

The joys of sleeping outside

You keep asking. Why, during summer, do I insist on sleeping outside under the leafy overhang of a back yard maple?

Good question. But the answers are simple.

First, our house isn't air-conditioned and while the basement is comfortably cool, our bedroom isn't.

It's horribly hot. So hot, an open window plus a rotary fan does little to encourage a good night's rest.

Second, I enjoy communing with nature. Lying on my back and staring at the stars gives me a new lease on life.

I challenge anyone, atheist, agnostic or believer to gaze into the heavens and not appreciate the wonders of this amazing universe. And how it all began.

It's a sensation you don't achieve by fixing your eyes on the ceiling or cooling your heels under covers. That, to me, is boring stuff.

But not hearing the rustle of leaves responding to a brisk westerly breeze; or listening to sounds of crickets duplicating the most magnificent of choirs; or hearing repeated calls of a mourning dove, conversing long-distance with its wayward mate.

That, to me, is night life at its best.

URBAN COTTAGE

Little wonder urbanites long for weekend escapes to the country.

Little wonder suburbanites live for weekends at the cottage.

To them, the grass is greener and the air is fresher 100 miles away.

For me, the grass is greener and the air is fresher 100 feet away.

They'll take it and I'll take it and be thankful for it.

It's a priceless blessing I thoroughly enjoy.

However, where there are rewards, there are also penalties. Sleeping outdoors, minus a tent, can present problems.

For example:

In May and June, mosquitoes are a menace. They attack with deadly ferocity and unerring accuracy.

Any part of the uncovered anatomy is subject to an aerial offensive.

Even a double application of anti-insect repellent won't deter their aggressive ways. In the end, they always win.

Raccoons, frequent trespassers on our property, can also be disturbing.

While their main mission is usually a cool drink from the backyard birdbath, to suddenly awaken and stare into a masked face containing two beady eyes can be upsetting.

After two such episodes, I'm still not sure who was frightened



Roaming Around

with Jim Thomas

most, me or the coon.

There are other nighttime visitors as well: occasional dogs, countless cats, restless rabbits and squirrely squirrels.

None stop for long, just passing through.

While heavy dews are expected, sudden downpours are not, at least not this summer.

Our lawn is drier than the Sahara Desert. But when the rains come, it's a rude awakening, prompting a 20-yard dash to the nearest door.

Only to find it locked! While these occurrences can be bothersome, they're nothing compared to what I endured last week.

The time was 1:15 a.m. I remember checking my watch before falling asleep.

Suddenly, for whatever reason, I awoke with a start. There, glistening in the moonlight was a black and white tail.

That's all I could see. The rest was under my cot.

The tail colour, however, left no doubt as to the attachment at the other end. It was a skunk, at its most beautiful and odorous best.

What to do? Should I jump and run or fake deep sleep?

I chose the latter, keeping one eye open on the route the trespasser might take.

SPECIAL VISIT

For a brief period, minutes that seemed like hours, he went nowhere, merely parked himself under my bed.

Then, much to my relief, he emerged from the other side and ambled off into the night.

For me, this was excitement enough. I gathered up my belongings and retreated into the house, awakening my wife.

"What's the problem?" she asked.

"I crossed paths with a skunk," I replied.

"Then sleep in the basement," she requested. "The air's cooler down there — and fresher."

Jim Thomas is a Stouffville resident who has written for area newspapers for more than 50 years.

FRESH TUNA STEAK!

These firm-textured, thick-flaked fresh steaks are excellent grilled — and also raw, if that's to your taste!

19⁹⁵ LB THIS WEEK

ENGLISH CUKES

I was at a loss for what to write about the English cucumbers this week. So I asked my friend, Johnny P., from produce. I said, "What should I write about this fruit?" He says, "You mean vegetable?" And so an argument ensued about the classification of the cucumber. A quick search on Wikipedia proved that yours truly was correct. (But isn't that always the case?) Well, anyways, what they are is irrelevant, what they taste like is what matters, and I can honestly say that these are some scrumptious cukes.

