

Maynooth market a community hub



Organizer Christine Hass stands beside custom delicacies at her popular booth at the Maynooth farmers market, which launched its eighth season last Saturday.

By Sarah Vance

Maynooth's outdoor market kicked off the summer season on a strong note last Saturday, as more than 50 vendors started showing up at sunrise to unload products from the back of pick-up trucks. The day begins early for vendors in the parking lot of the Old Community Centre, near the Logger's Fields in downtown Maynooth, and it ends at 1 p.m.

The market started with about 10 regular vendors in its first year, and has constantly expanded. Now in its eighth year, the market now sees booths branching into the parking lot of the rink across the street, as organizers struggle to find room for everyone looking to be involved. In fact, there are vendors on wait-lists as the season gets underway.

The market is an important contact point for artisans and farmers, who are invested in keeping local foods and produce accessible, but who may lack a storefront to distribute their merchandise.

It is also a positive parallel enterprise for neighboring businesses, in the downtown core, that see sales increases on market day. For many cottagers the market is the reason for coming off the lake into the town, once they settled in after the often slow grinding commute from city life in order to gain the serenity of a weekend in the Highlands.

The market is definitely a hub for locals, many of whom farm the Highlands where Canadian Shield altitudes lead to warmer overall temperatures, ideal for cultivating herbs such as tarragon and basil.

"The altitude of our location at Hillsvie Farm and Studios is significantly higher than Bancroft, leading to warmer temperatures and an increase in rain," said Carol Russell, who has found a niche market selling infused vinegars and specialty jellies and reductions.

Susan Winch of Windchill Acres in L'Amable wowed the crowds with assorted boxes of organically grown mushrooms, including shiitake, oyster, lion's mane, cinnamon cap, and beech (Shimeji). "We sell our mushrooms to Foodland in Bancroft, but the market is an important point for us to meet customers," said Winch.

The market is also becoming known for a unique range of services and products which continue to evolve, following growing demand. A full breakfast will now be served every Saturday by Joyce Dale, inside the Old Community Centre where tables are set and fresh coffee and tea simmers.

Poet Peter Jones and writer Lea Kitler (author of the biography *A Magnificent Life*) were also on hand, sharing selections from their books. Liam Kelly, an accomplished young violinist, played the fiddle, as artisan breads and pastries, some baked in outdoor clay ovens, warmed in the sun.

"Everyone is feeling very positive today, and the weather has been excellent," said organizer Christine Hass. "We could not have asked for a better day."