

## THE ONTARIO TABLE: COMING HOME

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by Adrienne Roman

Mother Nature is a true wonder. Her abundance is evident. Indigenous communities have celebrated the growing, using, and preserving of crops with humble ceremonies of thanksgiving for centuries. Yes, we all sing along when the commercial comes on, but what do you really know about *the good things that grow in Ontario?*

Lynn Ogryzlo's bestselling Canadian cookbook, *The Ontario Table* is the perfect recipe for the changing season, bursting with vibrant tales of local farming communities and beautifully illustrated with her husband Jon's breathtaking images of our rich agricultural heritage. A true symphony of mouth-watering, locally-inspired recipes paired with a crucial message for educating yourself about the importance of what you buy and where it comes from. Immerse yourself in the endless bounties that Ontario has to offer.

Along with the release of her third cookbook, Lynn's *Eat, Think, and Drink Local* movement challenges consumers to purchase \$10 a week worth of local food, which helps to foster new business and create community interaction. The possibility of infusing \$2.4 billion into the agricultural economy has many changing their minds about their food choices. To date, close to \$84,000 has been contributed to Ontario agriculture through farmers markets and food programs like the Norfolk Childrens' Nutrition Network, and the possibility of creating 10,000 new jobs has Ontario empowered. Purchasing the cookbook or buying locally directly supports the farmers to turn the agricultural wheels in Ontario.

Consumerism enables an ever-ready supply of goods that provide instant gratification, yet we all know that travelled food is tired food. It's simple: why settle for weary when there's an abundance of fresh cheese, bread, meat, beans, jams, juices, and wine ready to enjoy all year round? The last chapter in the book cleverly lists monthly crop availabilities and a vast array of pantry items that are readily available in over 20 spectacular culinary destinations. Expand your food adventures and engulf yourself in the treasures that each season has to offer. Stock your pantry with Ontario products and make a conscious effort to buy local. Support your local retailer when you can, they are working alongside the farmers who risk everything on Mother Nature to bring fresh food to your table.

Many Indigenous communities utilize a truly brilliant method of farming to raise their corn, squash, and beans. These "Three Sisters" depend on each other for survival. The corn stalks provide the perfect place for the climbing beans, while the squash plant works itself along the ground deterring weed growth. The beans produce much-needed nitrogen, and the mulch from the squash leaves creates a microclimate that retains moisture in the soil. "The Three Sisters" once existed at the very heart of Indigenous communities as the primary food source, working interdependently to sustain the tribe. It was a considered a magical experience to grow the crops as a community and those who ate it together were believed to be protected spiritually. Ontario farmers continue to live by these same values, connected to their land, to each other, and to those around them. Lynn's grandmother used to tell her, "If you have a bushel of dirt with your food you'll always be happy". Grey and lifeless, or vital, fresh, and energetic? The closer you are to the Earth, the happier and healthier you'll be. [www.ontariotable.com](http://www.ontariotable.com)

Image courtesy of *Microsoft Office*.

