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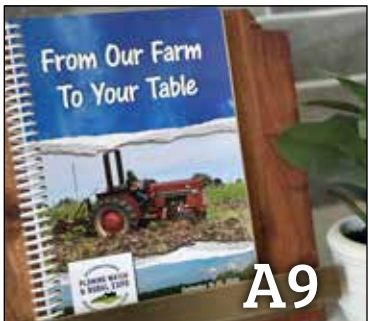
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ISSUE 13 / APRIL 2025

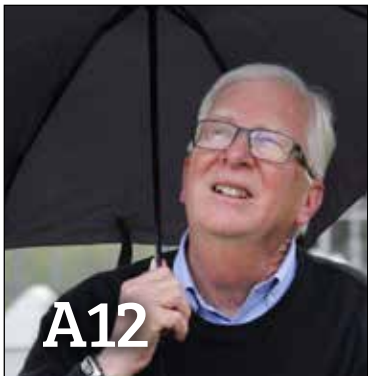


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FRONT PAGE PHOTO: Rodney Bierhuizen said the on-again-off-again tariff threats from U.S. President Donald Trump have made it frustratingly difficult to stay up to date and plan for the future.. ~ Luke Edwards photo



Commercial flower greenhouse operations like Sunrise in Lincoln rely heavily on a busy spring when retailers order plants ahead of Easter and Mother's Day, and get shipments in for the spring garden season. ~ Luke Edwards photos

Stressful time for commercial greenhouse flower producers

Easter one of a couple major days for operators like Sunrise Greenhouses

By Luke Edwards

For a lot of commercial flower growers, there are two key days they look forward to each year.

And while given the current state of politics Rodney Bierhuizen can't predict what'll happen for Mother's Day, he's breathing a small sigh of relief that it doesn't appear Easter will be impacted too much.

"(At this time of year) we say all the money's in the greenhouse, so everybody's full for Easter and Mother's Day and then garden centres," the second-generation owner of Sunrise Greenhouses in Lincoln said last month.

Flower production is big business in Lincoln, generating \$500 million in farm gate sales a year in the municipality. In normal times, roughly half of that comes from sales south of the border, primarily as retailers purchase inventory ahead of Easter, Mother's Day and

as garden centres get ramped up for the growing season.

Knowing the importance of the industry to the town, councillors and senior staff members met with local greenhouse flower producers last month to talk about how they could support these businesses in what is sure to be a challenging period as U.S. President Donald Trump continues to threaten tariffs on Canada.

Paul Di Ianni, director of economic development and communications for the Town of Lincoln, called it a "good discussion" as the Town tries to support local businesses affected by the trade war.

"Our policy levers to affect tariffs are minimal," he acknowledged. "What we can do is advocate for them at the provincial and federal level."

He also said that if it comes to it, the town can work with producers to help with roadside sales should the American market be completely shuttered. It's something they

Continued to page A4 →

Flower growers brace for tariff uncertainty amid Easter sales surge

→ **Continued from page A3**

did during the COVID-19 pandemic and is available again.

"That's where we can play a role in terms of tourism and marketing. But hopefully it doesn't go that route," Di Ianni said.

The director compared the trade war to the pandemic in the sense that they both disrupted normal business and trade.

Bierhuizen, whose family has operated the business for nearly a half century, said it reminded him more of the 2008/2009 financial crisis, a challenging period that taught them lessons and helped prepare them for future economic instability.

Even with that experience Bierhuizen said the last few months have been tough.

"It's very stressful, I think everyone can say the same thing," he said.

"The tariffs are part of it, but it's not knowing what the end game is here."

He's also president of Flowers Canada Ontario and said he's been

having regular discussions with other growers, many who are very frustrated with the uncertainty. Bierhuizen said with things changing on a daily basis it's been tough to send out an update one day, only to have to send a followup the next day with completely different information.

"Different growers are impacted in different ways," he said.

Getting through Easter with minimal tariff impact would go a long way in keeping the industry from catastrophe, and then Bierhuizen said they'll just take it day by day. One benefit for his operation is that they focus on potted plants, which means overseas growers aren't really an alternative option.

"The product has to move one way or the other," he said, recalling dumping 60 per cent of his product back during the pandemic.

The upside back then, though, was that demand skyrocketed as soon as things returned to relative normal. That's something economists Bierhuizen follows said is unlikely this time.

If things get particularly bad, flower growers like Sunrise could retool to grow vegetables, though there's uncertainty there as well. On the one hand, if Canadians turn away from U.S. produce, there will be a gap to fill. But on the other hand, current greenhouse vegetable growers export a lot of their product south of the border as well.

"Our hope is not to have to change what we're doing because it would involve a significant amount of investment and retooling," he said.

Bierhuizen said he and other local growers were appreciative of the roundtable with town officials, pointing out nearly all the councilors were on hand.

"(The Town of Lincoln has) always been supportive of us and they've recognized the benefit of our industry," he said, adding every five years his industry invests the equivalent of an auto plant.

There will also be indirect impacts should Lincoln's flower sector be impacted. Bierhuizen said for

every dollar greenhouses bring in, 90 cents is spent on supporting industries like freight and electricians. He also said it supports workforce that includes a diverse range of skillsets.

Di Ianni said they plan to have similar roundtables with other affected industries. They've also created a tariff response team that includes town officials, as well as the Downtown Beamsville BIA and Lincoln Chamber of Commerce. The team will continue to monitor tariff related developments, provide updates and information on services and strategies, and advocacy support.

Regardless of what happens in the coming weeks and months, Bierhuizen encourages Canadians to support local and buy Canadian. If there's one positive that is coming out of Trump's threats it's that it's rekindled a Canadian spirit that seems to be lying dormant in recent years.

"It's good to see some Canadian pride," he said. 🌱



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A breathtaking view: Sarah Grey tulip farm readies for second season

By Luke Edwards

It was something of a tulip trial by fire for Sarah Kuzee and her new family farm agri-tourism business last year.

But not to be deterred, the Fenwick based tulip farm has high hopes for year two, as they prepare to open to the public later this month.

“As soon as May hits we’re hoping for some real warmth,” said Kuzee. This winter’s colder weather and increased snow, she’s been told, should set the bulbs up for more success.

“There was a nice blanket on them all winter.”

Her family bought the property, located next to their home, in 2023. It had been used by TASC, another American-owned tulip farm previously, and before that was owned by failed cannabis production facility CannTrust. During that time, fruit trees that once populated the property were pulled out.

“It was devastating watching all the fruit trees disappear,” Kuzee said.

With the help of neighbouring farmers, Kuzee said they planted a million tulip bulbs they ordered from the Netherlands after buying the property in 2023.

But then they were hit by nearly all the obstacles one could reasonably expect. A mild winter with not a lot of snow meant the bulbs they planted the previous fall were stressed and eager to sprout come spring. Mother Nature’s finicky ways continued into the spring as windy weather created challenges for the flowers and visitors alike.

Finding the right mix for the visitors is also a challenge. Spending a couple spring days in Niagara and touring some tulip farms is an ideal weekend getaway for people from the GTA, but Kuzee said they also want to be a welcoming space for locals.

“We’re trying to be accommodating for everyone,” she said.

To do so, they’ve increased the ticket package offerings, including cheaper weekday passes, a wander pass for those who just want to walk among the tulips and not pick any, or a full season wanderer pass for those who want to return multiple times.

