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# Ostrich tastes like beef, but it's lower in fat

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calorie alternatives to meat.  
"It's a delicious red meat that tastes like beef while being lower in fat and calories than beef, chicken or even turkey," said Ms Simmonds. "It looks and tastes like beef."  
As relative newcomers on the ostrich

farming scene, the couple are living proof that sometimes changing a life can be as simple as buying a newspaper.  
Just three years ago the Simmonds were busy dusting off the grit of city life to dive into country living on their newly acquired 15-acre farm on Fourth Line.  
They had bought farm in order to house

the heavy equipment Mr. Simmonds used in his landscaping work, but it wasn't long before they discovered another use for their land.

"Three years ago I saw an article in a paper about ostrich farming. We thought, 'Huh, ostrich meat,'" said Ms Simmonds. "We started to do a little research."

Today the Simmonds have 45 young ostriches and 15 teens. An adult male and two adult females are the breeders of the bunch, with the females laying an egg about every other day. One ostrich egg weighs up to 4 lbs. and takes 42 days to incubate.

"There's a lot to ostrich farming. You don't just put them on the field and let them go," advised Ms Simmonds. "We did a lot of research on this."

Ostriches are generally healthy, hardy beasts boasting skin so leathery they can sleep out in the snow in the winter without bother. But the Simmonds had to learn the whole hatching process.

From the start, the eggs are treated with care. They're washed with an antiseptic and handled with gloves only, so no bacteria is absorbed. From there they're put into an incubator for 39 days, which turns every two hours to simulate conditions found in the wild.

On the 42nd day, the baby ostrich meets the world.

Ostriches at White Rock usually go to market at a provincially inspected establishment at about 10-13 months. The meat is sold through Brandt foods.

"That's important," said Ms Simmonds. "We really don't want people thinking we're doing this in our backyard."

At White Rock, the ostriches are raised in a natural, free-range environment with no added hormones. Their diet consists of

alfalfa, clover and a vitamin pellet.

The result is a heart smart alternative to red meat, tallying up at 122 calories and two grams of fat for a 100g cooked serving.

Compare that to 220 calories and 11g of fat for a beef rib roast, or 160 calories and 3.5 grams of fat for both turkey and chicken breasts of the same size.

Today ostrich meat is available in some restaurants and supermarkets but has yet to find the popular appeal of your typical steak.

That might just be a matter of time, said Ms Simmonds.

"This is a new type of thing but it's actually becoming big all over," she said. "Canadians are just getting used to it. I think you'll see it in more stores when the availability is there."

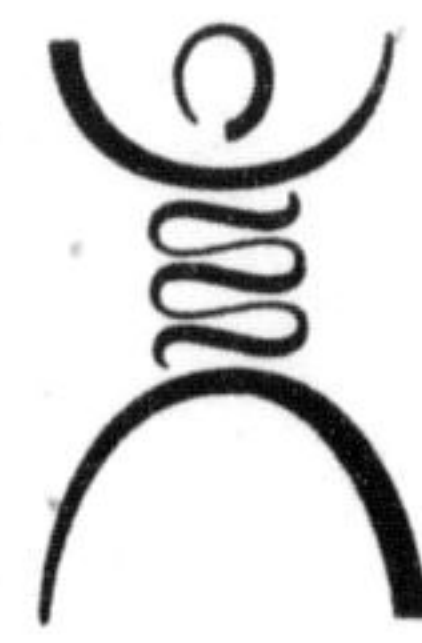
There's definitely interest. In fact, in their first year of business the Simmonds were hit with a wave of curiosity substantial enough they have opened up their farm to the public.

"We had so many people buying the meat from us we decided to open up the farm," said Ms Simmonds. "What people really find neat is here they can see them run."

Along with wagon rides and barbecued ostrich meat hamburgers and hot dogs, the farm offers a gift shop filled with ostrich egg crafts and ostrich meat recipes. One tip — don't overcook. In fact, due to its low fat content ostrich meat should be cooked about 20-minutes less per kg than beef and is at its most tender when served medium rare.

White Rock Farm is open Wednesday through Sunday until Thanksgiving, then on weekends only to December 24. For more information, call 519-856-2629.

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