



The Good Food Box: *A non-profit fresh food distribution system*

FoodShare's Field to Table Centre

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FoodShare's flagship program, the **Good Food Box**, is now in the double digits—age—wise that is! In January of 1994, FoodShare staff packed the first forty Good Food Boxes in the basement of our Queen St. office. And now thirteen years later we are packing and distributing between 2,500 and 3000 boxes per month through 200 neighborhood-based drop-offs from a temporary warehouse while our brand new home on Croatia St. is being renovated.

We buy only top quality fresh fruit and vegetables directly from local farmers and from the Ontario Food Terminal, and volunteers pack it into green reusable boxes at Field to Table Centre every Tuesday. Volunteer co-ordinators collect money for the boxes in advance of delivery, and then make sure that everyone gets their box after it arrives. We deliver to daycares, apartment buildings, churches-anywhere there are 8-10 people who want to buy a box. A newsletter that offers nutrition information, as well as easy and economical food preparation tips, accompanies all of the boxes.

We choose Ontario-grown whenever possible because we want to know where and how our food is produced, to support local farmers and to reduce the fossil fuels burned when we import food.

Professional evaluation of **The Good Food Box** shows that participating in the program helps people access a more nutritious diet. It is now thought that up to 70% of deaths result from diseases that have a diet-related dimension, and there is mounting evidence that eating enough fruit and vegetables is key to preventing disease. Not only is it a matter of justice that everyone should have access to the food they need to keep them healthy - it also makes sense because of the enormous costs to the health care system that result from treating these diseases.

The Good Food Box makes top-quality, fresh food available in a way that does not stigmatize people, fosters community development and promotes healthy eating. Customers pay the cost of the food itself, while distribution overheads are subsidized. The family-sized **Good Food Box** costs \$17 (for a retail value of between \$23 and \$30), and a smaller version is \$12. Also available are a fruit basket (\$12), organic boxes (small \$22, large \$32), the **Wellness Basket** (\$12) containing smaller portions of cut-up fruit and vegetables geared to seniors and others who have barriers to food preparation and a box that is geared towards women in treatment for breast cancer, through our **Good Food At Home** project.

416 392-1629 or gfb@foodshare.net

Good Food At Home & Good Food for Life

Good Food at Home is a supportive nutrition program for women recently diagnosed with breast cancer. Eating a healthy diet, high in fruits and vegetables is universally accepted as being beneficial to overall health and wellness.

The **Wellness Box** is delivered once per week to your door and contains 25-35 servings of fruits and vegetables. Each week we include a few special items such as a jar of soup or pre-washed chopped vegetables. The produce is top quality and, whenever possible, purchased from local Ontario farmers. You also receive a newsletter and recipes with each delivery. The home delivered Wellness Box is available for up to six months to any woman in active treatment (receiving chemotherapy and/or radiation therapy), living in the City of Toronto. The cost is \$5 per week

416 392-1670 or zahra@foodshare.net

An auxiliary program, **Good Food for Life**, offers survivors of breast cancer the opportunity to attend hands on workshops on healthy eating and cooking. The program also offers social and interactive food skills; personal reflection and mindful eating; the opportunity to be connected to local food sources; and interactive discussions about key issues related to food and the environment.

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Working with communities to ensure that everyone has access to sustainably produced, good, healthy food.

Urban Gardening Programs

Growing food in urban centres – whether for subsistence, fun or profit – is an idea that has reached its time. FoodShare has two programs that support individuals and groups who want to learn more about growing their own food in the city: the *Community Gardening Program* and the *Urban Agriculture Program*

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Community Gardening

Toronto now has approximately 120 community gardens, located everywhere from city parks to abandoned lots. On these garden plots gardeners grow food for their families, beautify their neighbourhoods and get in touch with nature's cycles. FoodShare works to increase availability of community gardens and helps these gardeners to grow.

FoodShare works with community groups to assist them in acquiring the knowledge, expertise and resources necessary to start up a community garden. Every winter we teach a multi session course to approximately 40 potential garden leaders that covers all aspects of starting and sustaining a garden. Upon successful completion of the course we match them up with garden leaders from past year's courses to provide close mentorship.

We are also a supporting organization of the Toronto Community Gardening Network, which connects gardens and gardeners, organizes special event such as Seedy Saturday, the mid-summer Annual Community Garden Tour and the Urban Harvest Festival, as well as advocating on behalf of support and resources for more community gardens.

Urban Agriculture Projects

FoodShare's urban agriculture program is a hub of innovation, drawing attention from around the world. In our new Field to Table Centre at Croatia St. we hope to recreate the **sprouting operation, rooftop greenhouse, midscale composting, bee hives and warehouse gardens** that we built at our previous centre. All use appropriate technology methods and recycled materials to produce certified organic food and seedlings for sale.