“Some just wanted to walk through and see them at every stage,” Kuzee said.

Kuzee said they didn’t have much farming experience, though she worked for United Floral Distributors, which opened some doors. They’ve also received help from other farm and greenhouse neighbours with ordering and planting.

“It’s been nice to get help and guidance,” she said.

The whole family has been hard at work getting things prepared. After a few busy days planting the new bulbs last fall, there wasn’t a ton to do over winter. But now the family, including two teenage boys doing coop placements at the farm, are getting the props and everything ready. They brought in an old pickup truck and planted a few thousand bulbs in the box, which they hope produces an intriguing sight.

Kuzee said before opening the farm tulips were no more special



Sarah Kuzee opened Sarah Grey tulip farm last year after buying the property in 2023. ~ Sarah Grey photos

than any other flower. However, seeing a full field in bloom does fill her with the similar awe that visitors experience.

“It’s just breathtaking to stand in the middle of it,” she said.

Her favourites last year were a series of coral, peachy coloured tulips that unfortunately were victims of the weather.

“While they were blooming they were beautiful,” Kuzee said.

If the weather cooperates, Kuzee said they plan to open April 25

and hope to remain open until the May long weekend. In addition to passes to wander around the field, the farm is offering various workshops as well as two market days on the first two Saturdays in May. Various food trucks and vendors will be set up on May 3 and 10 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Kuzee said it’s another effort to make the farm more friendly to locals.

For more information, or for tickets, visit sarahgrey.ca 🌱



Sarah Kuzee says standing in the middle of a tulip field in full bloom really gives a visitor an appreciation for the flower’s beauty.



With the help of her family and neighbouring farmers, Sarah Kuzee has planted two million tulip bulbs at Sarah Grey tulip farm.

Creating a tapestry of colours at JP Niagara

By Luke Edwards

Some farmers produce fruits or veggies, while others produce meat and dairy. However, when they're successful, Paula Boots and Joseph Garcia like to think of themselves as producers of happiness.

The pair opened JP Niagara Tulip Farm back in 2023 in Fenwick, and are preparing to open for their third year of pick-your-own fun later this month.

"There are many favourite parts for me, but I love the interaction with the customers. I love to make them happy, because at the end of the day it's a happy thing. That's really what Joseph and I love to do," said Boots.

Born in The Netherlands, tulips have always been a part of Boots' life.

"I've always been working with tulips, since I was four years old," she said.

Garcia's background is a little more varied. Originally from Mexico, Garcia is a trained chef who transitioned to tulips.

"He's always had a passion for creating and that's what he does in the kitchen and that's what we do in the field as well. We're creating a tapestry of colours," Boots said.

They opened their own farm after working for TASC, an American company that also runs pick-your-own tulip farms in Niagara.

Garcia and Boots wanted to bring their own personal touch to their farm, and worked with a supplier overseas to bring a wide range of tulip varieties to their farm. This year their farm will be located at 230 A Tice Rd., and contain about two million bulbs.

"We have all the colours you can imagine and very interesting varieties," Boots said.

Her favourite varies from year to year - this year she's enjoying the akebono - while Garcia likes the crown of destiny variety.

There's a lot of preparation work to be done. There's choosing and planting all the new bulbs. And as the spring nears they get to work planning the logistics and doing all the marketing required to ensure a successful season.

While there are a lot of out-of-towners that come out, Boots said they also try to entice locals to visit, and end up getting a good mix with the locals usually coming out during the week.

However, there's one thing that can't be solved by planning and preparation: weather. Last year was a tough one for tulip farms

weather wise, with JP Niagara and others having to overcome less than ideal spring conditions.

"So let's hope that Mother Nature is a little bit more forgiving this year," Boots said.

The plan is to open on April 25 and remain open daily to the May long weekend. This year they're offering flex tickets and season's passes. Visitors can also change their date once for no charge.

Boots and Garcia are both proud to call JP Niagara a Canadian farm. While neither was born here, they've both become Canadian citizens.

"We are a true Canadian farm, I think with everything going on in the moment that's important," she said.

For more information visit jpnigaratulipexperience.com.



Joseph Garcia and Paula Boots run JP Niagara Tulip Farm, and will be opening their Tice Road farm for pick-your-own visitors at the end of April.
~ JP Niagara photos



JP Niagara features two million bulbs, with every colour and variety of tulip one could imagine.



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EDITORIAL

Cheers to a year at Niagara Farms, and an invitation to be a part of year two

No fooling, April means it's been one year since the launch of Niagara Farms.

That time has flown by as our entire team has been working hard to build the paper from the ground up. With graphic designers making everything look nice, an advertising department serving the needs of our local ag businesses, and reporters providing what we hope is the right mixture of interesting and entertaining stories and photos.

As we enter year two of this little enterprise, we'd like to offer a chance for readers be a part of it by sharing any farm, rural or agriculture related photos with the rest of our readers.

We know there are plenty of talented amateur photographers out there in Niagara, Hamilton and Haldimand, and we want to provide a space to share those perfect pics. So feel free to email your favourite photos to luke@granthaven.com, with a bit of information and we'll share what we receive.

We're also always looking for story ideas, so if there are stories or topics you'd like to see covered, we'd love to hear them. Email that same luke@granthaven.com address and we'll see what we can do. The same goes for any businesses who'd like a bundle of papers dropped off at their location. Those who want to advertise

can also reach out to Heather Dunbar in our ad department, at heather@granthaven.com or call 226-261-1837.

You can also visit us online at granthaven.com for more information and to see some of our sister publications.

In the meantime, on behalf of the Niagara Farms and Grant Haven team, thanks for being with us over the past year as we try to provide an important service to the area's ag and rural community.

And to all the farmers out there, we wish you good luck with the upcoming growing season. May the sun shine, the rain fall (in appropriate amounts) and the ma-



By Luke Edwards

chinery remain in good working order. 🌱

Luke Edwards is the editor of Niagara Farms

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Farm Kids Programme returns with a new partner



The Wainfleet Agricultural Society’s Farm Kids program is accepting applications until April 15. In the photo are some of last year’s participants with WAS member Dan Bath. ~ Niagara Farms file photo

By Niagara Farms Staff

The next generation of farmers and food producers will once again have a chance to receive some financial help to make their entrepreneurial dreams come to life.

The Wainfleet Agricultural Society’s Farm Kids Program is accepting applications. This is the third year of the program, and first partnering with Minor Bros. Country Living.

Four young people under the age of 18 will receive grants of \$500 each to help fund their agricultural based business. Youth in Niagara and Dunnville are eligible to apply. No farm experience is required, just a passion for their project.

The program gives children and young people an introduction into running a business, including budgeting and marketing. Recipients will then be invited to show off their work at the Wainfleet Fall Fair in September.

Those wishing to apply can do so online at wainfleetfallfair.com, with forms available under the “Farm Kids” tab. Families can also find applications at any of the MB Country Living locations. Forms can be emailed to the agricultural society or dropped off at a Minor Bros location. They’ll be accepted until April 15.

The ag society will announce the winners at the Wainfleet Open House at the Wainfleet Arena on April 23.

And even though spring has hardly even begun the society is already thinking about the fall, recently announcing the theme for this year’s fall fair, which will take place Sept. 18 to 20 in the village. This year’s theme will be “We’ve got a good thing growing.”

Chair leads are working away on their respective categories with the 2025 exhibitor book expected to be released soon. Anyone in Dunnville or Niagara can enter exhibits.

