

Farmers looked south

Their roots go deep in sweet corn soil — 6,000 acres of sweet corn soil.

Brothers Richard and Rob Reesor, two of Whitchurch-Stouffville's most enterprising farmers, manage properties extending into three United States states, as well as Ontario.

Richard, 52 and Rob, 47, sons of Elmer and Stella Reesor, commenced their operation with a 15-acre plot on their parents' Warden Avenue farm, south of Stouffville Road. While still in their 20s, they extended the venture to include land owned by their uncle, Cecil Reesor, also on Warden.

There were other crops, but sweet corn was the main focus. Cobs were hand-picked and trucked to the North York Farmers Market in Thornhill. The price was \$3 a dozen.

From this humble beginning has developed a corn crop business that spans three states, Florida, Georgia, Ohio and one province, Ontario. Corn production in Florida is the largest, comprising 2,500 acres. Ontario sites include Ridgetown, Tillsonburg, King City and Stouffville.

Due to a warmer climate south of the border, multiple corn crops a year are obtainable.

"From Florida, we work our way north," Richard said, "from Ontario, we work our way south."

During peak season, from mid-April through September, the company known as Rouge River Farms employs up to 400 people. A staff core is retained year-round. Through a concentrated monitoring system, management is able to keep in close touch with all spheres of operation on an hour-by-hour basis.

The firm's head office is on Warden Avenue. A new Gormley location is in the works.

For several years, the corn cobs were hand-picked. Self-propelled harvesters are now employed spanning four rows at a time. Because of intervals between harvest seasons, the machines can be moved from place to place.

Corn-planters, ranging from eight to 16 rows, are pulled by tractors. Planting 20 acres an hour is not uncommon.

While corn likes warmth, excessive heat can prove damaging, he notes. The same goes for rain.

"We can control lack of moisture through irrigation, but we can't control temperatures," he said. Often heat in the south is extreme, he adds.

Weather-wise, there's less risk in Ontario, Richard says. Deliveries to Ontario stores, usually five cobs per package, are regular from July through September. While shipments can be Canada and U.S. wide, the concentration is mainly Ontario, Quebec and the eastern U.S.

"Our sales are largest in Canada because that's where it all started," said Richard, "and that's where our focus is."

Sorting, grading and packing are all done by Rouge River Farms' employees.

While the fact a Canadian firm is doing business south of the border may seem strange when the opposite trend is so frequently publicized, this isn't necessarily so, says Richard. "Agriculture excluded, many Canadian businesses operate in the United States," he says.

Although deeply immersed in so large an operation, Richard has yet another life. During the off-season, he volunteers with the Mennonite Central Committee and the Canadian Food Grains Bank as an agricultural consultant in Kenya, Uganda and South Sudan.

"The business has its own life," Richard said. "If our children have an interest, they may carry it on. It will be their decision to make."

Jim Thomas is a Stouffville resident who has written for area newspapers for more than 60 years.



Roaming Around

with Jim Thomas

SWORDFISH AGAIN!

We've bought a whole one this week, sans the sword! This is the perfect fish to grill, either in steaks or kebabs, and the flesh is firm enough and flavourful enough on its own to take most any kind of condiment. Delicious! A touch less expensive this week too! While supplies last and most probably not available until Friday.

\$14⁹⁵
/lb
THIS WEEK

WE'VE GOT BLUEBERRIES

Our local crop this week is Bluecrop and we'll have these running right through the weekend. These come from 'Parks', just beyond London. Wonderful! Also, we've got some 3 litre baskets of wild blues from the Sudbury area. This is a good, useful size if you're wanting to make a couple pies and have some snacks, too!

\$30⁰⁰
3L

SIRLOIN SALE

Although sirloins are not the most tender steak that we sell, they sure have a following. This week we'll have a good supply of our personally selected product (by me), so you can have them either thick or thin, in roasts, burgers, pepper steaks, sirloin eyes, or simply ground, all of which will be featured at ...

25% OFF THIS WEEK

GREEN GRAPES

I bought a few cases of these grapes last week because my salesman at the produce terminal told me to ... I am pretty obedient! Some ended up at home and Cathy asked me about them, relating that these have that memorable flavour that she remembers from when she was a kid. Truly, they do taste different than a lot of the others, maybe with a slight hint of 'Concord', previously the only local summer grape available. Try these. You won't go broke at the price, but you may go back in time in a flavour sense. Product of California.

