

hello everyone. for those of you who don't know me, my name is rowena hopkins. and i am the executive director of farmers' markets of nova scotia. i'm really happy to be here and really impressed by the quality of the presentations and enthusiasm of the participants. a big thanks to beth and her amazing crew for making this happen.

meet marilyn and bruce. they, like everyone here, want to make a difference. to do something authentic. they gave up their well paid jobs in the city to grow and sell healthy fresh produce to people in winnipeg.

has anyone read this? jared diamond postulates that the reason some cultures advanced more rapidly than others was access to beasts of burden. like this one. they do some of the heavy lifting so that you don't have to. which means that you have more time to [x] think, dream and plan. which leads to innovation [x], creativity and advanced society. the alternative to which is [x] growing old and jaded really fast.

a very wise organic farm inspector shared this advice with me when i was farming in new brunswick. [x] i never forgot it. because really, what is the alternative?

so how do we do it? [x] this is a smile curve. this is what most of us do, most of the time. as you can see, even if we do it really well, we're never going to make much money. and that matters because to be able to do good, we need to be happy, healthy, productive people, which we can't be if we're broke, tired and grumpy.

so who does make the money? the people who develop the ideas and the people to sell the products well. and i emphasize well because anyone can sell a product for cheap. i could sell thousands of bmw's for \$50 each, but it takes thought, planning and creativity to sell a product and make money. you may be able to grow the best carrots ever, but until you have made your first sale, what you have is a hobby.

[x] next concept. what is collaborative agri-preneurship? it's a really pretentious way of saying "working together to help each other to make more money from farming" this is an example of collaborative agri-preneurship. [x] and so is this [gesture]

you are the smart people who have decided to come out to learn from and to share with each other. to learn not only how to grow great carrots, but also how to sell great carrots.

by sharing our ideas and resources and working together to support each other, we become each others mental beasts of burden. saving each other time, energy, money and brain cells. allowing us all to grow. you are far less likely to follow through on an idea and you are far more likely to overlook a fatal flaw in your plan if you keep your idea to yourself.

this is the second part of collaborative agri-preneurship [x] r and d, otherwise known as [x] rip-off and duplicate. it is not necessary to recreate the wheel. most really good ideas have already been thought of. all we need to do is take them, do them better and do them some place else.

at farmers' markets of nova scotia we've done some of the work for you because we want to see more innovative businesses selling at our farmers' markets.

i'm starting with [x] food and ingredient trends taken from across north america and europe. [x] it is not enough to just say local anymore. customers want to know the provenance of their food meaning, where it's from and the variety meaning, what kind of pork am i buying? this helps you to differentiate your products from store bought products.

it's a lot easier to charge more for your carrots when you explain that they are not just carrots. they are sweet and tasty, nantes carrots, which are totally different to the plain, old carrots that you buy in the store. these sausages aren't actually made from dragons from wales, but you get the idea. if you are raising rare breeds of livestock or growing unusual varieties of fresh produce, why wouldn't you share that with your customers? they'd love to know.

[x] people can choose to buy, or not to buy organic and local because they are, in many people's minds, optional. religious practices however aren't. there are, apparently, jewish people in halifax who haven't had a burger in years because they can't get kosher beef.

[x] i hate most offal, but in many cultures it's the best bit. so don't make it into sausages. find the people who really want to eat the parts that you don't.

[x] korean cuisine uses a lot of ingredients that grow well here. it's healthy and tastes great. koreans are the fastest growing immigrant population in the maritimes and if you can sell korean food in new glasgow, the chances are you can sell it anywhere.

[x] i don't know if you get the chance to eat out much, but if you do you'll likely have noticed that sweet potato fries are showing up on a lot on restaurant menus. imagine if we could do the same with jerusalem artichokes!

[x] people no longer just eat food. thanks to cooking shows and food magazines people want their food to look pretty so that they can photograph it and write about it in their blogs. so if you sell food that looks good, then the chances are that you

will sell more of it.

[x] which brings me on to nutrition trends. these are the kinds of things that you see highlighted on bottled vitamin water, margarine and overly sweetened cereal packets. most people don't really know what they mean, but they know it's good for them.

[x] many fruits are considered to be superfoods because they are packed full of vitamins and antioxidants (which must be a good thing, right?). we ship blueberries to asia because asian people know that blueberries are good for them. in return we buy gogi berries from china, because we've read that they're good for us. wouldn't it make more sense for us to market our own fruits as superfoods here in canada. but i've yet to see a pot of blueberries with any kind of superfood claim on it.

next time you are in the line-up in the supermarket, read the covers of the magazines and see what the latest diet trends are. apples are currently being touted on the yahoo home page as the best appetite suppressant ever.

when i was farming in new brunswick i came up with the slogan "everything we grow is good for you". the point i was trying to make was that many people obsess over how many grams of cheese they are allowed per day and how many slices of bread. my goal was to let our customers know that they could eat as much as they liked of anything we sold, with the only potential side effect being really regular bowel movements (without the need for tim hortens)

[x] probiotics, or 'friendly bacteria' are naturally found in yogurt, sauerkraut, kim-chi and kombucha (fermented tea). people pay more for products labeled as containing probiotics. so if you sell something that already contains probiotics, you should be telling people about it.