Follow the ag society on social media or visit wainfleetfallfair.com to stay up to date. 🌱



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Commemorative souvenir items now available ahead of 2025 plowing match

By *Niagara Farms Staff*

The organizing committee for the 2025 International Plowing Match certainly has something cooking.

An event cookbook is now available for purchase, giving plowing match fans and amateur cooks alike a souvenir for this fall's Niagara match. Called From Our Farm to Your Table, it includes a mix of recipes for every occasion, contributed by community members, farmers, supporters and volunteers.

"The newly-published IPM 2025 cookbook is more than just a collection of recipes - it is a celebration of the local community and its agricultural roots," a press release promoting the book said.

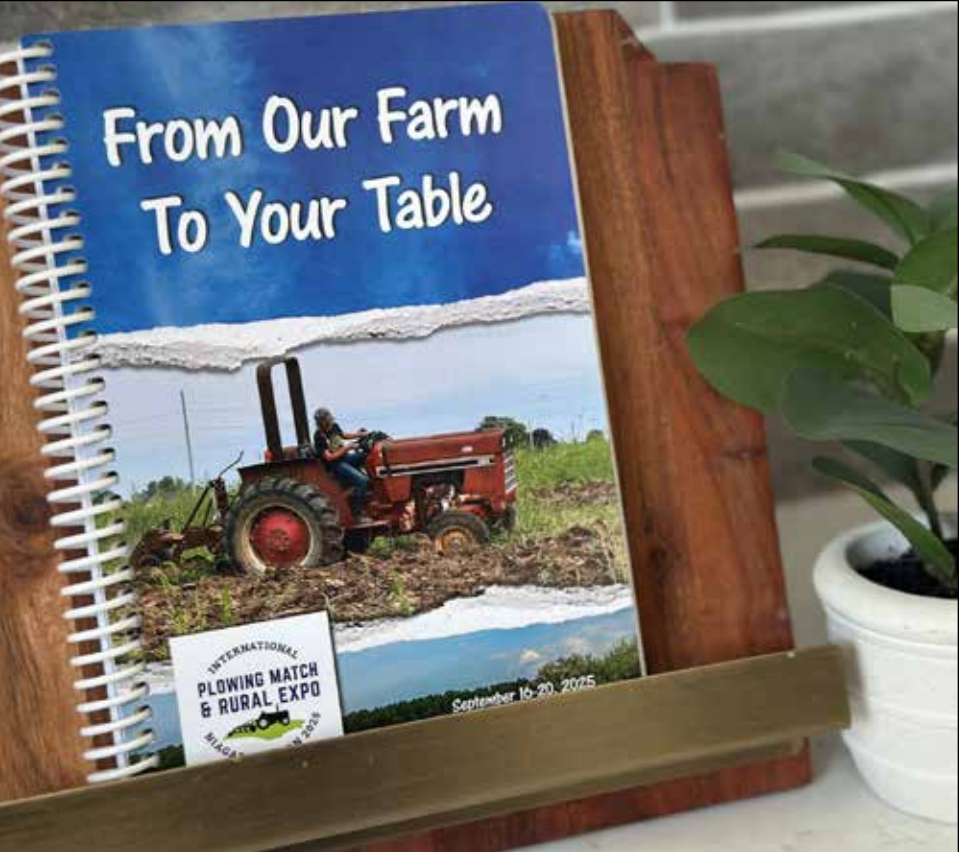
Money raised from the sale of the book will help pay for the extensive costs that come with hosting an event that size of the IPM. Any profits from the match

will be donated to local groups and organizations.

The IPM returns to Niagara in 2025 for the first time in a century. It features five days of plowing competition, vendors, music, entertainment, food and more. A celebration of farming and agricultural heritage, it welcomes thousands of visitors from across the province and beyond. It runs from Sept. 16 to Sept. 20, with the West Niagara Fairgrounds acting as the main host site.

It's organized jointly by the Ontario Plowmen's Association and a local host group.

Copies of the cookbook are available for purchase at three sites in the region: Devries Fruit Farm at 825 Canboro Rd. in Fenwick, Lowden's Feed Supplies at 7269 Regional Road #20 in Smithville (cash only), and Lincoln Line Orchards at 9764 Regional Road 20 in Smithville. Books are being sold for \$20 each.



The commemorative International Plowing Match cookbook, From Our Farm to Your Table, is now available for purchase at three Niagara locations. The book offers cherished recipes from local community members, farmers and IPM supporters, and can be a keepsake to remember the 2025 match, set to take place in Niagara later this year. ~ IPM photo

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🌿 AT THE MARKET 🌿

Turning over a new leaf, market a chance for new brewery to get the word out

By Luke Edwards

As they work towards opening a taproom at their newly established brewery, Turncoat Brewing Co. is using the St. Catharines Farmers' Market to get the word out.

Matt Richter, one of the three owners who turned their home brewing hobby into a business last summer, was at a recent market day chatting up passersby and offering them a can or two of the company's lagers and ales.

"There's a really great sense of community," he said.

Turncoat's focus is on Belgian beers, a style Richter said is a little hard to find.

"We all just really love it," he said.

He opened the brewery with his brother in law Stephen Vukovics and Tom Garnett, a friend of theirs. They'd done homebrewing before, but took the plunge and started the brewery last year. They're currently working on getting all the approvals and necessary paperwork to open a taproom, and in the meantime are selling their beers retail.

Despite being relatively new, they already have quite a selection of beers, led by their two flagships: a Pillow Fort oat ale that's described on the company's website as having a "pillowy soft mouthfeel with a crisp, refreshing, hop-forward flavour" and a rich Copper Rocker amber ale.

Along with the two flagships is a wide mix of small batch brews.

"We're trying to do a bit of everything," Richter said. His favourite is the Dear Abbaye, a Belgian IPA.



Matt Richter is one part of a trio of home brewers who have opened Turncoat Brewing Company in St. Catharines. As they await the final approvals for their taproom, they can often be found at the St. Catharines Farmers' Market offering up cans of their Belgian style brews. ~ Luke Edwards photo

The trio still have jobs outside the brewery, but they'll see what happens if things go well with the business.

Richter said they're unsure when they'll be able to open up the taproom, but in the mean-

time encourages beer lovers to visit turncoat-brewing.com or follow them on social media, @turncoatbrewco. They are selling retail out of the location at 12-5 Export Ave. in St. Catharines. 🌿

To nominate a local vender for our monthly "AT THE MARKET" feature, contact Luke Edwards at luke@granthaven.com

Buy fresh, buy local, shop at farmers' markets

By Michelle Seaborn

The Grimsby Farmers' Market has a motto: 'Buy Fresh, Buy Local.'

Never has this motto been as important as it is now. The unrest between our country and our southern neighbours has resulted in a profound "buy Canadian" movement. And why not? Canadians are a proud people, we honour our country, we live, work and play here. We have a pride in who we are and what we stand for, just ask a Canadian if there is a difference between them and their southern neighbours!

There is some confusion to the average shopper who may have, until recently, filled their shopping cart with lovely looking produce irrespective of where it may have originated. Grocery stores are trying to do their part by labelling shelves with the Canadian flag symbol to draw the buyer's attention to products that have some affiliation with Canada.

