

## 'Eat New Brunswick' aims to put more local food into restaurants

### **Fredericton restaurants are encouraged to create meals made only from local food**

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A new initiative in Fredericton is encouraging restaurants to create meals that are made entirely from food produced in New Brunswick.

Ben Conoley came up with the Eat New Brunswick campaign and the rules are pretty simple: come up with a dish that can be served between Oct. 2 and 26 that is made from local food.



Conoley said the initiative is a way to help local restaurants and local farmers.

"Something that they were looking for an excuse for anyway, for a reason to bring in local food. Something that the customers were asking for," he said.

There are 14 restaurants participating in the Eat New Brunswick campaign.

Aaron Fraser, the chef at the King Street Ale House, created lamb meatballs with blueberry barbecue sauce for the campaign.

He said the herbs come from his own garden and the lamb was sourced from Sussex. The apples and blueberries were also from New Brunswick.

Doug Williams, who owns two Fredericton restaurants, said he welcomes the chance to add more local food to his menu, but he points out there are some challenges to doing so.



"I just think it's really important that we go out and support them. It's the only way we're going to get more people producing food here in New Brunswick," Williams said.

However, it's not easy for restaurants to assist local producers.

Williams said homegrown products are often more expensive and they are more complicated to acquire.

"It's easier to go to one great big grocery store and buy all your things, than it is to shop in other, smaller stores and things like that," he said.

"The same with retail. So there is the work part of it. There's quite a bit more work that goes into it."

## Challenges to selling local food

Buzz Harvey, the owner of Harvey's Big Potato in Maugerville, said he sells most of the produce from his 50.5-hectare farm from this roadside stand. He said he would love to supply more restaurants with his produce.

He said he has tried to compete with farms in other parts of the country for the past 30 years to get his produce into nearby restaurants.

"I would say 90 per cent of the product in restaurants — vegetables — are probably from out of the province, and we get a very little bit of that business," he said.

That's where Real Food Connections, a Fredericton-based business, wants to help local restaurants and farmers.

Courtney Steeves, an employee at Fredericton's Real Food Connections, said the company connects more than 140 New Brunswick producers with customers, including restaurants.



"With Eat NB, we've offered wholesale prices to any restaurant that wants to source it through us," Steeves said.

"And we've also connected them to farmers directly so, we've been that connection."

If the Eat New Brunswick campaign is successful this year, Conoley said he wants to expand the initiative to the rest of the province next year.