began growing Middle Eastern and Asian vegetables, which became his full-time occupation.

From that starting point, Ted has expanded his vegetable crop more and more into specialty crops.

Now he grows about 60 different types of vegetables.

Lobok (Chinese for radish) is just one of the crops he grows that is highly suited to Kings

County's growing conditions. Asian greens also love the climate. In comparison, some of his more tropical type of plants like Dow Quak (or Chinese long-bean) need to be grown in greenhouses.

Though originally targeted to those who have immigrated to Nova Scotia, Ted's market has grown to encompass a wider range of the population. He has established a substantial, non-ethnic restaurant business with chefs and owners of high-end eateries who love to use specialty vegetables. And he has established a very “to-the-point” marketing plan.

“I don't make deliveries or negotiate on prices. My customers come to my market table to buy, or occasionally to the farm,” says Ted. “The reason I do that is because I'm picking and choosing my customers.”

Ted has changed both his crops and marketing strategy to deal with customers who can make his many work hours count the most. And he specifically markets to people who buy locally grown product because they are politi-

cally and environmentally motivated to do so.

“I've worked and traveled extensively throughout Central America,” says Ted. “If I have to produce local foods that compete with Mexican growers who have crops picked by low-paid workers halfway across the continent, I would rather not deal with that clientele.”

And it works. With the main part of his marketing direct to customers, and with an established client base of people who appreciate locally grown product, Ted can continue to strive for his ultimate goal.

“My aim is to work less than 80 hours a week, make more (income), and keep encouraging people to buy local!” to customers, and with an established client base of people who appreciate locally grown product, Ted can continue to strive for his ultimate goal.

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Two-year-old Sarah Hutten, her Mom Debra and her Dad Ted show off a Daikon, a Japanese radish.



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