

Farmers needed to help build food guide

By Chris Traber

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If you're a farmer in and around York Region, growing and selling produce at your farm-gate operation, the York Region Food Network wants to hear from you.

The network is producing two culturally specific Guides to Fresh Food for the Chinese and South Asian communities in York. These new guides will highlight the growers and suppliers of local ethnic food, giving residents the opportunity to become better informed about the many ethnic food options that are grown in and around the region. Farms will be included in the guides free, food program coordinator Catherine Cook said.

While the network is seeking foods that are specific to these cultural communities, they are also interested in speaking to farmers who are selling their own produce and meats that reflect a broader array of food choices beyond what are typically recognized as ethnic specific foods.

"Communities are seeking fresh, local and homegrown food," she said. "If this definition fits your farm-gate operation, please get in touch with us."

The network also wants to include retailers who sell local, fresh food from the region's greenbelt.

The guides will be available free to York residents and will provide easy-to-read, community-based listings of retailers, farmers markets and on-farm operations that provide locally-grown produce for the Chinese and South Asian communities.

The Chinese version will be produced in traditional script. Both guides will be ready for distribution at the end of June.

The guides are made possible through the support of the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation, a charitable organization established to support the vitality of the 1.8 million acre greenbelt.

The food network is a registered charity dedicated to reducing and eliminating hunger in our community. It raises awareness in York and promotes policy changes that increase access to affordable nutritious food for residents. It works with regional food banks, anti-poverty organizations and community groups, government, and corporate partners to provide and support community programs that provide food and related assistance.

To learn more about hunger in York Region, visit www.yrfn.ca online.

Anyone interested should contact the food network by mid-April. Farmers' information will be listed and there will be a map indicating location.

To be included in the 2010 guides, contact Yvonne Kelly, 905-967-0428 ext. 205, e-mail yvonnek@yrfn.ca or Catherine Cook, 905-967-0428 ext. 203, or e-mail catherinec@yrfn.ca.