



Veggies on Wheels



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NEWSLETTER OF PFENNING'S ORGANIC FOOD BOX

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"Veggies on Wheels" (edited by Wolfgang W.) appears about once/month. Biweekly or irregular customers may receive the latest issue at a later date.

Dear Pfenning's Food Box Community,

In the hope and expectation that we all survived "All Hallows' Eve," as Halloween was originally known many centuries ago, we welcome you to the merry month of November – up to us to make it merry!

Two weeks ago (the delivery week October 18/19) was "**Small Business Week**" (– *who knew?*). Once again, my delivery travels allowed me to listen to an interview on CBC Radio with a small business owner from Windsor who is the proprietor of a small, independent bakery in Windsor that opened up three years ago. Why would I take interest in a bakery way down in Windsor? Because Tristan Fehrenbach, the owner of the bakery, accredits the survival of his small business to the thoughtful support of some of his customers. He shared some very poignant tips on the radio on how customers can help family businesses survive (*and yes, we are one too*) – and boy, we could not agree more.

Here, adapted to our own small business, are Tristan's tips to help you **support your favourite neighbourhood Health Food Store and Home Delivery Service:**

1. Hold us to a high standard, but give us a second chance

We aren't always going to be perfect. But, we work very diligently for our satisfied customers and are getting better all the time. Should we ever slip up, please, let us know and give us a second chance.

2. Give feedback to the owner, gently

If we're not providing great service, let us know or our business won't last. If we're not meeting your needs and you have suggestions, share them, tell us (as diplomatically as possible). We have had people offer great ideas and those customers became fiercely loyal to us.

3. Don't expect us to operate like chain stores

Family-run businesses are often operated with a skeleton staff. We don't have all the resources and plentiful staff like chain stores to make everything appear slick as a whistle.

4. Don't beat us up on price

Our overhead costs for space, purchases, equipment, staff and utilities are considerable. Plus, we don't enjoy the benefits of buying in large quantities and bulk, like the big chains do.

5. Debit payments are business friendly, credit cards, NOT so much

When you pay for your purchases electronically, we are charged a transaction fee. Debit fees can be as little as five cents, while credit card purchases start around two per cent of the entire purchase. That can really add up. Best, of course, is cash or cheque (or an Interac e-Transfer).

6. Order in advance, when possible

It's more sustainable to let us know ahead what you want, especially if you would like large quantities or items that we do not want to overstock – such as milk.

7. If you like us, tell your friends and tell us, too

We don't have excess funds to advertise. We rely on word of mouth. We depend on your support, so your compliments may help us carry on with your favourite Health Food Store and Home Delivery Service.

Frosty Hesitating, But Ready!

Many may not remember that we already had our first minor **frost** back on October 9th – and it even went down to -5 last week. Everyone on the Farm was scrambling to save as much of the precious frost-sensitive greens – such as lettuce, cilantro and chard – from the deep cold. Now there is lots in storage, and the frost-hardy crops that actually get sweeter with a touch of frost, like kale and (to a certain extent) spinach, and the roots, such as carrots, are still out there waiting to be brought in. It won't be much longer. By mid-November the fields are expected to be bare. And not too soon, since our



long-range weather forecast calls for dramatically colder temperatures and imminent snowfalls right around that time. Frosty is on the way. Sit back with a comfy cup of tea and wait and see.

At the same time, we must again bring out our **cold weather delivery advisory**. Most of you receiving regular deliveries will have a pretty good idea about when you may expect your Food Box to be delivered. If you are not sure, please, get in touch with me – store@pfenningsorganic.ca – and I should be able to give you a fairly tight window of when you may expect your delivery. The window should be in the range of about an hour, or even less in some cases. As always, your delivery time will also be influenced by traffic, weather, number of stops and all those other circumstances that are unforeseeable.

If you can be home at delivery time, we will be happy to give you a buzz or knock to let you know that you can happily bring your goodies inside. If you won't be home and we have not yet done so, we should get together and talk about a cold weather delivery scheme – and there are many possibilities. Visit our site and specifically our **Delivery Arrangements** page: <http://pfenningsorganic.ca/Delivery-Arrangements.htm>. This will give you some ideas on how we can safely get your goodies to you on a freezing cold day. If you are uncertain, make sure to get in touch with me for an extensive delivery consultation.

Food Waste

Alright, I can still hear my mother getting on my case about not wasting food. Frugality was one of the many hardcore values instilled in many of my generation. While my peers and I inherently stood up against parental indoctrination, we did come around later and understood the value of not wasting food.

With this in mind, it was quite the revelation to learn that about 31 billion dollars worth of food is wasted every year in our own country. Roughly ten percent of this food waste can be attributed to grocery stores and the retail sector. That's over 3 billion dollars a year. So it was puzzling to learn that a recent dumpster check in leading grocery chain stores (*again, CBC reported on this*), performed in Toronto by some curious "CBC Marketplace" journalists, revealed that a large amount of food items thrown out were still well before its best-before date and in perfectly good condition. These included produce, baked goods, frozen foods, meat and dairy products with most of the food still in its packaging, rather than separated for composting. According to the CBC report, it appears that the retailers are just doing what buyers expect. Much of the waste comes from us not wanting to buy products that have a blemish on them. It can happen that pallet-loads full of fresh produce will be returned to the farmer or producer because of "one bad apple."

Waste in our Store is minimal. Whatever is deemed overly imperfect goes home to employees, feeds our own home, our 18 chickens, the dog or the cats – and the rest is composted. Maybe you – our valued customers – can accept the odd food imperfection or blemish, as we know you have already been doing. We tend not to follow the wasteful mind-set of the chain stores, but rather go by the notion of honouring our food, and at the same time those that produce it for us.

Have a merry month of November,

Wolfgang