

2018
VISIT GUELPH
GUIDE *YOUR GUIDE TO THE CITY*



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FLAVOURS OF GUELPH: THE CITY THAT EMBRACES FOOD DIVERSITY

Olivia from My Wandering Voyage

In Guelph, the difficulty in answering “what do you want to eat tonight?” stems not from indifference, but from indecisiveness. There are hundreds of restaurants in Guelph, all with a unique milieu.

Chow down on Greek food at Café Greek Garden in Two Rivers, Italian at downtown’s Buon Gusto, or Indian at Spice Roots in the south end. Grab a Canadian bite to eat at downtown’s Mijidaa, Afghani at Helmand Kabab House in the Waverley neighbourhood, or Japanese at the Crafty Raman in downtown.

Guelph has embraced an outstandingly diverse restaurant market, with foods from around the world.

The restaurant owners themselves have histories that bring passion to the dishes they serve. Many started at the Guelph Farmers’ Market – open every Saturday from 7am to 12pm.

Naruemon Verspagen and her husband Neil own Na-Ha Thai’s Kitchen in The Ward. They opened the restaurant in 2014, after selling desserts and Thai appetizers at the Farmers’ Market.



“We just do authentic Thai and concentrate on healthy food,”

The Sounds of Guelph // FLAVOURS

As Naruemon started expanding her fare, the couple took an opportunity to open Na-Ha's after spotting a for sale sign on a building on York Road. As word of mouth spread, so did their customers, coming in from all over Ontario.

Many of the Thai dishes are gluten-free, vegetarian and vegan.

“We just do authentic Thai and concentrate on healthy food,” said Naruemon.

“I should do exactly the real thing, what my mom cooked for me and I cook and eat from Thailand.”

The couple said they love the support that the Guelph community offers them.

“The Guelph community, we really appreciate; they really support small businesses like us,” said Naruemon.

Melku Gebrekristos, owner of Laza Food and Beverages Inc., also began at the Guelph Farmers' Market.

Formerly a medical lab technician from Eritrea, a northeastern African country bordering Ethiopia, Melku said she wanted to share her food and culture with others. Eritrean food is very similar to Ethiopian, consisting of

stews and injera, a flat spongy bread. Melku also blends her own spices.

“Food or beverage is one of the ways that you can express or explain to people your culture, your tradition,” she said.

“We don't use forks to eat; we eat with hands. It's a way that people know a different kind of culture.”

Melku has a wide range of flavours in her food and can cater to vegetarian, vegan and gluten-free diets. She also sells her own variety of hibiscus teas, which, she says, is high in antioxidants.

“It was a drink that me and my family were consuming for the last 35 to 40 years, especially when we go by the seacoast,” she said.

Her teas, which she started selling at farmers' markets and festivals, are now in over 25 locations in Guelph and surrounding areas.

John and Lili Pusic, owners of Bluewater Creamery, strive to find authentic flavours for their small-batch ice creams.

“We just have a passion for good food and something different in life,” said Lili.

In 2015, the couple started selling their batches at farmers' markets in St. Jacobs, Aberfoyle and Guelph. In 2017, the pair crowdfunded for a mobile trailer – a 1970s Airstream – that they bring to festivals and other events around the city.

The flavours of ice creams – including Rhubarb Strawberry Crisp, Chamomile Honeycomb and Caramel Crunch as well as non-dairy and vegan ice creams – vary based on the season.

“Our inspiration really comes with the season. We're a lot of times at the market, so we just walk around and see what's new, what's in season, what's fresh, what's looking good and we just kind of go from there,” said Lili.

However, the most popular flavour is vanilla – a real test of the quality of the ice cream.

Lili said she feels supported in Guelph.

“I love our city. I think there's so many awesome things happening here, a sense of community and how people really support each other. The food industry is amazing downtown,” she said.

Catch up with Olivia's travels on mywanderingvoyage.com