



Ian Smith delivers his fresh pork. (Randall King / Winnipeg Free Press)

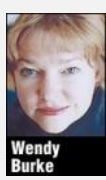
## Who's your farmer?

**Home cooks have tremendous power to change the way they get their food by practising 'kitchen counter activism'**

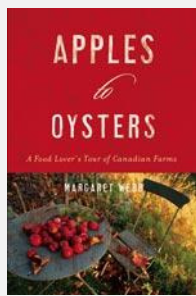
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TALKING about pig farming in Manitoba lately is tricky business. It's fraught with the same difficulty as being an American Democrat trying to talk about the war in Iraq -- you support the troops but not the war. In Manitoba, you support the farmers, but contemporary farming methods can feel like an all-out war on the environment.



The more you read and the more you talk, the more you understand that the person in front of the stove wondering what to make for dinner is asking a much deeper question. Dinner is personal. And it's political.



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These days, the choices the home cook makes amount to more than mere consumerism. The question of how food gets to our tables is enormous. But every home cook who feeds a family has an equally enormous power to change the way we get our food. They don't even have to organize.

They just have to choose.

Call it "kitchen counter activism."

### From the field, out in the field, and back to the field...

Toronto writer Margaret Webb grew up on a farm in Barrie, Ont. She used to take lunch out to her dad when he was working in the fields. She grew up listening to farmers tell their stories. She became a writer and wrote poetry, fiction, magazine articles, even a couple of unproduced screenplays for Disney. Today she teaches at Ryerson University. And she's come full circle, writing about what she knows -- farmers.



Her new book is called *From Apples to Oysters: A Food Lover's Tour of Canadian Farms* (Penguin, \$34).

"I was on a travel story for the *Globe & Mail* -- I was really interested in sourcing the best East Coast seafood," says Webb. "At one restaurant, a chef introduced us to a farmer who supplied him with fresh vegetables, and he invited us back to his farm. There we were standing in this field, and he



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pulled this carrot out of the ground and had me taste it -- and it was incredible! And with all the thinking I'd been doing -- chefs had been saying that it's all about the quality of ingredients -- I thought, 'Well -- if we say it's all about the ingredients, then we need to start talking about farmers the way we talk about chefs.'

And so Webb's idea for a book was born -- a book that treats artisan farmers like celebrities.

She hit the road and interviewed artisan farmers in every province from one coast to the other. The book's subtitle is A Food Lover's Tour of Canadian Farms. The food lovers are on both sides of the equation -- these producers love the food as much as the gastronome.

#### **Got farmer?**

When Webb launched her book last week, she was being interviewed on CBC radio. She made a very astute observation.

"We all have our lawyers and our financial advisers and our own doctor -- but we should really have our own farmers."



Something clicked. The quote was picked up and has been making its way around the Internet. Imagine having a business relationship with a farmer. Or maybe two or three, each of whom produces something different. You would deal directly with the farmer. You would place your orders directly with the farmer. You would pay the farmer. Maybe you would visit the farmer. Or maybe -- the farmer would deliver. This is how Ian Smith does business. He's a Manitoba pig farmer. Margaret Webb wanted his story for her book.

#### **If it ain't broke don't fix it...**

That's Ian Smith's philosophy. He loves farming. He loves it enough that, at age 44, he remains single as he works the farm. It's tough to meet a potential wife when you have to be on the farm most every day. And with rural de-population, they're just aren't that many eligible women out there who understand the life. Smith takes no holidays. He says his holiday is delivery day -- Friday -- when he gets to go out and talk to his customers.

Smith raises pigs the way his dad did. In 1967, the Smith family began raising hogs on their quarter section near Argyle. He continues to farm the old-fashioned way. He keeps his business debt-free and credits his father with starting him off on the right foot. "The credit doesn't just go to me," Smith says. "It goes to my parents. And I just followed in my parents' footsteps."

Back in the '70's, '80s and '90s when farming was expanding into something more "industry-driven," Smith says his dad didn't believe in expanding. It's a point of pride for him that his parents never required off-farm income and were able to raise three boys on a quarter section. Smith maintains the same number of livestock his parents did back then.

"We're not machinery-poor here," he says. It's another point of pride that his father never succumbed to idea of replacing machinery in good working order with new equipment for its own sake. It kept the family out of debt and Smith continues to keep it that way.

#### **Some pig**

So what does old-fashioned farming entail? Pigs are indoors and outdoors all year round. They are fed home-made rations -- no purchased feed here. Smith grows barley and clover for the 200 to 250 pigs to munch on. It's a pig's life. Margaret Webb sums it up in her book this way: "Well-cared for while they're living, and delicious after."

While Smith is farming the old-fashioned way, his marketing methods are thoroughly modern. He has a beautiful website that outlines the benefits of his farming methods, his family history, his community history, his documentation and certification (he's certified as a Humane Farmer by the Winnipeg Humane Society, was The 2005 Humane Farmer of the Year, and is Canadian Quality Assurance Certified). He hands out full-colour brochures. And he delivers. He might have been raised a farm boy -- but he's got plenty of entrepreneurial smarts. He just applies his business acumen

in a way that doesn't shortchange his livestock. Or the earth he raises them on.

