

The bounty of the county is so near

The food and wine producers of Prince Edward County really ought to open a store in Toronto.

By: **Joe Fiorito** Columnist, Published on Mon Aug 03 2015, www.thestar.com

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These days I have some time on my hands, which means I can explore a bit more widely. No, I am not looking for lost any ships, nor any of the reasons for the fuss about those ships.

I'm mostly looking for a bite to eat.

In aid of which we went to Prince Edward County last week. I have a friend out that way who knows everyone in the vicinity and he said if I was ever near, I should look him up.

Angelo Bean is a man I admire because, some years ago, he said he wanted to retire from his job at the LCBO and start making Italian sausages. A man after my own heart, and arteries.

And many people have that dream, or its equivalent, but Angelo not only did what he said he'd do, he does it as well as it can be done.

He makes salsicce and salume, and many of his sausages are flavoured with the wine and cider of the region, and he fed us these things and more for lunch, and then he pointed us in several directions and turned us loose.

Here's what I discovered:

Lunch at the Drake Devonshire in Wellington. Do not draw any hasty conclusions. I have never been to the Drake in Toronto. I merely point out that the Drake in the county conforms to the utopian ideal of lunch.

There is a patio on the lake and you can eat fresh fish caught nearby, and with your lunch you can have a bottle of white wine made from grapes grown ten minutes away, and when you taste their Chardonnay you think you might have been mistaken to order it until you drink it with your lunch, and you suddenly want to punch yourself in the face because why haven't you been drinking it forever?

There are, as you know, several wineries in the county. I will not rave about Hubb's Creek because I am afraid if you knew how good it was you'd buy up all their wine, and that would make me sad.

For the same reason, I hesitate to say that Hinterland makes a sparkling wine as fine as any prosecco you are likely to get in Italy. But a pizza at Norman Hardie winery is better than a pizza in Naples, and they are not likely to run out of that.

Also in the county we ate a lot of cheese — goat, sheep and buffalo — from a maker called Fifth Town; really, all that was missing was a bell tower, a villa on a hill, and a few thousand years of history.

Give them time.

One night in Bloomfield we passed an ice cream shop ten minutes after it had closed. Two young women had just done the cash and wiped the counters clean, and they were about to turn off the lights.

I stared mournfully until one of them opened the door a crack and said, "Are you desperate?" I was so wordlessly desperate that she opened up and made me a rhubarb and raspberry ice cream cone.

I am forever grateful.

Here's a thing I did not know: there were, at one time, more than 40 canneries in Prince Edward County. There are none

left now. There are, however, many fallow fields and also a tiny cannery museum in Wellington. I want to howl.

What's wrong with us?

Here's a thought.

We cannot leave Toronto any time we want, even on a long weekend. I suggest that the producers and vintners of the county band together and open up a specialty store in Toronto, and ship us wine and cheese, fresh fruits and small-batch jams, and Slickers ice cream by the quart. Now, please. Me, desperate.

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