

From our readers



## FALL DELIGHTS

Alice Rice wanted to share a photo she took in Limehouse of the Limehouse Memorial Hall. Got a photo you want to share? Email: [cgamble@theifp.ca](mailto:cgamble@theifp.ca)

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## A THING OF BEAUTY

Laurent Thibault of Georgetown had a magical moment in the temperate rainforest coast of British Columbia recently. The white mama bear is what they call a "spirit bear." It is a regular "black bear," (not a polar bear) but with a recessive white gene so that when two bears with this gene mate, the offspring can be either white or black. In this case, her cub is black. In fact she had two of them, but it was hard to photograph all three together. Got a photo you want to share?

Email: [cgamble@theifp.ca](mailto:cgamble@theifp.ca)



## A great pair: Ontario wine and farmers' markets

If you can buy wine at the grocery store—where soon the selection will be expanding significantly, thanks to the arrival of LCBO express outlets in some stores—shouldn't you be able to do the same at a farmers' market?

Thankfully, says the province, yes.

Recently saw the launch of a new two-year pilot program in Ontario designed to bring great local food and the best Ontario wine together, in farmers' markets.

The program addresses the province's desire to stimulate the economy by further promoting local food and beverages. Sales of VQA wine—an acronym for Vintner's Quality Alliance, a quality assurance program centred around 100 per cent Ontario grapes—soared to \$268 million last year, up a phenomenal \$100 million since 2008.

Still, the wine industry has long argued its potential to expand would be further enhanced with greater exposure to consumers.

And selling wine at farmers' markets is a step towards making that consumer connection.

This new program didn't come about easily. A lot of hand wringing and what-if scenarios related to alcohol sales at farmers' markets—and the potential loss of business at the LCBO—caused government bureaucrats some sleepless nights. Legally and administratively, there's a world of difference between selling grapes at a farmers' market stall and selling wine. And no Ontario government wants the

LCBO to earn a penny less than it does now.

But to its credit, the province pressed on. And what a boon for those who frequent the farmers' markets participating in the program. "Oh, you're buying asparagus. Can I suggest a wine to go with that?" Sure!

This pilot will be revealing for a couple of reasons, beginning with the commitment by wineries. Appearing at busy farmers' markets will enhance a winery's profile, but I wonder about profitability. Is it equitable for a winery even an hour or so away to pack a vehicle with a few cases of wine, and spend a half-day hawking it at a farmer's market?

As well, it's likely Ontario craft beer producers and fruit wineries that have storefronts like the VQA wine producers will also want to take part at some point. Right now, it's just for VQA wine producers. But after all, the whole idea of selling wine at farmers' markets originated with fruit wine producers.

And finally, anyone who has frequented farmers' markets knows there are cultural reasons some food producers would not want their products associated with alcohol.

Will your local famers' market be selling wine? The Attorney General's website is supposed to be listing those that have been approved. See you at the market.

Owen Roberts is the director of research communications at the University of Guelph and the agri-food columnist for *The Guelph Mercury*.



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