The Sunshine Garden, our former 7000 sq. ft. market garden at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) has been turned into a public park but we were able to build a new lasagna-style garden nearby before the change. Twice weekly, from mid-June to October, we sell just-harvested vegetables at our farm stand on Queen St. just west of Ossington. Imagine being able to buy an organic tomato that was picked just minutes before!

The mid-scale composting operation turns one tonne of organic waste per month, produced via the Field to Table Catering Company and Good Food Boxes, into top-quality garden amendment (aka the Best Compost in Toronto). If grocery stores and restaurants did the same, imagine the reduction in Toronto's garbage.

Our bees produced a record harvest of honey in 2005 – over 1000 lbs. from 12 hives. The bees are tended by the Bee Co-op, a group of volunteers who have formed a co-op in order to learn how to manage the hives. They tend the bees and share the harvest of honey and beeswax with us.

Field to Table Schools

FoodShare's newest program to make healthy eating a way of life for our children. Currently a pilot project involving 3 Toronto schools, we eventually envision the creation of a centre where children can come for a day or more of hands on experience of all aspects of the food system. They will learn by growing, harvesting, preparing and eating good healthy food, while they also learn about the big picture by visiting local farms, composting their lunch scraps and being introduced to important aspects of agricultural policy.

In the pilot stage we are developing curriculum supports for teachers and beginning to involve the three schools with FoodShare's Field to Table programs as we develop the model for the next stage of Field to Table Schools.

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Focus on Food Intern Project

Focus on Food is a program for youth interns between the ages of 15 to 30 facing barriers to employment to gain the job and life skills necessary for them to make the transition to school or work.

Participating youth are paid by Human Resources Development Canada to learn marketable skills at FoodShare by working in all of our programs: the Good Food Box warehouse, the kitchen and urban agriculture programs. The participants are also taught skills in cooking, gardening and nutrition which they can carry with them into their personal lives.

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Visit our website for more information on
any of our programs and projects

www.foodshare.net



Good Food Markets

Many communities do not have good access to fresh, healthy food. Neighbourhood—based **Good Food Markets** sell high-quality and affordable fruits and vegetables to improve fresh food access by creating public space and supporting local farmers.

FoodShare works in partnership with community organizations to run the markets. We purchase fresh produce from local farmers and from the Ontario Food Terminal and delivers it to community organizations who run the markets. The markets feature seasonal, local produce in order to offer the greatest quality and value to communities.

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mark-jan@foodshare.net

Student Nutrition

FoodShare works with Toronto Public Health, Boards of Education, and other community agencies to sponsor the *Toronto Partners for Student Nutrition*, which supports the over 300 student nutrition programs in Toronto, as well as helping new programs to start up. Field to Table wholesale produce distribution also makes fresh fruit and vegetables available at an affordable price to school programs, in order to promote increased consumption amongst children.

The *Salad Bar Project* provides schools with the tools to provide kids with healthy fresh food that they'll actually eat! With over 60 salad bars in Toronto's schools, the future looks bright for the *Salad Bar Project*. We advocate for funding and infrastructure for community programs, and for a federal universal child nutrition program, which would ensure that every child receives a nutritious meal every day that they are in school.

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Field to Table Catering

Field to Table Catering offers an eclectic menu of fresh, affordable and seasonal foods for sale to community organizations and others seeking catering for events of any size.

Revenues generated from sales support the delivery of nutritious soups and meals to organizations serving the homeless and underhoused, as well as cooking training projects aimed at youth in FoodShare projects and people living in supportive housing.

416.363-6441 xt. 232 or sybil@foodshare.net

Toronto Kitchen Incubator

The *Toronto Kitchen Incubator* is a fully equipped industrial kitchen for use by small entrepreneurs and community groups. Started with funding from the Toronto Economic Development Corporation, the TKI is available for a low hourly rental to small food businesses that would otherwise have to make a large investment in their own facilities. As businesses grow, they move on and make space for others to move in.

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Community Food Animators

FoodShare together with The Stop Community Food Centre, Second Harvest and the Afri-Can FoodBasket are developing community gardens and kitchens, fresh food markets and emergency food programs in communities across Toronto, by partnering with neighbourhood agencies.

The animators will engage communities, in particular youth and seniors, in the effort to build community food security, reduce isolation and create public space.

416.363.6441 xt. 227 or angela@foodshare.net

Healthy Babies Eat Homecooked Food

Making your own baby food is easy and affordable. And best of all, you know exactly what's in it! FoodShare maintains a team of peer trainers, speaking eight languages, who are available to go out to community groups to teach "Baby Food Basics." Topics covered include how to prepare and store your own baby food, when to introduce various foods and the basics of baby nutrition.

416.363.6441 xt.235 or janet@foodshare.net

FoodLink Hotline

FoodLink, a partnership with Community Information Toronto (CIT), answers calls from 500 people per month looking for food programs in Toronto. Referencing a database of over 1400 records, CIT councillors and *FoodLink* volunteers can refer to the full spectrum of food programs - from emergency food programs, such as food banks and low-cost meals to community development food programs, such as community gardens, seniors congregate dining and peri-natal programs.