1³⁹ EACH THIS WEEK

CREAM OF CARROT SOUP

I'm not a big soup guy and never really have been. In fact, when I first tried Chicken Noodle soup I threw it back up all over my grandmother. (I was very young at the time.) But out of the few types of soup which I do eat, this is one of my favourites, along with our pumpkin soup. So, if I'm picky, and still like it, I'm sure you'll love it!

Serves 2-3
Reg. \$5.99 each **25% OFF THIS WEEK**

CRANBERRY SAUSAGES

These are a delectable all-pork sausage with a sweet hint of Maple and a tart hint of cranberry!

Reg. \$4.50 lb. **25% OFF THIS WEEK**

WHAT'S HAPPENING! AT THE DELI

In the Deli this week we will feature our Tomato-Bocconcini Salad. This is a fabulous mix of juicy cherry tomatoes and tender mini bocconcini cheeses, livened up with lots of shredded fresh basil, extra-virgin olive oil, "Finis" balsamic vinegar and spices. My aunt tells me that Uncle D. loves this served over hot cooked rotini pasta!

We will also have beautiful slow-roasted stuffed loins of pork ready and warm from mid-afternoon until dinner-time. These roasts are simply, perfectly seasoned with sea salt, freshly ground black pepper and sage.

A third special at our deli counter will be grilled Tiger Shrimps tossed in a lemon vinaigrette with parsley, capers and Nicoise olives. Add a tossed green salad, good crusty bread, your favourite wine, and there's dinner!

MAC & CHEESE

In my personal opinion (which is by no means biased due to the fact that I'm a vegetarian), this is the best frozen entree we sell. Whenever my mother cops out of cooking for me, I go and grab one of these packages of frozen mac-and-cheesy goodness. Nuke this baby for 8 minutes on medium, and you've got it made.

(Time approximate - every microwave is unique.)