On a recent shopping trip to a large box store, several shelves proudly displayed the Canadian flag on products that were clearly labelled "Made in USA." The problem is, within a brand, there may be some of the product line made in Canada while others are indeed made in the U.S. or other countries. Without spending a lot of time checking every label for some in-

dicators of the product's origin, how can we be sure where our dollars go?

And then there are the new labels. "Prepared in Canada" does not mean that the ingredients necessarily came from Canada, rather it was just assembled here. "Made in Canada" allows for at least 51 per cent of the ingredients coming from Canada while "Product of Canada" means 98 per cent of the product was grown, packaged and produced in Canada. How can we make this easier for people who really want Canadian products?

The best way to be sure of product origin is to visit farmers' markets. Farmers take pride in the products they grow. Vendors at markets fill their tables with home grown products and will happily tell you exactly where their "products of Canada" were grown. Food vendors that make their own value-added products can tell you where the ingredients come from, they are responsible for putting them all together and offering customers authentic "Made in Canada" products. One-stop shopping made easy.

This year, keep your shopping dollars local while enjoying all the benefits of Ontario's bounty. Most farmers' markets will begin to open again this spring as the early crops of asparagus, peas and other similar crops return. Visit farmers' markets and buy fresh, buy local, and



keep your money within your community. Food writer and author Lynn Orgyzlo once pointed out that \$0.80 of every dollar spent at a farmers' market stays in the community. That's exactly where we want it. Happy shopping! 🌿

Michelle Seaborn is the Grimsby Farmers' Market manager. The Grimsby market reopens for the season on Thursday, June 5

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‘More jokers in the weather deck’: Climate change means more uncertainty for farmers

By Luke Edwards

It’s a stark reminder of just how precarious a farmer’s livelihood can be.

“The difference between prosperity and bankruptcy can sometimes be five millimetres of rain or 0.5 degrees of heat,” said Environment Canada’s David Phillips, as he presented a talk called “Tomorrow’s Forecast: Warmer, Wetter, and Wilder – Are you Ready?” He did so at February’s Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Convention in Niagara Falls.

Phillips said there was a time when farmers thought issues with the weather and climate would in the near future no longer exist for farmers. There was also a time when many people thought climate change wasn’t real. But with the scientific community largely in agreement, and with farmers and citizens alike experiencing first hand more dramatic weather events, Phillips said he doesn’t believe that’s the case anymore.

“The majority of farmers recognize that something seems to be amiss,” he said, adding that while

the climate is always changing, human activity in the last few centuries means it’s changing faster and more drastically than ever.

“There are more jokers in the weather deck. I don’t know what’s normal anymore.”

And while short term weather forecasts remain notoriously difficult to nail down with any precision, Phillips warned of three overall trends in the coming years, harkening back to the title of his talk.

“Warmer, wetter, wilder. That’s what the forecast is going to be,” he said.

However, it’s not all doom and gloom, with Phillip calling the future of agriculture in Canada anything but bleak. It just means adapting with the times.

“We’ve got to change faster than the climate is changing,” he said, adding Canada will likely be one of the five super producers of food.

“There’s great reason to be optimistic of the future of agriculture in the province.”

Still, he warned of being prepared.



Environment Canada’s David Phillips told farmers and those in attendance at February’s Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Convention to expect warmer, wetter and wilder weather in the coming years. ~ Environment Canada photo

“There’s going to be winners and there’s going to be losers. Everyone is going to be affected,” he said.

And to be best prepared, farmers and society should support

scientific advances and innovations. Farmers may need to rethink their approaches, not relying on the traditional calendar dates to determine what they’re doing. 🌱

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Niagara's unique conditions creates winemaking challenges, says Arterra winemaker

By Luke Edwards

Big and small, north and south, east and west. Marc Bradshaw has made wine all over the world, and in all kinds of situations.

But in his experience, few, if any, wine regions in the world present the same kind of challenges as Niagara.

"Niagara is the most inconsistent when it comes to year-to-year growing conditions," he told a group listening in on the Oenology and Cider sessions at February's Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Convention in Niagara Falls.

Bradshaw is the VQA Red Winemaker for Arterra Wines, but has travelled the world making wine. Born in Australia, he first pursued forensic science before making the switch. Since then he has worked in his native Australia, as well as Germany, France and South Africa.

His Canadian experience goes back as far as 2004, when he worked at Pillitteri Estates Winery.

After a brief stint back home in 2011, he returned to Canada and worked at Strewn Winery for 12 years before moving to Arterra last year.

Even with a larger outfit like Arterra, Bradshaw said cost is always a top consideration, which means getting creative when issues arise. For instance, those unpredictable growing conditions means it's rare to have perfect weather during harvest time. And on top of that, even at Arterra there's only so much fermentation space.

The uncertainty also leads to potential sugar level and taste issues down the line, which all must be addressed.

Last year Bradshaw also dealt with a stuck fermentation.

"It can be a little bit stressful," he said, underplaying just how much some of these experiences can raise the blood pressure.

Fortunately there are always gadgets, tools and techniques to employ. Bradshaw discussed the use of flash detente, where the grape mash is heating, and then quickly cooled. The process can help improve colour, aromas and develop more complex tastes.

"Temperature and timing is key," Bradshaw said.

Microoxygenation is another process that Bradshaw said he has limited experience with but is



Grapes ripen on the vine in Niagara, where unpredictable growing conditions challenge winemakers like Marc Bradshaw to adapt and innovate each season. ~ Pexel photo

eager to use. As the name suggests, it involves treating wine with small doses of oxygen for short periods of time, which proponents say can help develop compounds that are more stable in the wine environment.

Bradshaw warned his fellow winemakers, though, that they need to be careful with the process.

"This isn't just plug and play," he said.

All told, it makes winemaking - and especially winemaking in Niagara - a huge task, but one winemakers like himself are excited to tackle.

"You never know what's coming around the corner," he said. 🍷

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Proper country of origin labels more important than ever, says CFIA

By Luke Edwards

The Canadian Food and Inspection Agency is reminding businesses the importance of properly labeling where their product comes from.

In a notice to industry members last month, the CFIA said the Canadian government is “working with provinces, territories, and industry associations to promote clear, transparent and accurate product labelling.” The notice went on to encourage businesses to help consumers discern products that have Canadian input.

“We have seen an increase in complaints related to origin claims on food labels or in advertisements, including some related to ‘Product of Canada’ and ‘Made in Canada,’” the notice said. This is presumably a response to the increased desire to buy Canadian following U.S. President Donald Trump’s trade war and threats of annexation.

While use of the “Product of Canada” or “Made in Canada” claims are voluntary, those who use those terms are subject to federal guidelines, which apply to food sold at all levels of trade as well as for claims made in advertising and by restaurants.

All ingredients and components that contribute to the food must be considered, the guidelines say.

The “Product of Canada” claim is suitable when “all or virtually all major ingredients, processing, and labour used to make the food product are Canadian.” Very low levels of products that aren’t typically made in Canada can be allowed.

Packaging isn’t considered in the “Product of Canada” claim, and neither is the use of imported farm inputs such as seeds and fertilizer.

Simply using “Canadian” is considered the same as “Product of Canada.” However, claims of being 100 per cent Canadian means everything must be Canadian and there’s no wiggle room.

The “Made in Canada” claim is appropriate for items where “the last substantial transformation of the product occurred in Canada, even if some ingredients are from other countries,” the guidelines say. These claims should include qualifying statements such as “made in Canada from domestic and imported ingredients.”