### Connect

Kitchen counter activism is painless. There's no risk. No groups to join, no cards to sign. Just choose. In a few short weeks, local farmers and market gardeners will be opening up their stalls. Get out there. Find a farmer. Find a couple. Even if you can't go whole hog and give up the supermarket altogether, you will make a difference. And your food will taste better.

When you go to the markets and the gardens, or you order food directly from producers like Ian Smith, the producer gets paid the real value of the commodity. And they get all of it. Some of that income is seed money for next year. Seed money for next year is a key part of sustainability for small producers.

Margaret Webb will be at McNally Robinson, Grant Park Shopping Centre, for a book signing next Tuesday, April 29, at 7 p.m. Ian Smith will join her and will be happy to share stories and answer questions about his farm. Webb will also be speaking and signing books at the Winnipeg Humane Society, 45 Hurst Way. The phone number is 982-3559.

Margaret Webb has a website at [www.margaretwebb.com](http://www.margaretwebb.com)

If you want to contact Ian Smith directly, you can find him at his website at [www.naturalpork.ca](http://www.naturalpork.ca)

If you want to connect with other farmers, a good place to start is [www.100milemanitoba.org](http://www.100milemanitoba.org)

### Here are three recipes to try:

The pork chops you see in the photograph came from animals Ian Smith produced. The chops are juicy and flavourful. They stood up to this simple method of pan-frying without drying out and they were tasty all by themselves. I also tried some of the sausages Smith produces (his pigs are processed at a family run plant). They were delicious. They contain no fillers. They were beautifully seasoned and were not loaded up with salt to compensate for a lack of taste. Two sausages on the plate were plenty.

These instructions are based on Trish Magwood's pan-fry instructions from her book Dish. First, to pan-fry the pork chops, pre-heat the oven to 500F. Place an oven-proof skillet on the stove and heat it to high. When hot, brush it with olive oil. Lightly salt each chop on both sides and place in the skillet. Brown both sides. When both sides are brown, place the skillet in the oven and roast the meat for about 7 to 10 minutes.

You can serve these sauces to accompany pork chops.

### Basic Barbecue Sauce

Use this on the side or on the barbecue. It makes about 750 ml (3 cups).

**500 ml (2 cups) ketchup**  
**45 ml (3 tbsp) dark brown sugar**  
**45 ml (3 tbsp) cider vinegar**  
**30 ml (2 tbsp) yellow mustard**



**30 ml (2 tbsp) Worcestershire sauce**  
**10 ml (2 tsp) paprika**  
**7 ml (1 1/2 tsp) salt**  
**5 ml (1 tsp) garlic powder**  
**2 ml (1/2 tsp) onion powder**  
**2 ml (1/2 tsp) ground black pepper**

Put everything in a medium saucepan and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer for 20 minutes, or until slightly thickened. Cover and use or chill in an airtight container in refrigerator or cooler up to one month. Recipe source: David Joachim, The Tailgater's Cookbook, Broadway Books.

### Mango Salsa

This one is from Winnipeg firefighter Jeff Derraugh's cook



book. It's a spicy accompaniment for pork chops but would be good with chicken, as well. Let it stand and blend. It makes about 750 ml (3 cups).

**1 ripe mango, diced**  
**4 ripe Roma tomatoes, diced**  
**? small red onion, diced**  
**2-3 jalapeno peppers, seeded and diced fine**  
**2 cloves of garlic, minced or pressed**  
**60 ml (1/4 cup) cilantro, chopped fairly fine**  
**15 ml (1 tbsp) lime juice**  
**Kosher salt and pepper to taste**

Combine all ingredients, sprinkle the lime juice over top and let stand in the fridge for one hour. Serve with pork chops. Recipe source: Jeff Derraugh, Fire Hall Cooking With Jeff the Chef, Touchwood Editions.

## Mushroom Sauce

Mushroom sauce over mashed potatoes and pork chops was a favourite of mine when I was a kid. Still is.



**45 ml (3 tbsp) butter**  
**250 ml (1 cup) sliced fresh mushrooms**  
**30 ml (2 tbsp) all-purpose flour**  
**2 ml (? tsp) salt**  
**.5 ml (1/8 tsp) pepper**  
**2 ml (? tsp) paprika**  
**2 ml (? tsp) chicken bouillon powder**  
**250 ml (1 cup) milk**  
**15 ml (1 tbsp) white wine**

Melt butter in frying pan. Add mushrooms, saute until soft.

Sprinkle with flour, salt, pepper, paprika and bouillon powder. Mix well. Stir in milk and wine until sauce boils and thickens. Makes 250 ml (1 cup). Serve hot. Recipe source: Jean Pare, Sauces & Marinades, Company's Coming Cookbooks.

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