

A Sweet Salute To Canada Day

By Ruth LeBlanc

What smells like summer, tastes juicy and sweet, and grows in fields on the 10th line and Bethesda Road? If you guessed the humble strawberry, you know that fresh picked is the only way to go.

Visit the Stouffville Strawberry Festival, enjoy the many activities and events, and indulge in local berries while you can. Whitchurch-Stouffville is by no means the only place which celebrates strawberries: festivals honouring this delicious fruit take place from British Columbia to Nova Scotia, as well as in the States, the UK, Japan and Italy. Luckily for us, Canada Day is on July 1, which just happens to be peak berry time.

Since food is a common denominator for all human beings, perhaps it should be considered a new tool in war. Put a huge buffet, including fresh strawberry pies, in the middle of a battlefield and we would never fight again. Well maybe we would, but only over that last piece of pie.

There is one thing that we Canucks love even more than strawberries and that's macaroni and cheese. We hold the title for consuming more than any other nation on earth. We also eat an average of 23.4 pounds of cheese a year, our favourite being cheddar.

Canadians live, on average, to 82 and people reaching 100 are becoming more common. Could artery-clogging mac and cheese actually be the fountain of youth? Should we start a mac and cheese festival?

We Canadians have legends and some pretty creepy tales. B.C. boasts a lake monster called Ogopogo and the giant sloth-like Sasquatch. Most frightening of all is the Windigo. This mythical Cree and Ojibwa creature lives in the deepest woods from the Rocky Mountains to the wilds of northern Quebec, lures lost hunters and hikers with visions of food, and devours them.

The Windigo is also said to possess people and was blamed for one of the worst murders in Alberta's history. In 1873 a Cree trapper named Swift Runner was hanged for devouring his wife and six children, along with his mother and brother. Until his last breath he swore he was possessed by the Windigo.

Today Canada is a diverse country, with half the population coming from other parts of the world. As inhabitants of a peace loving nation which rarely hits the front pages with controversial news, we should be proud to call ourselves Canadians.

This July 1st weekend, let's celebrate Canada and the best of the berries at the Strawberry Festival. We are so lucky to live here, in the best place on earth. Besides Fiji of course.

Happy Canada Day.



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Pooch Perfect



If last year's Strawberry Festival is anything to go by (see photos), there will be a large contingent of pooches at this year's event. Cute canines of all kinds are invited to take part in the 2012 Dog Contest, which takes place Sunday July 1 at 1 p.m. in Franklin Park.

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