



View From the Editor's Desk: Preparing for a Good Winter

Firewood has been gathered in. We hope it's enough to last through March. We had a chainsaw and beer party, which had a handful of friends cutting and splitting logs and stacking firewood in a rather precarious pile. The consumption of beer was postponed until all sharp and dangerous equipment was stored away.

Then everyone came into the house for pre-supper snacks, roasted vegetables, hot bread and soft cheeses, and beer or soft drinks followed by pecan pie and hot tea. Three visiting dogs joined mine in milling around quietly and happily, energy having been spent freely outside. It's lovely to gather around a fire, warming up with hot food and drink after spending the afternoon outdoors.

"A cutting bee is definitely the way to go," observed Nancy, one of the guest helpers, so there may be more chainsaw parties in my future.

People helping each other. Honest hard work. Relaxing and celebrating with food and drink. These seem to be themes for this time of year, and for this issue.

Helping. Working. Relaxing.

We celebrate the tradition of the United Way's Christmas house tours that raise money in many communities to support social agencies. A tremendous amount of volunteer effort goes into making these tours the successes that we present for you in this issue.

Many businesses, large and small, are facing budgetary squeezes. To achieve success and remain viable, their owners and employees put in hours, even years of dedicated work. Chris Mills of Fort Erie met and photographed John Picard and his father Jim, for a fascinating behind-the-scenes look at the harvest of local peanuts and their transformation into delectable treats. The Picards' hard work and astute efforts make a great Canadian success story.

For relaxing and celebrating this winter, consider taking part in the Niagara Icewine Festival. Enjoy the fruits of local wineries' labour by going to one of the events of the two-week festival. We present some of the pleasures enjoyed at last January's Icewine Festival in Jordan Village.

Our food columnist Misty Ingraham takes a break from cooking to explore some of Niagara's wines. She is struck by the many differences available within this relatively new wine-producing region of the world.

Resilience

"Resilience" is another word that comes to mind at this time. Certainly, budgets may be tight for some enterprises, and some people are out of work, while H1N1 fears may keep some people from mingling extensively in public. Yet we all must have faith in the future and in our ability to return to easier times.

The best current example of this has to be Chapman's of Markdale. After a fire destroyed their ice cream factory, owners David and Penny Chapman told employees that not only will they rebuild the factory in Markdale, they will continue to pay their employees for up to a year, and to take care of them even after that. The community has responded with offers of help and declarations of remaining loyal to Chapman's products. At *Escarpment Views*, we feel that we're part of Chapman's wider community as well. We admire their resilience and determination to rebuild, and we wish them well with their "Project Phoenix," and a return to the market with a greater presence as a great local food producer.

So with winter heading our way, we plan ahead, decorating for Christmas, getting together at New Year's, touring Niagara for icewine, planning a treat for Valentine's Day, and hoping that our woodpile will take us warmly through to spring. And if inspiration is needed to get cosy for the weather ahead, see Nathan Hiller's beautiful photo in our centre spread.

Gloria

Gloria Hildebrandt, Editor

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