



# Misty's View of OLD AND NEW MARKETS

ing quite like meeting the actual growers and purveyors of the products one buys.

Imagine meeting someone whose world is seriously about apples, and has been for generations – how they are grown, harvested at the peak of perfection and stored in optimal conditions. **This kind of integrity speaks volumes to me.** Apples matter! Or meeting meat specialists who raise their products locally to exemplary standards.

How about meeting a Portuguese couple who host a cultural experience every week in their corner of the market? Fresh breads, pastries and pottery are the backdrop to the *real show*: Ercilia's line of homemade savoury and sweet preserves, salsas, and condiments. Just learning about their products taught me new ways to do old things, a real gift to a chef like me with over 25 years of culinary adventures.

Take potato dishes for example; one can get really excited about discovering a secret cultural recipe and an authentic product that makes it happen! **Here is my twist on Portuguese potatoes:**

Toss large quartered or halved Yukon Gold potatoes in a bowl with Ercilia's Portuguese Style Sweet Pepper Paste, or Hot Pepper Paste, and some extra-virgin olive oil. Coat potatoes and distribute on the bottom of a large oven-capable skillet. Roast in a hot oven (425 F) for about 25 minutes to let the pepper coating caramelize and seal the potatoes. Then just barely cover the spuds with a good chicken stock, water, or vegetable stock, and turn these partially roasted potatoes into my version of French fondant potatoes with a Portuguese flair!

Continue to cook, lid off, at 375 F until tender. These potatoes will cut like cool butter, infused with the genius flavours provided by the Ercilia's pepper paste. The larger the potato wedge, the longer the cooking. Be responsive and watch how your potatoes develop! And just as cooking should be interactive, so should one's shopping.

## Making a Difference

Here is some interesting testimony from a mother of four: "What a glorious afternoon I had with my daughter, enjoying the sights, sounds, smells and especially

the tastes of the Hamilton Farmer's Market. We could sense the pride in everyone as they invited us to sample their cheese or enjoy the fragrance of their herbs. One thing that we enjoyed the most was people watching in one of the small cafés; it was heart warming to see generations of people experience this wonderful market custom. Through visiting the market often with *my* mother, I learned the value of fresh food and good living. I have learned that we must take time to delight in the simple things, and this is what I wish to pass on to my children."

Clearly, **the market is a place to learn** about fresh products from merchants and experience the world of old where people met with their purveyors and enjoyed the wonderful connections between consumer and producer. The world needs us to re-establish this bond.

A market can make a difference. ■

*With husband Bill Sharpe, Misty Ingraham of Ancaster owns the catering business The Portable Feast at Home.*

**F**or weeks now, my chef husband and teaching colleagues have been telling me to check out the recently renovated Hamilton Farmers' Market, a new institution that has been an old institution in the city for almost 175 years, so I went and was impressed.

As a youngster in the 1960s, I remember being taken there by my grandparents. It was a blur of large vegetables and milling big people. Back then, most families were frozen-TV-dinner consumers and frozen-veggie lovers. Remember the Dominion Store's jingle? It was certainly mainly because of the meat! So seeing large mountains of vegetables was very much like seeing a circus sideshow to me; food on display without a freezer barrier was certainly a novelty in my white-bread world back then.

Today, I can hardly believe the **changes in our thinking about food.** Our supermarkets have larger produce areas; most have bakeries and floral shops; and we can even get a coffee or a pizza in them. We have evolved as consumers and the big stores have stepped up to meet our changing needs.

Visiting the new Hamilton Market, however, made me understand an important distinction between a chain and a "one off," as the British say. It's the people connection.

## Nothing Like Farmers' Markets

A farmer's market is spontaneous and structured daily by a gathering of product specialists, or vendors as they are called. And as much as dutiful employees in a superstore can try to bring a personal touch to one's shopping experience, there is noth-