



# Veggies on Wheels



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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,

### COG - Another Conference!

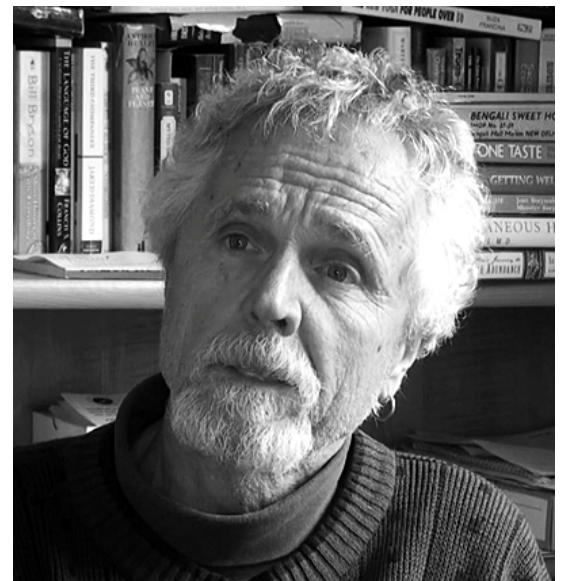
Welcome back to everyone from the Pfenning's Food Box Community! Here's hoping all our customers and readers have been coping well with the ongoing cold spell. Back in January, my dear brother-in-law, Wolfgang Pfenning, shared a dire weather outlook with us. According to meteorological forecasts at that time, we should be looking at another two months of very cold well below average temperatures. I remember hoping that these predictions would turn out to be not all that fearful. Alas, as we now know they were more than correct and there are but a few of us left who continue to wholeheartedly chant about our Canadian love affair with winter.

Not giving in to hibernal idleness, last week, the whole family took off to Blue Mountain for a few days of skiing and wintry relaxation. Just before we headed out, my wife Almut, our oldest daughter, Barnhild, and I attended another noteworthy one-day conference all about growing and eating organic food. This was the 9<sup>th</sup> annual organic conference of COG, the Canadian Organic Growers. You may want to check out their site to learn more: <http://www.cog.ca/>.



### Lectures Galore

Since we did not have a stand (there were also a few retailers present, Big Carrot of T.O. not being the least of them), on this my first visit to the COG Conference I actually was able to attend a few of the many lectures offered. This turned out to be much more than just an informative sitting. Especially Dr. Thierry Vrain's lecture on "**The Truth About GMOs, Glyphosates and Your Health**" was an eye opener. I thought I was fairly well-informed on this controversial subject, but Dr. Vrain's solemn presentation pointed out a few details that I had been unaware of. Not wanting to impose this subject on you again, it just simply can not be pushed aside. Especially Dr. Vrain's previous occupation with Health Canada (for 30 years) in charge of assuring the public of the safety of GMO crops, as well as his credentials of a retired soil biologist and genetic engineer lent considerable credibility to his presentation. In a nutshell, what Dr. Vrain made absolutely clear was the fact that glyphosate (actually glycinephosphonate) was in fact first used as a pipe and boiler demineralizer in the 60s, then as a herbicide by Monsanto as early as 1969, and – most notably – that it is known to **accumulate** in the body and can cause birth defects, infertility and may possibly be linked to cancer. Hard to believe that glyphosate, now most commonly known as RoundUp, is still not only being routinely used in conventional agriculture, but is widely defended as safe and scientific. According to Dr. Vrain, RoundUp ready crops are nutritionally depleted and chronically toxic.



To listen to a recent revealing interview with Dr. Vrain, go to <http://foodintegritynow.org/2014/05/08/dr-thierry-vrain-former-gmo-scientist-speaks/>.

## “High Steaks”



Although I don't want to bore you with a compendium of all the lectures I attended, there was one discussion entitled “High Steaks” I can not leave unmentioned, since it dealt with the ever intriguing topic of **meat**, especially whether to eat it or not. As you may know, I have been engaging in a little auto-experiment which has me avoiding grains, but again eating meat. It may have been asking a bit much from the consortium of three that led the discussion to clarify – once and for all – whether we need to eat meat or not. **Martin de Groot**, owner of **Mapleton's Organic**, that wonderful dairy farm north of Drayton where that delicious organic ice cream comes from, made a strong case for sustainable dairy farming, but did not really convince us all that meat forms an absolutely essential one-can-not-do-without component of human nutrition. What does seem to be important is where your meat comes from and

that it is raised ethically and organically. Go figure. As to the answer whether to eat meat or not, well, we were left somewhat high and dry with the admission that this is more a philosophical than scientific matter, for everyone to decide for him or herself. There was, however, one outcome everyone agreed on when it came to eating meat: less is better.

Just on a side note for all those of you following my personal grain – no, meat – yes venture, it has come to feel a lot like what I experienced in my raw food days: anyone deviating from the norm in society ends up feeling alienated, like a social outcast. Of course, you try to not let it get to you, but it can get the better of you if you thrive on a vibrant and wholesome social experience. Some of you were wondering how we were enjoying the meat experience after being vegetarian. Both Almut and I seem to concur that, for now, we prefer chicken and fish rather than beef. Almut does feel more drawn to carbs than I do. It may end up being more of a philosophical experiment than a scientific one. Stay tuned for more insights!

## “Soil, Not Dirt”

It would not feel complete to at least mention, albeit at the end, the keynote message of none other than **Dr. Elaine Ingham**, a soil biology researcher and leader in soil microbiology and founder of Soil Foodweb Inc.

(<http://www.soilfoodweb.com>) which works with soil testing laboratories to assess soil biology. In her keynote speech, Elaine was keen on pointing out the difference between soil and dirt. What may seem as a mere subtlety turned out to be a major difference, noteworthy enough for me to want to share this insight with you here. **Dirt**, as Elaine sees it, is what you find in most conventional agricultural grounds and is the result of repeated compacting of the soil and the prolonged use of artificial fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides, effectively minimizing and killing all soil microbiology. **Soil**, is earth that is alive with microbiology, which can be fairly easily achieved using the correct methods. In several hands-on research projects, Elaine and her team demonstrated that even compacted, dead soil or dirt can be reverted back to healthy, living soil simply by loosening it up and adding and mixing under compost. As she showed us in a slide show, they were able to revert compacted, dead dirt to lush grassland without irrigation within one season. You can get an impression of Elaine Ingham's passion for this subject if you go to this short clip <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GEtI09VZiSU> where she talks about soil microbiology. It really does not seem to be hard at all to turn dirt into soil.



Wishing all a bright month of March and a balmy spring,

Wolfgang