

JK Hillier

Celebrated Chef Hosts Hillier Fish Fry

On a hillside near Hillier, Toronto's and possibly Canada's most celebrated chef toils alone in his small vineyard. Jamie Kennedy shot into prominence in the early 1980's when he and another young chef Michael Stadlander were hired to open Scaramouche. Scaramouche quickly became the city's ultimate dining experience. Reservations still need to be made several weeks in advance even to enter its doorway. In 1985 he opened his first restaurant Palmerston. He also published a cookbook that year. Along the way Kennedy spent eight and half years at the ROM and during this time

his emerging events and catering business began to thrive. When renovations at the ROM closed the restaurant and forced his hand he decided that a new restaurant would be the public venue for his flourishing catering business. Late last year he opened Jamie Kennedy Wine Bar to great enthusiasm from the Toronto restaurant media and fans of Kennedy's cuisine.

Since 2001 Kennedy has begun the slow transition to the County. Kennedy's love of wine drew him to Prince Edward County. "I had heard that this area was being looked at as a potential Pinot Noir ►

or wine growing region," said Kennedy. "I am very interested in wine and the idea of a vineyard appealed to me. A friend and a fellow vineyard operator, Geoff Heinricks introduced me to this farm—and that was it."

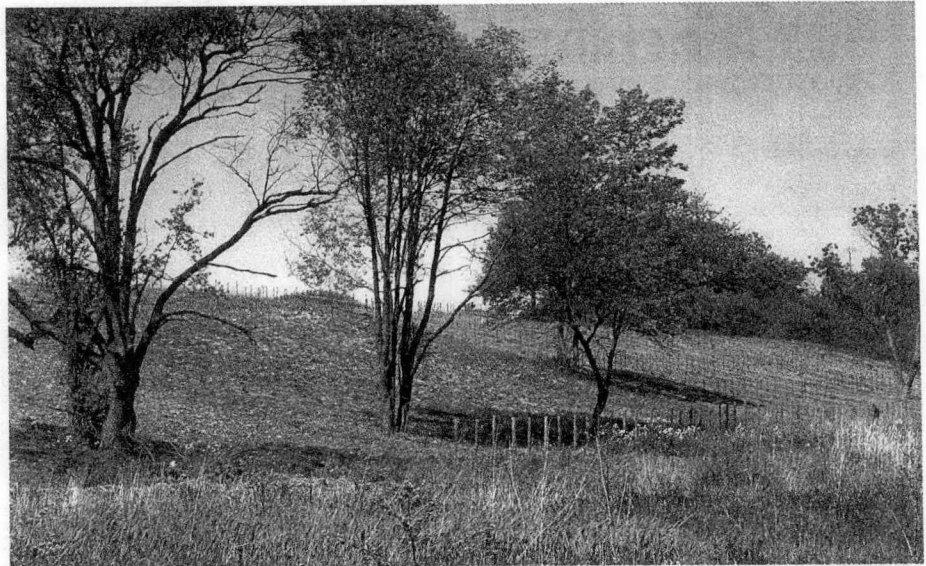
From this small cultivated acreage Kennedy points 300 metres in two directions to show the length of this south facing escarpment. "Eventually the entire length of this hillside will be producing grapes."

Kennedy bought the 115 acre farm in 2001 and has endured the trials of starting a vineyard. Pointing to a leafy foot tall plant Kennedy says, "These are our 3rd year vines. They will produce some fruit this year but it has been a pretty steep learning curve. We suffered quite a bit of damage this past winter. So I plan to approach it a bit differently this year—replant the

vines that have been killed and delay things a bit. But you learn."

"I bought this place in 2001 with the idea to work towards living and working here full-time. However, when you start something like this it's more of a money pit rather than a revenue producer. Toronto seems to be the place where I can generate revenue. For now anyway. For me ultimately the goal is move here full time and to open a little restaurant and be able to serve wine from the vineyard, using local foods as much as possible. That's the idea—to celebrate what is local here."

On Saturday Kennedy is hosting his third Fish Fry event for the Hillier Recreation Committee at the Hillier Town Hall. According to Hillier Rec Committee member Jim Wright, the event is the single largest fundraiser



Kennedy's vineyard on a south facing hillside near Hillier.
TIM KOLLETT

for the organization. "Everybody seems to turn out for it. We've had to turn a lot of people away, because we

have run out of food. We are extremely lucky to have someone of Jamie's talent and stature helping us with this

event"

"The community is very important to me," said Kennedy. "When I heard

about it three years ago, I asked if I could cater the event. It seems to be very popular and gets bigger each