\$2⁹⁹
container

WHAT'S FOR LUNCH?

This week it's our **Roast Beef** with red onions, cheddar and lots of mixed greens on **ACE** multi-grain bread with a **Cajun aioli dressing**. It's an armful! **\$7.99** each.

And, if that's not enough you can add on a soup, salad or a coffee for only **\$1.00**.

Sunday Brunch will be the very delicious **Bacon and Potato Soup**, followed by either **Beef and Mushroom Stew** with mashed potatoes or **Butter Chicken** and rice. Followed by a token dessert with tea or coffee. Served from 11am to 2pm.

All For **\$10⁹⁵**

PIZZA PIZZAZZ

This weekend we'll be having all the toppings of my all-time favorite sandwich transplanted onto a pizza. We start with an olive oil base, throw on a heaping portion of our shaved NY Striploin, a handful of sautéed mushrooms and caramelized onions, slices of creamy Canadian brie and finally a drizzle of balsamic glaze. Creamy, meaty and sweet, all at once! **Reg. \$12.95.**

1/3 OFF



AT THE BANDSTAND THIS WEEK

This Thursday evening it's one of my favourites. Jeanine Mackie with her troupe of local magicians of music! Come and enjoy some classic R&B. It's free, fun and good times on the 'street'.

WHAT'S HAPPENING INSIDE?

You will notice that we have installed a new group of display freezers in replacement of our long-serving freezer cases of the past. The vacant area in the centre will become our floor-level office and treasure trove of answers, if you have any questions or requests.

WHAT'S HAPPENING OUTSIDE?

By this weekend, the first of the fall planters will arrive with more to come as the month goes on. Our sidewalk has been looking a bit thin, so here goes ...

WHAT'S COOKING AT THE DELI

Well, we'll start with our **Cream of Bacon and New Potato Soup**. We use lots of our beauty bacon, new Yukons, sweet onions, carrots and celery, chicken stock and 'spices'. Featured at **\$5.99/containers**.

And next, we'll have our **Summer Chickpea Salad**. This uses red onions, Roma tomatoes, cukes, cumin, rice vinegar, lemon and 'spices'. Featured at **99¢/100g**.

And further, we've made mega amounts of our **Pomodoro Sauce**. We use Roma tomatoes (plum), lots of sweet onions, enough garlic to notice, olive oil, herbs and 'spices'. Make your pasta happy! Featured at **\$3.99/500ml size**.

And lastly, we'll have **Butter Chicken**. We use chicken breasts, sweet onions, coconut milk, tomatoes, butter and 'spices'. This is the genuine article. Available in 500g size. Serves 2. Featured at **\$7.95 each**.

BROCCOLI

We'll have a special on our **Caledon Broccoli** this week. You'll get greens in your diet and that's good! Actually from Caledon!

\$1²⁹
head

WHAT'S BAKING THIS WEEK?

Apricots are really good right now, so that is what we are baking with ...

APRICOT FRANGIPANE SQUARES • **\$9.95**

These are baked in 8"x5" foil containers with a buttery shortbread crust topped with a layer of almond frangipane (marzipan-like filling), then topped with a layer of freshly pitted apricot halves and finally glazed with apricot glaze. These are best enjoyed at room temperature.

APRICOT CRISPS • **\$12.95**

Available from our freezer section! We are making two different types, **Apricot-Blueberry** and **Apricot-Raspberry**. Full of fruit and topped with a buttery crisp, ready-to-bake. Just pop in the oven for an hour at 350° degrees.

APPLE-APRICOT-DATE MUFFINS • **\$1.89**

No refined sugar added in these muffins, they are naturally sweetened with dried apricots and dates. It's a bad day in the bakery when these are not available!

APRICOT GALETTE • **\$14.95**

French-style open-faced tart. Apples, apricots and fresh raspberries baked with a bit of brown sugar and spices, folded inside our pastry, brushed with some raspberry jam, almond cream and white cake crumbs.

APRICOT SLIPPERS • **\$3.49**

Our scrumptious puff pastry baked with custard and fresh apricots and topped with an apricot glaze.

ALL THESE ITEMS while quantities last! **25% OFF THIS WEEK**

SPECIALS IN EFFECT FROM THURSDAY TO CLOSING SUNDAY, AUGUST 11th



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

4476 16th Avenue (Just W. of Kennedy)
(905) 940-0655