Other claims can be used, as long as they’re truthful and not

misleading. The guidelines offer examples such as “roasted in Canada” for coffee products, which is obvious since all coffee beans are imported.

Some commodity specific guidelines are included. Meat producers can use “Product of Canada” claims for animals slaughtered in Canada.

“Animals are considered Canadian if they are born or hatched, raised and slaughtered in Canada or, in the case of feeder cattle, if they have spent a period of at least 60 days in Canada prior to slaughter in Canada,” the guidelines say.

“Meat from imported hatching eggs, including those hatched in transit, would meet the ‘Product of Canada’ guidelines provided that the chick was raised, slaughtered and processed in Canada.

For dairy and eggs, “Product of Canada” claims can be applied if the egg was hatched in Canada or the animal milked in Canada.

“It is important to follow the CFIA’s guidance for their use and ensure the label is accurate and not misleading. Accurate ‘Made in Canada’ and ‘Product of Canada’ labelling fosters a fair marketplace and builds trust,” the CFIA notice said.

An online AskCFIA service is available for those with questions.



A notice from the CFIA last month reminded those in the food sector, as well as consumers, the rules around using certain labels to describe country of origin. ~ Submitted photo

Making false or misleading claims about a food’s origin is against the law, and the CFIA notice said government officials will take enforcement action where appropriate.

The agency also had a message for those who come across labelling they suspect to be misleading or inaccurate.

“We take labelling issues seriously and we want to know about products that are labelled in a misleading manner. We encourage consumers and industry to report concerns directly to the CFIA through our food complaint or concern web page,” the notice said.

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A quick count: Camera technology helps with key orchard decisions



By Luke Edwards

It takes time to develop trust. That remains the case when it comes to robots.

Gerbe Botden is the orchard manager for Blue Mountain Fruit Company, a Thornbury-based farm. He and Jenny Lemieux, of Vivid Machines, presented to an audience at the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Convention, held February in Niagara Falls. Botden shared his experience using technology created by the company.

"What I wanted was something to measure and count the fruit of every single tree in our orchard," Botden said.

The Vivid device uses camera and machine learning to do just that. The device can be mounted on different equipment, providing more information that can help Botden plan thinning decisions and arm his labourers with the most accurate instructions possible.

"We can then make bloom thinning decisions...and tell guys where to go and then a simple rule for them to follow," Botden said.

It took time for the grower to fully trust the data he was receiving. Early on he would still conduct the full visual inspections he had previously. But as the information proved accurate, he began simply double checking and trusting the data more.

"I'm still going out into the field," he said.

The Vivid Machines website boasts 90 per cent prediction accuracy, and the ability to scan 15,000 trees per hour at a moving speed of five to 10 miles per hour (eight to 16 kilometres per hour).

"Ease of use and making it accurate are really our focuses," said Lemieux.

Botden said the technology is useful to him throughout the year. Not only does it help with thinning decisions, but it also helps him plan for yield and storage, as well as marketing preparation as he can get an idea of fruit size.

"We used the data at every single point of the growing season," he said.

Lemieux said it can also be used for other related research, such as the correlation between soil compaction and fruit count.

The company is exploring using their technology with other crops, including pears, high density cherries and vineyards. 🌱



The Blue Mountain Fruit Company is utilizing a tool from Vivid Machines to perform rapid fruit counts and measurements of the trees in their orchard. The technology uses high tech cameras and machine learning.
~ Vivid Machines photos

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Taking cleaning technology out into the vineyards

By Luke Edwards

Paul Moyer's a smart guy, even if his math doesn't seem to add up to the average person. Give him a moment to explain, though, and it all makes sense.

Moyer is a ninth generation apple grower in Niagara who's also known for his candy apples through Moyer Apple Products, as well as a newer company created in response to a listeria outbreak several years ago. He recently presented at the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Convention, using the odd math to describe the benefits of new technology he's developed to clean fruit and vegetables.

"It's not one plus one plus one equals three," said Moyer.

Cleanworks, where Moyer is the chief networker and idea creator, is a company that began when the apple business took a hit following a listeria outbreak a few years ago.

"It was devastating to the caramel apples business," Moyer said.

Not one to give up, Moyer ended up developing a device, with the help of researchers from the University of Guelph, that combines ultraviolet light, ozone and hydrogen peroxide to create the ultimate food cleaning machine. Using all three cleaning tools together increases the effectiveness

exponentially. Instead of just being three times better, Moyer said using all three together is "100 times more powerful than peroxide and UV alone."

The tool is now used for more than just cleaning apples, with eggs and other frozen fruits and veggies all benefiting from a pass under the tunnel. The medical community has also taken advantage of the technology, beginning to use it to clean equipment during the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

But now, they're looking at taking it to a whole new level, creating a mobile device that can be used outside in the vineyards and fields.

"We're getting 99 per cent kill on e. coli right in the field," said Moyer, who has teamed up with Vineland Estates Winery to test a tunnel device that passes over grape vines.

Brian Schmidt, winemaker at Vineland Estates, said the technology shows great promise in dealing with mildew, which can be a huge challenge for grape growers.

"And it looks really cool," he added, something that on the surface might not seem important, but for a business that has a heavy agri-tourism component, it is.

Traditionally, wineries like Vineland Estates have had to navigate spraying schedules around the



An adaptation of new technology created by Niagara business Cleanworks could support grape growers as they look for alternatives to spraying. ~ Pixabay photo

times when the public is visiting. Even if the spray they're using is completely innocuous, Schmidt said the mere sight of a sprayer in the vineyard can create a sense of unease among visitors who are becoming increasingly concerned with the use of pesticides and other chemicals.

"We're spraying all our vineyards before any customers show up," he said.

However, with the new technology, they can use it whenever, and are excited to share the process whenever a visitor asks.

"We can celebrate it," he said, adding it's a huge step towards sustainability.

The technology also reduces spray costs and eases concerns of soil compaction since the implement is lighter than a sprayer full of product.

However, it's not perfect. For instance, it doesn't address black rot, and the tool may hurt or kill beneficial microorganisms as well as the problematic critters.

But Schmidt points out that chemical solutions aren't typically very nice to those beneficials either.

And Moyer said the evidence also suggests there's no potential for resistance being developed by these microorganisms, like can happen with some sprays.

There have been some issues with damage to the equipment. In one experience the ozone rusted a steel cap, Moyer said.

If trials continue to show promise, Schmidt said the technology could be huge for the grape growing industry.

"We can create an environment where we can truly state that we are sustainable," he said. 🌱

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It's never too early or too late to start succession planning

By Teresa Van Raay

A significant portion of Canada's economy is powered by small and medium sized businesses. In fact, according to Statistics Canada, what are known as SMEs represent 98 per cent of all Canadian businesses and employ about two-thirds of the Canadian workforce.

Many of these businesses also happen to be family owned – and often family-run as well. That's certainly the case in agriculture, where the latest figures show that 98 per cent of Canadian farms are owned and operated by families.

It's also no secret that Canada, like many countries in the Western world, has an aging population with an imminent wave of retirements as the Baby Boomer generation transitions out of the workforce. In the agriculture sector, for example, statistics point to a potential of up to 40 per cent of farmers retiring by 2033.

That's why planning for the future of a business is so important. Whether the ultimate outcome involves a transition to next-generation family members or to a new owner altogether, the process of transition or succession planning is one that takes careful thought and effort from both the incoming and outgoing owners.