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416. 392. 6655 or foodlink@foodshare.net

Help us replant ourselves!

Working with communities to ensure that everyone has access to sustainably produced, good, healthy food.

Networking & Food Policy

FoodShare is uniquely positioned as one of the largest and most successful food security organizations in North America. Every year FoodShare organizes many training workshops to introduce innovative food security ideas to community organizers, and to help them build the skills necessary to implement food programs.

We also sponsor several networks and conferences to help develop community leadership, create synergies between people involved with the spectrum of food security programs and to create a forum where the voices of the many grassroots activists can be heard; some examples are the *Toronto Partners for Student Nutrition*, *Toronto Community Gardening Network*, *the Good Food Box Network* and *the Toronto Food Justice Coalition*. FoodShare supports communities across Canada to establish food security programs and structures with the goal of developing policies to ensure that everyone has access to affordable, nutritious food.

We play a key role in a number of organizations and coalitions dedicated to addressing the policy dimensions of the food system, hunger and poverty; among them are the *Toronto Food Policy Council*, and the *Food Democracy National Food Security Coalition*.

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Our Philosophy –Putting Food First

Over the years, we have broadened our focus to look at the entire food system-how food is produced, distributed and consumed. We see hunger as just one symptom of a food system that is geared to treating food primarily as a commodity. Most people believe that access to food is a basic human right, because, like air or water, it is fundamental to health and survival. But the question is how to make this right a reality. First, should food be subjected to the same rules of market distribution that govern, say, soap or toothpaste? We believe there is a role for not-for-profit food distribution mechanisms, of which the Good Food Box is one example.

What we've come to realize is that the "what" and "how" of food access is also important. All of our projects are based on the premise that it's not just any food that we're talking about. We try to promote an awareness that fresh, whole foods are key to health, wellbeing and disease prevention, and to illustrate this principle through all our programs. How people get their food matters too. Food distribution systems that involve communities and help to create neighborhood leaders have a great potential to enhance individual and community empowerment, by leading people to feel that they have some control over this very basic part of their lives. Again, because of its material, cultural and social importance, food is special in its power to mobilize people to action. All our programs are based on this community building principle.

FoodShare takes a multifaceted, innovative and long-term approach to hunger and food issues. This means that we're involved in diverse actions: grassroots program delivery, advocacy for social assistance reform, job creation and training, nutrition education, farmland preservation and campaigns for comprehensive food labeling are just a few examples of the areas we work in.

Our History: Looking to a Future Beyond Food

FoodShare was founded in 1985 by Toronto Mayor, Art Eggleton and others concerned about the growth of hunger and food banks that had taken place in the wake of the recession of the early 1980's. FoodShare's original mandate was to co-ordinate emergency food services and to collect and distribute food. The Hunger Hotline was established as a volunteer-run referral service for people seeking these services in their neighborhood.

FoodShare's early mandate also included a strong call for policies that would ensure adequate employment, and the income necessary to enable all people to meet their basic needs.

In the late 1980's, FoodShare staff began to share the frustration of many that the problem of hunger was not diminishing. Income inequality and unemployment were, if anything, increasing. Food banks-originally intended as a stop-gap solution-appeared to be here to stay. We heard from food bank users that the food they received was often limited in quantity and quality, and rarely included fresh produce. A strong tradition against resorting to charity means that many feel stigmatized when they are forced to use a food bank – even to the point of going hungry rather than doing so. Food bank organizers have always stated that food banks are not a sustainable response to hunger, and that they want to "put themselves out of business."

FoodShare began to explore community development-based models like co-operative buying systems, collective kitchens and community gardens that would have the potential to address short-term issues of household hunger, while also providing longer-term benefits by building the capacity of individuals and communities.

Resources

FoodShare website: www.foodshare.net - includes an online learning centre, regular event updates, resource database, archived newsletters.

Newsletters:

- **Good Food News** - bi-weekly: the newsletter that comes in the Good Food Box - nutrition tips, recipes, articles on food issues;
- **FoodShare Newsletter - print newsletter, 2 times a year**
- **FoodShare e-bulletin** - monthly email food news and events
- **Community Garden e-bulletin**- monthly email newsletter

Manuals and Publications:

- **Salad Bar Lunch: A Fresh Approach to School Lunch**
- **Compost Breakdown**
- **How Does Our Garden Grow**
- **Starting a Good Food Box Program**
- **Train-the-Trainer Baby Food Manual**
- **Seeds of Our City**
- **Growing Sprouts and Seedlings**
- **Food 2002**

All manuals are \$20 if picked up at the FoodShare office or \$25 if shipped.

To order: **416.363.6441 xt 229**
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