[x] it seems that people have finally gotten sick of drinking things made with aspartame and high fructose corn syrup. you'll see bottles of coke labeled as containing 'natural sugar' which leaves customers wondering what was in it before? marketing honey as a natural sweetener is what honibe a pei company set out to do. often the marketing lies in telling people what to do with your product as much as telling them what your product is.

[x] if you are gluten intolerant you have no choice but to eat gluten free products. which, if you've ever tried, is really hard, because virtually everything in north america is made with wheat and most commercial gluten free products either fall apart, bounce off the wall (when hurled in disgust) or taste like nothing resembling food. you have a captive audience, desperate for something edible at whatever it costs.

[x] when galen weston starts to pretend that his pies, cookies and an increasing number of vegetables and fruits come from a farmers' market you know that farmers' markets are a brand that people trust.

as well as looking into food trends, our summer student xander also looked into products currently being sold at other farmers' markets across canada and the uk to see what was missing from many of our local markets. we have documented all of this in downloadable fact sheets on our website if you want more detailed information.

this is what we found at markets outside of this region;

[x] different varieties of garlic, sold by variety for a higher price more than the typical two varieties of mushrooms that are grown here. sold both as food and as a grow your own fungus, like a potted plant.

asian fruits and vegetables, grown commonly in the cooler off-seasons as a way to extend your harvest and diversify your offerings. remember you will need to tell people what to do with them.

haskaps are not something i've seen much of at farmers' markets yet, but i did see a lot of them being grown on farms across canada, ready to take to market soon. the benefit of growing a really hardy, early berry is that you will be the first to the market with fruit which will help you to sell all of your other products. plus ironworks distillery are making a haskap vodka, so they must be good.

sea-buckthorn also grows well in cold climates and i have seen it elsewhere transformed into jams, jellies and even wines.

[x] you often don't have to do much to a product to make it more saleable. most people are busy, tired and lacking in imagination when it comes to supper time. anything you can do to make their lives easier will help sell more of your products at a higher price.

large sacks of turnips at rock bottom prices may appeal to a certain demographic, but a little bit of something nice is more likely to catch the eye of an apartment dweller with a tiny fridge and no storage. or an aging person, living alone. good restaurants already offer seniors meals, which are smaller because they can't eat as much.

and when it comes to a group of people who are really tired but very conscious about what goes into food, you need look no further than new moms. if you don't want to get into making baby food, you could add labels to your products saying 'suitable for babies 6 months and up. simply boil and puree' it takes the brainwork out of it.

how much can you charge for cabbages by the lb? you can charge \$3.00/lb if your shred it. you can also sell more, and sell cabbages that are split or have worm damage in the outer leaves. which is how we got started doing it. we were terrible cabbage growers, but really good cabbage shredders. [x] this is a stall in london where all they sell is shredded carrot, cabbage and beets.

[x] we used to put 40g of herbs into our packets and they weren't selling very well. one day a customer mentioned that she always ended up throwing out half of the herbs so she'd stopped buying them. i reduced the amounts of the herbs in each packet to 20g, put them into ziplock bags and left the price the same. we sold out.

[x] if you sell meats at a market and don't also sell ready to eat products you should. there is a limit to how much meat a family will cook per week, so you can add all kinds of different meat products to your range but you won't sell much more. however the same shopper will both buy raw meat and a burger or hotdog. you can charge as much for one hotdog as for a pack of sausages. the smell will also draw people in and you get to make money from sampling.

[x] the maritimes will never be the prairies for grain production, but there are opportunities in taking small batches of local grains, seeds and flours and processing them to make oils, pasta, gourmet granola bars and raw food products as well as breads and pastries.

[x] yes, you read that right. stickles are pickles on a stick. and at \$1 a stickle, you are going to make a lot more money selling this way, than by the jar.

[x] would somebody please start a cleaning products company where you pump your own products into glass jars! beth and i will be your first customers.

japanese wwoofers visiting the maritimes go down to the shore and ask 'can we eat this?'. there is a huge diversity of sea plants growing off our coast line. is dulce really the only one we can eat?

the ideal agri-preneurial product is one that is flexible enough that you can do many things with it.

[x] blueberry juice concentrate can be diluted and drunk or frozen into popsicles.

[x] mixed with soda water to make italian soda.

[x] frozen and crushed to make slushies

[x] poured over shaved ice for the latest in food crazes

[x] or mixed with hot water for a non-caffeinated warming drink during the colder months.

you can make some money from selling the product in a bottle or you can open the bottle and make a bigger profit selling it by the shot.

[x] remember bruce from the start of the presentation? he's a smart man. he told me that he used to get annoyed when he thought of a great idea and then other people, independently, started a business using that same idea. he said he thought the power was in the idea. but then he realised that it isn't. the power is in doing something about the idea.

years ago my honey and a close friend were talking about how there was never time to both shower and drink coffee in the morning. they brainstormed the idea of caffeinated soap. did they do anything about it? [x] no, but someone else did. they should have trusted their instincts.

[x] the winter is coming on fast and we have months ahead of us to dream, scheme and collaborate. and thanks to beth for holding the conference at this time of year in order to allow us to do that. how will you use this time?