

Businesses busy when we shop on holidays

Ever think we should just let all retail stores open when they want, holidays included? I was at Pacific Mall in Markham on Easter Sunday. The place was so jammed, we drove around for 15 minutes unsuccessfully looking for a place to park.

Just up the road, the Kennedy and Denison Centre parking lot was also full.

In the end, we headed west to the restaurant strip at First Markham Place for lunch and a movie, where it was also lively and crowded on one of the first sunny days of spring.

What's interesting about Pacific Mall and the Denison Centre are that one has received designation as a tourist attraction, allowing it to stay open on holidays, while the other recently won the same rights by arguing it is near a tourist attraction, namely Pacific Mall.

Vaughan Mills, some main streets and a few other spots in York Region have also received exemptions under the Retail Business Holidays Act on the same grounds — that they're a "tourist attraction" or near one.

Frankly, I'm surprised more retailers don't demand the right to stay open, tourist attraction or not. Why wouldn't they?

Obviously, this is the day to be open for business, when so many government and education workers have the day off and time to spare (and money to spend, if you look at the recent Sunshine List).

Especially when you are talking about small businesses, a "holiday" could be among the best days of the year for sales.

Which is why I have a feeling it's going to be more difficult for the region to say no to others who ask for the right to stay open on holidays and that this "tourist zone" designation business will start to look bogus over time.

What do we stand to lose in all this, if more businesses in York Region get to open their doors on holidays?

One does feel perhaps a simpler life is being lost, when time was set aside for people, even retail workers, to observe their faith and spend time with family.

At the same time, our country has changed so much one has to wonder if it is fair to impose store closures by government decree on religious holidays many do not observe.

By all appearances, the businesses are happy to be open and the customers are happy for the opportunity to shop or enjoy their day off by getting out, spending some money, sharing a good meal and so on.

If more and more "holiday shopping" had the effect of spurring on our economy even a little, it could be very good for the overall job market and businesses' bottom line.

The people who sought jobs in retail would just need to know they may end up being scheduled to work on a religious holiday, which, in an era when jobs can be hard to find, sounds like a reasonable trade-off.

(The stores can always close after the holiday, when the customers have gone back to work.)

Years ago, the battle to prevent Sunday shopping was in part about the right of workers to have a day of rest.

Now, when there are so many young people looking for work, and when retailers must compete with the 24/7 nature of online shopping, as well as rival stores that have the government's blessing as "tourist attractions", the new call for rights may be for the right of the business owner to open when they want.



Bernie O'Neill

Stouffville resident Bernie O'Neill is a York Region Media Group editor.

MAPLE WEEK

It's Maple Week at the store, but for those of you who know me, it's Maple Week all year long! I think that this is a hereditary streak, meaning I got this from my dad. He grew up in what seems to me to be the remotest part of eastern Ontario, and the town from which he came even now has a population of only 350. There were never a lot of people but there was always an abundance of maple trees, and the thing to do was to make syrup every spring when the sap began to run. I can even remember tapping the maples that lined Kennedy Rd. when we lived there, much to our neighbours' puzzlement. I share my dad's love of maple.

Firstly, the first 25 people through the door every morning get a **Maple Muffin and a Regular Coffee for a Toonie!** The muffins are made every morning — we start at 6:00am — and they are a great day starter. While we are talking café, Grethe and her troop will be making a **Maple Sugar Ham Sandwich** with maple mustard, cheddar and greens on ACE multi-grain. The deal is \$5.49, allowing you some cap space to splurge on dessert! Further, as I write this, many would have thought the mention of Maple would be about the Leafs and their much better success this year! It's a thrill to see and here's hoping that it all works out!

— CRANBERRY MAPLE — SAUSAGES

These are made with coarsely ground fresh pork, dried cranberries, 'spices' and a finish of maple. I find that these are best oven-roasted and served with beautiful mashed potatoes and gravy — scalloped will do, too! **Reg. \$5.99/lb.**

25% OFF THIS WEEK

— RED AND GREEN — SEEDLESS GRAPES

We spare no expense when it comes to buying grapes for our store and right now there are really nice ones available.

\$1.99 LB.