The story is a bit more complex in agriculture because in most cases, farm business transition also involves the family home and often an agricultural legacy dating back multiple generations – so the stakes are also high emotionally.

What is surprising, then, is that approximately 66 per cent of farmers are not prepared for succession and don't have a plan in place as to what it's going to look like.

To help draw attention to this important topic and encourage farmers to start thinking about it, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) has just wrapped up its third year of running a Financial Literacy and Farm Succession Planning Roadshow together with Farm Life Financial, a consultancy that specializes in this field.

This included a series of in-person workshops across Ontario as well as a virtual session that was recorded and is now available for viewing on the OFA website.

I'm a director on the board of the OFA, and I farm with my family near Grand Bend, where we raise pigs, and grow corn, soybeans, wheat and garlic.

My husband and I are still actively involved in the business, but we work alongside two of our kids who also play key roles in the farm – so I know first-hand how im-

portant and complex succession planning can be.

It's not as easy as simply handing over the reins or stepping away. In a family transition, the business must both provide for the retirement of the existing generation as well as support a living for the next generation.

It's also not always easy to step away from something that you've dedicated your life to building up. In the case of farming, it's usually not just a business, it's also a passion for agriculture and a love of the lifestyle that keeps us so committed to what we do.


If you're not sure how to get started, a good place to get a sense of what it all means is by watching the video and reviewing the resources on the OFA website:

ofa.on.ca/issues/succession-planning.

A few other tips that I've learned along the way:

- Keep the lines of communications open with the next generation, including any kids you have who don't want to farm, and be honest with yourself about what your expectations are for retirement.
- Make sure you write things down, including any contributions your kids may have already made to the business.
- Have regular meetings as a team where you treat each other like co-workers and step away from your more traditional family roles or relationships.

- Consult with accountants, lawyers and financial planners. They are the experts in taxation, shareholder agreements, transition and financial matters and their advice will help guide your process – and likely save you some money while you're at it.
- And finally, it's never too early or too late to start. No matter how old your kids are, if you haven't thought about developing a succession plan, now is as good a time as any to get the process going.

Teresa Van Raay is a director with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture 

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Ambassadors, leaders and members honoured by Agritourism Ontario

By Niagara Farms Staff

Agritourism Ontario recently celebrated accomplishments of those in the industry with its annual awards night.

Held at 13th Street Winery in St. Catharines, the association handed out three awards to deserving recipients. The awards were for work accomplished in 2024 and included categories of ambassador, leadership and member of the year.

“We are thrilled to recognize an outstanding team, business and individual this year. All three have made extraordinary contributions to the agritourism sector, each in their own unique ways,” said AO board chair, Darlene Downey.

Here are the three winners.

AMBASSADOR AWARD

Ontario’s Southwest Tourism Organization has worked on several agritourism projects over the recent years. In recognizing the organization - which covers Haldimand, Norfolk, Oxford, Middlesex, London, Elgin-St. Thomas, Sarnia-Lambton, Chatham-Kent, and Windsor-Essex - AO pointed out its Next Stop Taste series, content that features local agritourism, and their efforts to encourage people to visit local farms.

“They also do a lot of development and training for farmers in diversified agriculture,” a press release said.

The organization’s Ontario Southwest Signature Experience program also includes several agriculture related experiences.

LEADERSHIP AWARD

A private member’s bill put forward last year helped net MPP

Matthew Rae the leadership award for 2024.

Rae, an MPP for Perth-Wellington, drafted the Growing Agritourism Act - Bill 186 last year. At the time he said his goal with the private member’s bill was to provide consistency and protection for farmers around liability.

“It will help remove some barriers to those investments that farm operators can make in their agritourism operations,” he said last spring.

It received royal assent in December.

“This legislation is a first of its kind in Canada and a game-changer for agritourism operators. MPP Rae showed extraordinary leadership in drafting this bill and seeing it through to royal assent,” the AO press release said.

MEMBER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Described as a family and business that’s both “first class” on and off the farm, Meghan and John Snyder received the member of the year award.

Owners of Snyder’s Farm in Bright, they host thousands of visitors each year to make their way through the corn maze or pumpkin patch, climb up on a wagon for a hayride, enjoy a fun fright with the Halloween Haunt, or sit back and relax by a campfire with some home baked goods.

The family is also highly active in the community, supporting local charities and volunteering and helping out the local children’s hospital. 🌱



The Southwest Regional Tourism Organization received the 2024 Ambassador Award from Agritourism Ontario. In the photo is AO board chair Darlene Downey with Southwest Regional Tourism Organization executive director Joanne Wolnik. ~Agritourism Ontario photos



Snyder’s Farm won the Member of the Year award from Agritourism Ontario for their work providing an ever evolving on-farm experience for visitors as well as their significant community work. In the photo is AO board member Amy Strom with John and Meghan Snyder.



After his private member’s bill on agritourism received royal assent in December, Perth-Wellington MPP Matthew Rae received the Leadership Award from Agritourism Ontario. He’s pictured here with AO chair Darlene Downey.

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Feds provide \$1.6M for farm safety programs

Dollars were committed during Canadian Agricultural Safety Week last month

By Niagara Farms Staff

In one of his last acts in politics, Lawrence MacAulay announced funding for farm safety programs in Canada.

The retiring Minister of Agriculture and AgriFood made the announcement - up to \$1.6 million over three years - during Canadian Agricultural Safety Week last month. The funding will be spread out over three years and fund a range of initiatives, including national leadership and training programs, awareness campaigns and on-farm resources.

"Our hardworking farmers do so much for us, from putting food on our tables to keeping our economy strong. This funding will help ensure they are safe and taking care of their own health - both mental and physical - so they can continue doing the vitally important work they do. By supporting farmers and their families, we're helping

to build stronger, safer agricultural sector for everyone," MacAulay said in a press release.

The release pointed out one program in particular that will develop safety education resources designed for children, to keep the youngest people on the farm safe.

Other programs will support mental health work.

"CASA is deeply grateful for the continued support from AAFC. This vital funding allows us to work towards our vision of a safe and sustainable agriculture where healthy Canadian farm communities thrive," said CASA executive director Sandy Miller.

"With this generous contribution, CASA can continue to offer impactful programs, including Canadian Agricultural Safety Week, BeGrainSafe, and Canadian Agricultural Injury Reporting—programs that make a positive difference in the lives of farmers, their families, farm workers and farming communities. Together, we are building a safer agricultural sector for generations to come."

Ag Safety week takes place each spring on the third week of

March, seeking to remind those in the farming community the importance of safety.

From 2011 to 2020 there were 624 agriculture-related fatalities in Canada an average of 62 per year. However, those numbers have been dropping, from an average of

110 deaths per year between 1990 and 2005, and 70 deaths per year between 2006 and 2020.

The funding comes through the AgriCompetitiveness Program, which is under the Sustainable Agricultural Partnership. 🌱



The federal government announced funding to support farm safety programs last month. ~ Pixabay photo

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The most important meal of the day

Whether you're in a hurry to get the kids ready for school, or enjoying a more relaxing Sunday morning, it's always important to get your day started with a solid breakfast. And fortunately there are a lot of breakfast options that utilize the great things we grow, raise and produce right here in Ontario. If you're looking for something quick and easy as you rush out the door, or something a little more in depth - possibly as part of your Easter celebration - here are some options, courtesy Foodland Ontario.

