

Sustainable food event showcases edible ideas

Editor touts local food movement

BY CHERYL ROSSI, VANCOUVER COURIER SEPTEMBER 1, 2010

Metro Vancouver's role in furthering the global food security movement has been largely unheralded, says David Beers, founding editor of the online newspaper The Tyee.

But that's changing with Home Grown: Local Sustainable Food, an exhibit and series of events on at the Museum of Vancouver until Jan. 2.

The exhibit's photos, artifacts and events celebrate local food pioneers including Richmond politician Harold Steves who championed the Agricultural Land Reserve in 1973, Herb Barbolet who co-founded FarmFolkCityFolk, a non-profit that promotes local food initiatives in 1993, and James MacKinnon and Alisa Smith who germinated the 100-Mile Diet in 2005. "It's a real political act to say that a huge swathe of land right next to a fast-growing city is only going to be used for agricultural purposes. It's very, very unusual," Beers said about the land reserve. "Where I grew up in northern California it was all beautiful orchards and berry fields and it's all now just an endless block of suburbia."

The museum features 39 photos by photojournalist Brian Harris that include farmers and gardens, 12-foot tall shelves awaiting donations of preserves, creative composters and the beekeeping suit of Courier columnist Allen Garr.

The museum is hosting three streams of events and talks.

Beers, whose The Tyee was the first media outlet to feature MacKinnon and Smith's writings about the 100-mile diet before they gained global exposure, said their fingerprints are all over his Food and Beers series.

On Sept. 23, Todd Bright, executive chef at Wild Rice, will battle Raincity Grill's head chef Jennifer Peters for the title of local iron chef, using ingredients sourced within a 100 miles of the city, handpicked by MacKinnon and Smith.

On Oct. 14, an urban grower, a processor and packager and a distributor will discuss regulations and ways of making food systems more sustainable.

"I hope some politicians are in the room because I think a lot of what's frustrating the local food movement here are regulatory obstacles," Beers said. "There's the necessary focus on health and safety, but a lot of regulations grew up around that are based on a factory approach of food production, so massive slaughterhouses, for example, versus local meat processing."

On Nov. 25, MacKinnon and Smith will present 10 local food ideas at work in other North American cities.

And on Dec. 8, they'll appear via Skype to discuss, along with others, Vancouver's new food writing.

FarmFolkCityFolk provided much of the content for the exhibit and has organized talks on the first Thursday evening of every month.