— MAPLE SUGAR — PORK CHOPS

These are racks of pork which have been well-trimmed, the bones frenched, and cured in our maple sugar style. Then we slow-roast them 'til they are fully cooked. All you need to do is give them a warm-up. My hockey buddies and I suggest that you serve them warm with our scalloped potatoes (also on sale) with some of Doreen's Famous Mustard Sauce. It's quite a post-game hit! **At the Deli. Reg. \$1.99/100g**

25% OFF THIS WEEK

— MAPLE MUSTARD — FLAT CHICKEN

This is the most popular flavour that we make and you'll save a buck a pound on them this week. If you are new to the V.G., these are boneless chickens (almost boneless) that are seasoned in and out. Follow the cooking instructions on the label. **Featured at... \$4.99 LB.** And, if a whole chicken is too much for you, we'll have Maple Mustard Boneless Breasts as well. **\$7.95 LB.** **Featured at...**

MAPLE SMOKED CHEDDAR

I am nibbling on this as I am writing and it's hard to put down! My sense is that I need some baguette and a glass of beer to properly compliment this, but sadly, I'm at work! **Reg. \$4.79/100g.**

1/3 OFF THIS WEEK

Just so you know, we do have a few early-week features that run from Monday until Wednesday. To find out what they are please visit www.thevillagegrocer.com

— WHAT'S COOKING — AT THE DELI!

Kulam is not one to stand idly by while others are having fun, so this week he's doing Maple too, starting with soup. In this case it's **Sweet Potato with Maple**. To make this we use sweet onions, sweet potatoes, Yukon golds, chicken stock, 'spices' and a finish of maple. **Featured at \$5.99/container.**

Next up, we'll have our **Napa Salad** with a Maple twist! This is made with chopped Napa cabbage, fried noodles, almonds, sesame, green onions, soy and maple syrup. **Featured at \$1.29/100g this week.**

And for the main, we'll be making **Maple and Lime Glazed Chicken Breast**. These are pan-seared with shallots, stock, fresh herbs and 'spices'. **Reg. \$4.39/100g. Featured at 25% off this week.**

Next, we'll have our own **V.G. Maple and Pomegranate Salad Dressing**, packed in 250ml tubs. **Featured at \$3.99 each.**

Then, as previously mentioned, we'll feature our **8"x5" Scalloped Potatoes** from the entrée freezer. **Reg. \$9.95 and 25% off this week.**

And very lastly, we'll have a frozen soup as well, this being our **Cream of Curried Chicken**. This is a pretty hearty soup, has a little bit of a bite and it's delicious! **Reg. \$7.95/900ml and 25% off this week!**

WHAT'S FOR SUNDAY BRUNCH?

from 12-2pm
THE MENU IS THIS:
Sweet Potato & Maple Soup
Penne Carbonara & Maple Glazed Bacon
— OR —
Maple Sugar Pork Chops
— OR —
Chicken Cordon Bleu with Mashed or Rice and a Mini-Dessert
\$10.95

— WHAT'S — BAKING THIS WEEK?

MAPLE! I get all excited about Maple, so this week we are having lots of bakery specials featuring Maple Syrup.

MAPLE PECAN APPLE PIES — This week we are featuring our small oval apple pies with an addition of maple syrup and pecans, topped with pecan streusel. **\$5.95.**

MAPLE ROSEMARY CRÈME BRÛLÉE — You might think that this is a strange combination, but it really isn't! A hint of fresh rosemary with maple syrup elevates the sublime creaminess of our crème brûlée to an even higher level, if that is even possible! **\$4.50 ea.**

APPLE-PEAR UPSIDE-DOWN CAKE — Sliced apples and pears in maple caramel on the bottom, wonderful white cake with a hint of maple - bake - invert upside down - and there you have it - Apple-Pear Upside-Down Cake. **\$19.95.**

MAPLE PECAN MUFFINS — More like a little cake than a muffin! **\$1.89.**

CHOCOLATE ECLAIRS WITH MAPLE CUSTARD — Our large Eclair filled with pastry cream made with maple syrup (and a hint of brandy) and chopped candied pecans. Dipped in chocolate. **\$3.49 ea.**

PUMPKIN COFFEE CAKE — Moist pumpkin batter studded with cranberries, pecans and apples marinated in maple syrup and spices. Finished with a Maple glaze. **\$18.95.**

MAPLE WALNUT BISCOTTI — Cliff (our baker) comes up with new biscotti flavors all the time. Maple walnut is his newest creation. **\$4.99.**

MAPLE-CARAMELIZED APPLE PECAN CHEESECAKE — We cook spiced apples and pecans in maple syrup and butter, and then bake them in the cheesecake mix. **\$15.95.**

PECAN TARTS — We have been making these buttermilk tarts with pecans and maple syrup for about 20 some years now, and we haven't changed anything, from Doreen's original pastry to the filling. **\$6.99/package of 6.**

all the above items are

25% OFF THIS WEEK

SPECIALS IN EFFECT UNTIL CLOSING SUNDAY, APRIL 14th

Hours: Mon. - Fri. 8:00-8:00
Sat. 8:00-6:00 - Sun. 9:00-6:00

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