All-Ontario Frittata (Potato and Ham Frittata)



Ingredients

- 1 tbsp (15 mL) vegetable oil
- 1 Ontario onion, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2 cups (500 mL) cooked diced Ontario potatoes (about 3 medium, 1 lb/500 g)
- 6 Ontario eggs
- 1/4 tsp (1 mL) salt
- 1/8 tsp (0.5 mL) pepper
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) diced cooked Ontario ham, chicken or turkey
- 1 cup (250 mL) shredded Ontario old cheddar cheese
- 1 small Ontario greenhouse tomato, sliced
- Garnish: Parsley

Instructions

In large nonstick ovenproof skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat. Add onion and garlic; cook until lightly softened, about 3 minutes. Add potatoes; cook for 2 to 3 minutes. In small bowl, beat eggs with salt and pepper; stir in ham and three-quarters of the cheese. Add to skillet, reduce heat to medium and cook until bottom is brown and crusty, about 5 minutes, occasionally lifting edges so uncooked eggs can flow underneath. (If skillet handle is not ovenproof, wrap in foil.) Sprinkle half of remaining cheese over frittata, top with tomatoes and remainder of cheese. Broil until eggs are set and cheese is melted, 1 to 2 minutes. Cut into wedges to serve. Garnish with parsley. Tip: If you don't have cooked potatoes, scrub raw potatoes, pierce well

and microwave at high until almost cooked, 6 to 8 minutes. Cool slightly, then dice (leave skin on for added fibre).

Sheet Pan Eggs and Hash Browns



Ingredients

- 4 Ontario potatoes cut into 3/4-inch (2 cm) chunks (about 1-1/2 lbs/750 g)
- 1 tbsp (15 mL) Ontario sunflower oil
- 3/4 tsp (4 mL) dried Italian seasoning
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 4 Ontario eggs
- Chopped fresh Ontario basil or chives

Instructions

Place potatoes on large parchment paper-lined rimmed baking sheet. Drizzle with oil, sprinkle with Italian seasoning, 1/2 tsp (2 mL) salt and pepper, to taste. Toss to evenly coat. Spread out over the baking sheet leaving space between potato pieces. Bake in 425°F (220°C) oven for about 30 minutes or until potatoes are browned and tender. Remove pan from oven. Push potatoes into 4 equal piles on baking sheet to create "nests", each about 5 inches (12 cm) in diameter. Crack one egg into the centre of each nest. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Bake for about 7 to 10 minutes or until eggs are set to desired doneness. Sprinkle with basil. Variation: When you remove the pan from the oven, sprinkle hot potatoes and eggs with 1/4 cup (50 mL) shredded spicy or plain Ontario cheese, dividing equally; let stand for 1 minute to melt cheese.

Strawberry Stuffed French Toast



Ingredients

- 8 oz (250 g) cream cheese, at room temperature
- 1 tbsp (15 mL) granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) finely chopped Ontario strawberries
- 1 loaf unsliced egg bread (450 g), preferably day-old
- 2 cups (500 mL) sliced Ontario strawberries
- 3 Ontario eggs
- 2 tbsp (25 mL) Ontario maple syrup
- 1/8 tsp (0.5 mL) ground nutmeg
- 3/4 cup (175 mL) Ontario milk
- 1/2 tsp (2 mL) vanilla
- 2 tbsp (25 mL) butter, softened (approx)
- Ontario maple syrup

Instructions

In medium bowl, mash together cream cheese and sugar; fold in chopped strawberries. Trim both ends off bread, cut loaf into 12 slices, each about 3/4-inch (2 cm) thick. Spread one side of each bread slice with cream cheese mixture, dividing equally. Top 6 slices with sliced strawberries, dividing equally, then remaining bread slices with cream cheese side down; press gently. In shallow dish, whisk eggs, maple syrup and nutmeg until blended. Whisk in milk and vanilla. Working in batches, dip sandwiches into egg mixture, soaking well. Heat large skillet or griddle over medium heat. Brush with thin layer of butter. Add soaked sandwiches, in batches as necessary, and cook for 1 to 2 minutes, pressing gently. Using one spatula under sandwiches and one on top, flip over and cook until golden and puffed and a knife inserted into bread comes out clean, about 1 to 2 minutes. Keep warm while repeating with remaining

sandwiches. Add more butter and adjust heat as necessary, to prevent burning. Drizzle French toast with maple syrup.

Bacon, Egg and Cheese Muffins



Ingredients

- 1 small Ontario onion, diced
- 1/3 cup (75 mL) each diced Ontario sweet red and green pepper
- 1/3 cup (75 mL) vegetable oil
- 2 cups (500 mL) all-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup (50 mL) cornmeal
- 1 tbsp (15 mL) granulated sugar
- 1 tsp (5 mL) baking powder
- 1/2 tsp (2 mL) each baking soda and salt
- 1/4 tsp (1 mL) each pepper and dried thyme
- 1 cup (250 mL) shredded sharp (aged) Ontario cheddar cheese
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) diced cooked Ontario bacon (4 slices)
- 1 Ontario egg
- 1-1/4 cups (300 mL) Ontario milk

Instructions

In microwaveable bowl, combine onion, red and green peppers and oil. Cover and cook on High for 1 to 1-1/2 minutes to soften. Set aside. In large bowl, combine flour, cornmeal, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, salt, pepper and thyme. Stir in cheese and bacon. In another bowl, lightly beat egg, then stir in milk. Add milk mixture and vegetable mixture to dry mixture and stir just until moistened. Spoon batter into greased muffin cups. Bake in 375°F (190°C) oven for 15 to 18 minutes or until toothpick inserted in centre comes out clean. Let cool in pan on rack 5 minutes, then turn muffins out to cool completely. Tip: Try diced ham or smoked sausage instead of bacon.

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→ Continued from page A16

Breakfast Granola Bars



Ingredients

- 2 cups (500 mL) quick-cooking rolled oats
- 1 cup (250 mL) all-purpose flour
- 1 cup (250 mL) grated Ontario carrots
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) diced Ontario apple (skin on)
- 1/3 cup (75 mL) each roasted unsalted sunflower seeds and toasted chopped walnuts
- 2 tsp (10 mL) ground cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp (1 mL) salt
- 1 Ontario egg
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) canola oil
- 1/3 cup (75 mL) each Ontario honey and packed brown sugar
- 1 tsp (5 mL) vanilla

Instructions

Line a 13 x 9-inch (3.5 L) baking pan with foil, leaving 2-inch (5 cm) overhang at each end and grease foil. In large bowl, combine oats, flour, carrots, apple, sunflower seeds, walnuts, cinnamon and salt. In medium bowl, whisk egg, oil, honey, sugar and vanilla until blended. Pour over dry ingredients and mix until thoroughly combined.

Spoon mixture into prepared pan, press firmly into an even layer with a spatula. Bake in 375°F (190°C) oven for about 30 minutes or until lightly browned around the edges and firm to the touch. Let cool completely in pan on rack. Using foil overhang as handles, remove from pan and transfer to cutting board. With large knife cut into bars. Store covered in the refrigerator.

Tips: Freeze wrapped bars in an air-tight container. Thaw at room temperature for 15 minutes or pack frozen into lunch box.

