
Sharing SBLA Success Stories

Naicam Business Opportunity Co-operative

Good Spirit Farm

Peyton Leavitt and Jonathon Lee, Owners

Focusing on the Basics Brings Success to Good Spirit Farm

Bread is a food that means so much to us, both symbolically and physically, yet is often regulated to a lowly side dish or afterthought at most North American meal times. Perhaps this is because many of us have chosen a pale substitute for the health-giving, nutrition-laden bread of old that really could lay claim to the title “Staff of Life.”



A growing number of people are gaining appreciation for bread hand-fashioned with thought and care from quality ingredients -- artisan bread.

It has been said that, when considering artisan bread, one must consider the person making that bread. Peyton Leavitt and Jonathon Lee of *Good Spirit Farm* near Lac Vert are artisans, in every sense of the word. Their breads have not only been a major draw at the Saskatoon Farmers’ Market, but have become a business success beyond their initial expectations.

Peyton and Jonathon have found that the

success of their artisan bread industry has brought financial stability to their small farm, as well as allowed them to take creative satisfaction in producing health-giving food.

Peyton has always baked home-made bread and been interested in natural, wholesome food. At one time, she worked at a corporate retreat centre, providing organic, natural foods as part of the crash course in lifestyle changes the retreat offered. This often meant sourcing the foods she prepared from local farmers. She later became interested in raising goats because of her interest in the health benefits of goat milk. The development of an artisan bread home industry is, in many ways, an outgrowth of a lifestyle and philosophy.

Jonathon and Peyton moved to the Lac Vert district about four years ago from Nova Scotia, determined to make a living from a quarter section of land. Jonathon said that, in that time, they have come to greatly appreciate the potential that exists in rural Saskatchewan. “In our experience, we never could have got the kind of support we have found in rural Saskatchewan anywhere else.”

When the BSE crisis fallout began to affect their goat farm, Peyton began to think of other ways she could bring in extra income.

A loan from the Small Business Loan Association, administered by the Naicam Business Opportunity Co-operative through the Economic Development Office, helped her with the start-up costs of a home-based artisan bread bakery.

Jonathon and Peyton work over 100 hours a week, producing 475 loaves of fresh bread for the Saskatoon Farmers' Market every Saturday. They have about 15 different types of wholegrain bread made from organic wheat, barley and lentils, or heritage grains like Red Fife and spelt. They have specialty breads, like the popular Mediterranean olive bread, and others made with seasonal produce, like goat cheese zucchini bread, plum bread and saskatoon bread. Some of the most nutritious breads are made from sprouted grain. They use very little yeast, no sugar and no oil. No preservatives or artificial flavorings of any kind are added. The loaves are formed in cylindrical and oval baskets, allowing for a beautifully grained crust.

The key to their success is repeat customers who have come to depend on the weekly supply. They think people are becoming more educated about nutrition, and definitely are willing to go out of their way to find products that they can trust. "It is hard to be committed to the health aspects of eating without coming off like a fanatic," said Peyton. "It's really just common sense," said Jonathon. "Take basic food and don't fool with it much."

Their guiding principle is to maintain a hands-on approach, which has also translated into actively looking for ways to "keep it local." For example, much of their grain comes from local producers.

Not only can they sell every loaf they can make at the weekly market, they regularly turn down requests from stores who want to sell their bread. Jonathon said that they can handle a maximum of 500 loaves weekly and still give them the attention required by artisan bread-making, and continue their success through the farmers market.

In the future, they plan to move a building next to their house and set up a bakery there so they could become certified to sell through a store, expanding market options. They are trying to be careful that their expansions lead in the direction of making their workload a little more sustainable, not necessarily increasing production. "We have got a good thing going, so the key is to stay focused," explained Jonathon.

In less than a year and a half, Peyton Leavitt and Jonathon Lee have taken an idea and turned it into a reality beyond their initial expectations. Jonathon credits Peyton's passion, and she credits his patience. Jonathon emphasized the lesson they have learned: "there is potential here, but you sometimes have to look between the lines. If you are willing to work, there is support for small, diverse businesses here in small town Saskatchewan."