



EXPLORING THE TRUMANSBURG, NEW YORK, EAT LOCAL FOOD ECOSYSTEM

One Reporter Leaves — The Stories Continue

When we began the Trumansburg *Accidental Reporter*, we weren't quite sure what would happen. We had a simple idea: What if someone simply collected the stories that were already being told but not documented?

Not as a professional journalist with a notebook full of assignments and deadlines, but as a neighbor—with curiosity, a willingness to listen, and an appreciation for the stories that too often go unnoticed.

Trumansburg native, Cadan Ziemba became that person for us. As our first Resident Accidental Reporter, Cadan helped launch this experiment in community storytelling. He visited market vendors and leaders, met people, asked questions and discovered stories. More importantly, he helped demonstrate that you don't have to be a professional reporter to notice something interesting and share it with your neighbors.

That is the spirit of the Accidental Reporter.

And now Cadan is preparing for his next adventure: applications for transferring from TC3 to a four year college to pursue his writing career. Very soon, Cadan will step aside from his role as our Resident Accidental Reporter.

We couldn't let him go without saying thank you. Cadan didn't just contribute stories.

He helped create a tradition. He helped us see Trumansburg through the eyes of someone who was curious about



Cadan



Pakiza

the people, places and possibilities around him. And in doing so, he reminded us that a community's story doesn't belong only to professional journalists. It belongs to everybody.

And the story doesn't stop with Cadan. Enter Pakiza—our new videographer. She has worked with Cadan the last few weeks collecting video clips and posting them to Instagram. As Cadan heads toward college, Pakiza will continue visiting with the community, meeting the people who help feed it and gathering the stories of where our food comes from—and how it finds its way to local tables.

Farmers. Market vendors. Gardeners. Food producers. Restaurants. Pantries. Neighbors. Families. The people who grow it, make it, move it, prepare it, share it—and the people who depend upon it. In other words, Pakiza will be helping us follow the food.

And perhaps, in the process, we'll

discover something bigger than food itself. We'll discover the community food system that connects us. That makes this transition particularly fitting. Cadan helped us discover the power of simply being curious about our neighbors. Pakiza will carry that curiosity into one of the most fundamental questions any community can ask:

How do we make sure everyone has a place at the table? There is no application process for becoming an Accidental Reporter.

There is no journalism degree required. Just a willingness to listen to local stories, collect them and help publish what we hear.

If you see something interesting, ask about it. If someone has a story, listen. And if you discover something worth sharing, tell us. Because the Trumansburg *Accidental Reporter* was never really about having a reporter. It was about discovering that everyone can be one.

So, Cadan, as you turn the page toward college and whatever comes next, we hope you take a little bit of Trumansburg with you—and perhaps a little bit of The Accidental Reporter, too.

Thank you for being curious. Thank you for listening. And thank you for helping us begin. Good luck, Cadan. And Pakiza—keep listening to the stories of Trumansburg. There are stories waiting to be discovered all around us. And, quite literally, on our tables.

A Place at the Table



(Photo: Provided)

What does a community food system look like when everyone has a place at the table?

It might look something like a Wednesday afternoon in Trumansburg.

It begins with a farmer planting a seed—or raising a cow, tending an orchard, harvesting potatoes or sweet potatoes, or bringing vegetables in from the field. It continues at the Trumansburg Farmers' Market, where neighbors meet the people who grow their food.

But the story doesn't end at the market.

Some local farms find their way onto restaurant menus. Some sell through grocery stores. Some participate in year-round CSAs. Some sell hundreds of pounds of beef at a time. Others find their products on tap or on shelves beyond Trumansburg.

And some of the food moves through another part of the community food system altogether: the food pantry.

That's worth noticing.

We often think of a food system as a straight line:

Farm → Market → Customer.

But a community food system is more like a circle—or perhaps a web.

Farmers → markets → restaurants → stores → CSAs → pantries → families → neighbors → farmers.

Each connection strengthens the others.

Three Stone Farm's potatoes and sweet potatoes, for example, reach people through the Full Plate Farm Collective, a year-round, multi-farm CSA. Six Circles Farm has supplied local restaurants. Redbyrd Orchard Cider and Kombucha can be found at Main Street Market and on tap at Liquid State in Ithaca. Wixom Farm recently sold 300 pounds of beef to Franklin Street Market in Watkins Glen.

None of those relationships looks exactly alike.

And maybe that's the point.

Small farms don't necessarily have the volume or regularity required by a grocery store or restaurant. A farmers' market can provide a different kind of relationship—one in which the farmer can talk directly with the person taking the food home.

A CSA creates another relationship: a commitment between farms and households that extends beyond a single shopping trip.

A restaurant turns local food into a shared experience.

A grocery store makes it available when the farmer's market isn't open.

And a food pantry creates perhaps the most important connection of all: making sure that the ability to participate in the community's food system isn't limited to those who can afford everything on the table.

That's where the question gets bigger.

What does it mean to feed a community?

Andy Clark of Wixom Farm answered that question in a remarkably simple way.

"It's not about money, it's about feeding the community."

Heather Bowman, his partner at Wixom, knows the other half of the equation.

"We need to put diesel in the tractor to feed the community."

Both statements are true.

Food doesn't appear on a table simply because someone believes in feeding people. Farmers need land, equipment, fuel, labor, markets and customers. Restaurants need customers. Grocery stores need shoppers. Food pantries need food, volunteers and donors. Families need enough resources to put food on the table.



(Photo: Provided)



(Photo: Provided)



(Photo: Provided)

A healthy community food system recognizes all of those realities—and looks for ways to connect them.

That may be one of the quiet strengths of a place like Trumansburg.

We have farmers growing food.

We have a farmers' market creating a meeting place.

We have businesses selling and preparing local food.

We have CSAs extending the relationship between farms and families.

We have food assistance helping neighbors who might otherwise be left out.

And we have people who volunteer, cook, shop, deliver, donate, listen, play music and simply show up.

Even the market's music is part of the story.

As I ate my fried vegetables from The Grasshopper and listened to TOiVO, I was reminded that a community is nourished by more than food.

Annie, TOiVO's snare drummer, talked about the importance of having a creative outlet. Her outlet happens to include music and painting.

Someone else's might be farming.

Someone else's might be cooking.

Someone else's might be volunteering at the pantry.

Someone else's might be bringing a child to the market for the first time.

We tend to separate these things into categories: agriculture, business, nonprofit service, food, arts and entertainment.

But around a community table, those categories begin to disappear.

People simply bring what they have.

A farmer brings food.

A musician brings music.

A cook brings a meal.

A volunteer brings time.

A neighbor brings a story.

And someone who needs a little help brings something equally important: the reminder that community isn't measured by how much each of us can contribute, but by whether there is room for all of us.

So perhaps the real question isn't whether Trumansburg has a community food system. It does.

The more interesting question is what we can do to strengthen it.

Can more food grown here find its way onto local tables?

Can more farmers find sustainable markets?

Can restaurants and stores create more opportunities for local producers?

Can surplus food find its way to people who need it?

Can the farmers' market remain a place where people come not only to buy food, but to discover who we are?

And can we continue creating a community where everyone has a place at the table?

Maybe that's what feeding a community really means.

Not simply producing more food.

Creating more connections.

Because when the connections are strong, the table gets bigger. And when the table gets bigger, there is room for everyone.





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