Morning Glory Muffins



Ingredients

- 1-1/2 cups (375 mL) all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) packed brown sugar
- 1/3 cup (75 mL) toasted wheat germ
- 2-1/2 tsp (12 mL) cinnamon
- 1-1/2 tsp (7 mL) baking powder
- 1/2 tsp (2 mL) salt
- 1/4 tsp (1 mL) baking soda
- 2/3 cup (150 mL) Ontario milk
- 1/3 cup (75 mL) vegetable oil
- 2 Ontario eggs, beaten
- 1 tsp (5 mL) vanilla

- 2 cups (500 mL) peeled and finely chopped Ontario apples (2 medium)
- 2 cups (500 mL) finely grated Ontario carrots (2 to 3 medium)
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) each shredded coconut, raisins and chopped pecans
- Topping:
- 1 tbsp (15 mL) sugar
- 1/2 tsp (2 mL) cinnamon

Instructions

In medium bowl, mix together flour, sugar, wheat germ, cinnamon, baking powder, salt and baking soda; set aside.

In large bowl, whisk together milk, oil, eggs and vanilla. Stir in apples, carrots, coconut, raisins and pecans. Stir in dry ingredients just until combined, do not over-mix (batter will be thick).

Spoon batter into lightly greased or paper-lined muffin cups. Sprinkle with cinnamon sugar topping (recipe below). Bake in 400°F (200°C) oven for 20 to 22 minutes or until firm to the touch. Cool pan on wire rack for 5 minutes. Remove from pan, serve warm or cold.

Topping:

In small bowl, mix together sugar and cinnamon. Sprinkle over tops of muffins before baking.



Sweet Cherry Scones



Ingredients

- 1-1/2 cups (375 mL) whole Ontario sweet cherries
- 2 cups (500 mL) all-purpose flour
- 2 tbsp (25 mL) granulated sugar (approx.)
- 1 tbsp (15 mL) baking powder
- 1/2 tsp (2 mL) salt
- 2 tbsp (25 mL) each of cold butter and vegetable oil
- 3/4 cup (175 mL) milk
- 1 tsp (5 mL) vanilla

Instructions

Pit cherries and coarsely chop, drain on paper towel. In large bowl, stir together flour, sugar, baking powder and salt. Using pastry blender or fingers, work in butter until in small bits. Stir in drained cherries. Make a well in centre. Stir together oil, milk and vanilla, pour into well and stir just until firm dough forms.

Turn out onto lightly floured surface. Knead three times. Divide in half. Pat each half into 3/4-inch (2 cm) thick 6-inch (15 cm) circle. Cut each into 6 wedges.

Lightly grease or coat baking sheet with cooking spray. Place scones slightly apart on sheet. For sparkle, sprinkle tops with 1 tbsp (15 mL) more sugar. Bake on rack above centre of 450°F (230°C) oven until golden, 10 to 12 minutes. 🍓



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AG EVENTS ON THE HORIZON

Some early plants will be poking through the soil this month as we prepare for warmer days ahead. Few months in Canada come with reliable weather forecasts, but April may be the most unpredictable, as we could see every type of weather all in one April day. With any luck, though, Mother Nature will behave enough to get our farmers and growers started on the right foot. Hoping for good weather isn't the only thing to do this spring, though. There are several ag related events on the calendar. Here are a few:

APRIL 12

NIAGARA AGRICULTURAL LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
The Niagara Federation of Agriculture will once again celebrate a member of the local ag community. John Sikkens Sr. is the 2025 lifetime achievement award winner and will be honoured at an event on Saturday, April 12. It begins at 7 p.m. and takes place at Twenty Valley Golf and Country Club. For more information email niagarafedag@gmail.com

APRIL 12, 19 & MAY 3

TEA AND TOUR AT FISHERVILLE GREENHOUSE
Indulge in some treats and get an inside glimpse of a local farm and greenhouse operation with Fisherville's Finest Greenhouse Tea and Tour. Upcoming events include Saturdays, April 12, 19 and May 3, with the latter two having unique themes of spring bloom and Kentucky Derby. Visit fishervillesfinest.com for more information.

END OF APRIL

TULIP SEASON
A burst of colour and beauty arrives every spring when the tulips come out in bloom. While many gardeners enjoy the flowers in their very own gardens, there are a few tulip farms in the region that people can visit to get a full appreciation of the variety and beauty the tulip offers. The season depends heavily on weather, but usually arrives towards the end of April and runs into early May. Three tulip farms in Niagara that will be offering tours include Tasc (tascllc.com), JP Niagara Tulip Experience (jpniagaratulipexperience.com), and Sarah Grey (sarahgrey.ca).

MAY 12 – MAY 18

KIDS FARMSAFE WEEK
A burst of colour and beauty arrivThe Canadian Agricultural Safety Association has a special message for the youngest members of farm families, with Kids FarmSafe Week from May 12 to 18. It offers a reminder for kids to be extra careful when on the farm, offering tips for young people and parents alike. CASA will also offer children friendly activities to get them thinking about safety. For more information, visit casa-acsa.ca.

MAY 27

FORT ERIE RACE TRACK OPENING
The horses hit the track in Fort Erie later this spring, as racing returns on Tuesday, May 27. This year marks the 128th racing season at the historic oval track, with regular race days on Mondays and Tuesdays along with the return of some favourite special events. It all leads up to a milestone anniversary for the track's signature event, as the Prince of Wales Stakes celebrates its 90th running this September. For more information on the track and its events, visit forterieracing.com.

SPRING MARKET SEASON BEGINS

MARKET SEASON RAMPING UP
Spring usually means the return of weekly farmers' markets throughout local communities. Even those that run year round tend to ramp up in April and May as the growing season gets going. There are several community farmers' markets across the Niagara and Haldimand area. Look out for your local market and see what they have planned this spring.

Feds bump up AgriStability compensation rate following announcement of Chinese tariffs

By Niagara Farms Staff

Tariffs from south of the border aren't the only international trade concern Canadians farmers must deal with these days, and the federal government has announced support for the sector follow another global power's move to raise tariffs.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada announced new measures to help farmers affected by new tariffs imposed by China. That country placed a 100 per cent tariff on Canadian canola oil, canola meal and peas, as well as a 25 per cent tariff on certain pork, fish and seafood products.

Those supports include increasing the compensation rate of AgriStability to 90 per cent from the previous 80 per cent, as well as doubling the current payment cap to \$6 million for the 2025 program year. The AgriStability payment cap hasn't been updated in more than 20 years.

Additionally, the federal government is providing provincial and territorial counterparts flexibility that's meant to get money to producers faster.

"China's decision to apply these tariffs will have a devastating impact on our farm families

and their communities. We're working hard to diversify our trading partnerships and establish new markets, but we know the sector needs support now," said Minister of Agriculture, Agri-Food and Rural Economic Development Kody Blois in a press release.

"Today's announcement is a direct result of their advocacy – and our commitment to them. As Canada's Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Rural Economic Development, I will continue to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with our producers and will defend the sector every step of the way."

The Chinese government is using an "anti-discrimination" investigation as their reasoning for the tariffs. They launched the so-called investigation last fall.

The tariffs come as Canadian farmers are facing challenges on multiple fronts, including a trade war with the United States, the Chinese tariffs as well as animal disease concerns.

Canadian farmers grow more than 21 million acres of canola each year, with it generating \$13.6 billion in farm cash receipts in 2023. Last year Canada exported nearly \$470 million worth of port products to China. 🌱



The federal government has made changes to its AgriStability payment policy in an effort to offset the impact of new Chinese tariffs on canola and other products. ~ Pixabay photo

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