Serves 3-4
Reg. \$10.95 **25% OFF THIS WEEK**

SMOKED CHICKENS

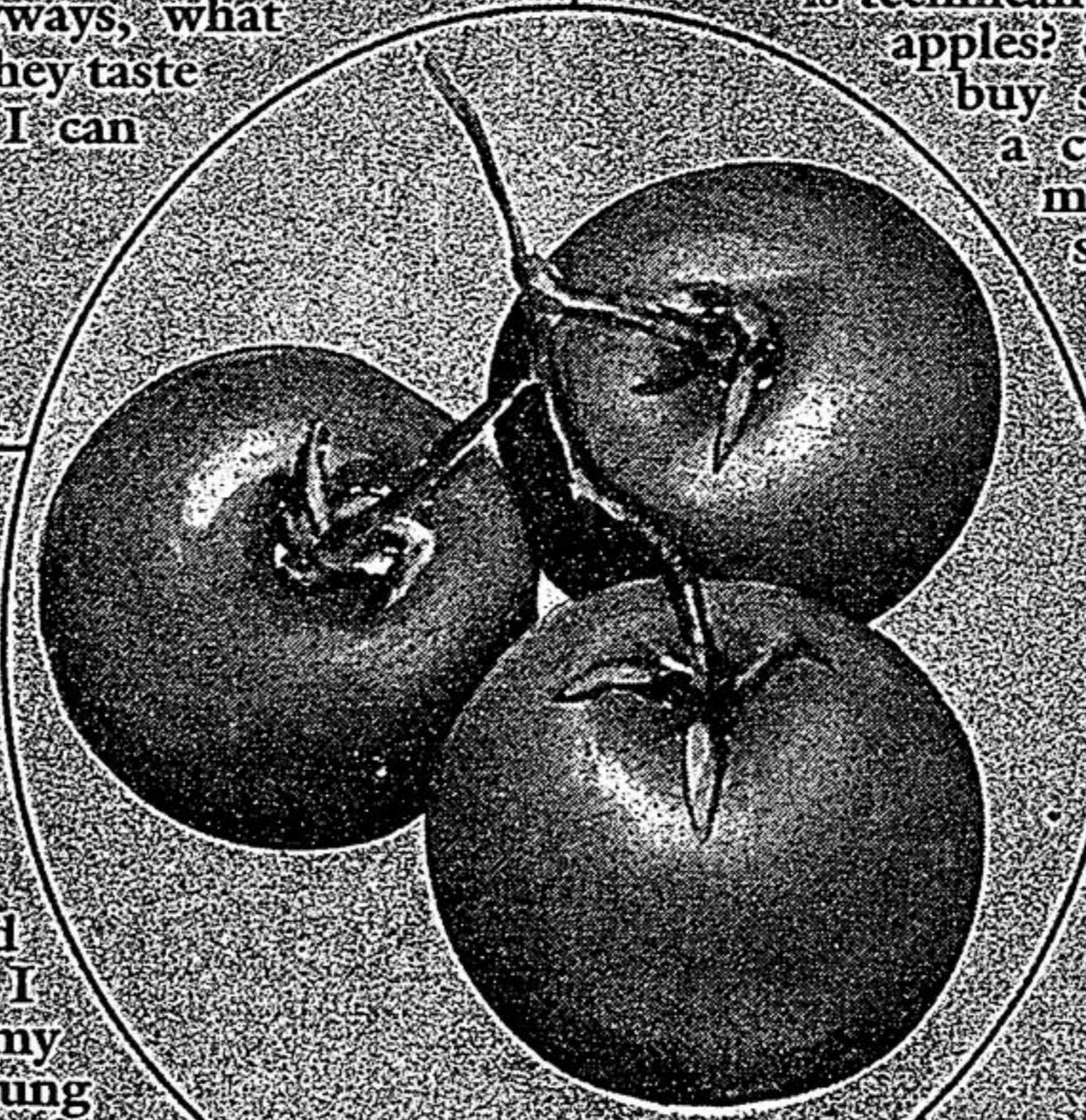
You know, I don't condone smoking. It's a nasty habit, what with those chemicals and the addiction thing. But when Village Grocer smokes, it's awesome! (Sorry, horrible joke, I know.) You automatically know when we're smoking something as the whole kitchen is filled with the distinct mouth-watering aroma... It almosts makes me wish I ate meat. Get these smoking birds while they're hot.

12⁹⁵ EACH THIS WEEK

VINE TOMATOES

My research with the infamous Johnny P. (refer to the piece on cukes) also showed me that the tomato is technically a berry. How d'ya like them apples? So my suggestion is that you buy some of these beauties, buy a cucumber (also on sale) and make yourself a delightful fruit salad!

Ontario Hydroponic Vine-Cluster Tomatoes **1⁹⁹ LB THIS WEEK**



WHAT'S BAKING! THIS WEEK

"Orange" is the ingredient that links all our scrumptious bakery specials this week:

CRANBERRY ORANGE LOAVES — Reg. \$4.99 ea.

WHITE CHOCOLATE PISTACHIO LOAVES — Reg. \$4.99 ea.

ORANGE SHORTBREAD COOKIES — Reg. \$9.95 cont.

ORANGE MOUSSE CAKE — fluffy, white cake layered with a zesty, refreshing orange mousse. This cake tastes like a creamsicle!

Small \$2.29 ea.
Large \$2.99 ea.

ORANGE WALNUT SCONES — made with orange zest and candied walnuts, drizzled with an orange glaze.

Reg. \$1.59 ea.

And as is usual, all these items will be priced at **25% OFF THIS WEEK**

(Text this week courtesy of Thomas)

SPECIALS IN EFFECT UNTIL CLOSING SUNDAY AUGUST 26TH

Hours:

Mon. 11:00-7:00 ~ Tues. Thurs. 9:00-7:00 ~ Fri. 9:00-8:00

Sat. 9:00-6:00 ~ Sun. 10:00-5:00

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