Potatoes Ahoy!

By Hannelore Volpe

Behold the lowly spud.

It brings delight to the eye, not to mention the tummy

It's been sung about by Stompin' Tom Connors and figures prominently in Vincent Van Gogh's painting The Potato Faters

But those potato eaters probably have nothing on the Volpe family.

For a lot of years, a 50 lb. bag of potatoes leaning against the counter was a mainstay in our kitchen.

think it gave my husband Iony a sense of security. He's originally from Monteleone in Italy, where the people were called "mangia patate" - the potato eaters. Before immigrating to Canada, the family had to be reassured that, yes, there are potatoes in of their farm-grown potatoes to the truck. Canada!

Those 50 lb. bags, bought from Simpson Produce on Hwy 48 in Ballantrae, were pretty neat. As well as the bags of perfect potatoes and other produce, we looked

forward to buying potatoes that weren't considered perfect. Some bags had such a variety: white, red, and yellow potatoes, some with such interesting shapes heart-shaped or with several protuberances. Maybe slightly slower to peel, but I thought these were the most fun.

Of course, we plant our own potatoes, too. It's one of the joys of life. Before you know it, a few months later, you get to head out to the vegetable patch and start to dig. You can dig out enough potatoes from just one plant for your dinner that evening. Each potato that you

treasure you can hold in your hand When my mother-in-

law Vincenza was

unearth is like a little

planting the potatoes at our place, she made the rows straight as an arrow with her zappa (hoe). I often got enlisted to place the potatoes in the rows and then she would gently hill them up, covering them with just enough soil to "senti le campane". That is, to be close enough to the surface so they could

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Escaping poverty and

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1849, the Irish Potato

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World were Irish.

hear the nearby church bells!

the summers, potatoes of another sort lure us north, ever north well, 15 minutes north. That's how long it takes us to reach the Rose Family Farm not far from

Ninth Line and Davis Drive. Our destination: their spanking-new chip truck. No plastic bags of pre-packaged skinny potato shapes for this farming family! You'll often see Wilfred or Norma Rose hauling a big pail The spuds are sliced and fried up right there. You get to sit in a variety of comfortable gazebos and picnic areas while overlooking the fields of potatoes and other crops such as strawberries and raspberries.

Sixth-generation farmer Trevor Rose began his career some years ago, at age 16, growing potatoes on one acre. Now he farms 100 acres and he's got some wheels. If you think your Alfa Romeo is hot, you should get a look at what Trevor drives: a big, shiny, green Lockwood harvester.

When it's really revved up, it can speed along at four miles per hour! And if you're lucky, you get to see him drive by with the tractor and wagon holding 40,000 lbs. of newlyharvested potatoes as you're enjoying your French fries.

The Rose family has been farming in the area since 1840, when their Pennsylvania Dutch ancestors settled here. This was right around

the time, from 1820 to 1860, when thousands of families came to Canada from Ireland. Escaping poverty and poor living conditions and then, from 1845 to 1849, the Irish Potato Famine, one-third of all immigrants to the New World were Irish. (Norma is the one in the family who has an Irish connection.)

They brought with them-their traditions (who isn't Irish on St. Patrick's Day?), their humour, their music and their love of potatoes.

history-changing This vegetable, originally from the South American Andes, is now on many dinner plates, baked, boiled, mashed or sliced into those ubiquitous skinny shapes. If the potato, or worse, the French fry, were ever abolished, I think people everywhere would be staring at the bare, white section of their plate where the potato used to be.

In case you have a hankering for local potatoes, carrots, onions and other vegetables, Simpson Produce is at 15152

Hwy. 48 in Ballantrae. Call 905-640-2657.

Rose Family Farm is at 17569 Centre St. in Mount Albert. They've got various vegetables for sale, as well as strawberries and raspberries in season, along with meat, honey and baking. Call 905-473-3574. They're open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. from Monday to Saturday in the winter. And mark your calendars: the chip wagon opens again on the May 24 weekend.



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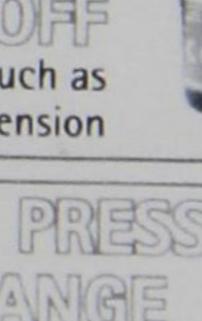
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Splash of Red

This beautiful Cardinal provides a stunning jolt of colour to a snowy Stouffville backyard Kate Gilderdale photo