

Theme Music

Marion Kane:

In Ontario, the Farm to Table movement continues to gain momentum. In fact, some of the best cooking is happening away from big cities and closer to where food is grown. I'm Marion Kane, Food Sleuth® and welcome to "Sittin' in the Kitchen®". Andrew Coppelino is a CBC Radio food columnist and unofficial ambassador for all things Farm to Table in Waterloo region. His new book features recipes by graduates of a nearby Stratford Chefs School and the local producers who supply them. We had a heartwarming chat in a coffee shop in Kitchener.

Theme Music

Marion Kane:

You describe yourself as a food journalist.

Andrew Coppelino:

I mean, I've used the word "journalist" very, very cautiously because I'm not trained as a journalist. I didn't go to J-School.

Marion Kane:

I didn't.

Andrew Coppelino:

I like to be able to do a combination of things in the writing that I do about food and that is to inform the public and to entertain them.

Marion Kane:

I say, "I aim to entertain and to educate."

Andrew Coppelino:

Yeah, I think that you do a good job at it. There's no doubt.

Marion Kane:

Thank you.

Andrew Coppelino:

Yeah. But that's what I like to do. I try to be able to show people around my region, that is Waterloo region, Perth County, Wellington County and introduce them to some of the great food people that I know, both farmers and producers and the chefs and the restaurateurs in the region. Get them to know them a bit. Help their businesses prosper and thrive just by people knowing who they are, but also maybe to teach a little bit about different aspects of their food, different aspects of the production of food. I like to think of myself as sort of a blending of those two things much like you do. I'm not a hard-hitting investigative journalist kind of thing. More sort of wanting to teach people about other people in their neighbourhood and help them learn about the foodways that we live with and where we all came from.

Marion Kane:

Your new book is called *Farm to Table* and the subtitle is *Celebrating Stratford Chefs School Alumni, Recipes & Perth County Producers*.

Andrew Coppolino:

Don't you love those subtitles? They're longer than the title.

Marion Kane:

Farm to table is the new thing.

Andrew Coppolino:

It is a new thing but you know what? It's an old thing too, right, Marion? This isn't new. This is new to a food culture that didn't understand how we used to get fed and how we built our economies on people – farmers – taking food to people to buy it. Or you were growing it yourself. It's not a new thing at all but it's a growing thing now. I was very lucky. I feel very fortunate that the publisher Blue Moon and the Stratford Chefs School asked me to write the stories of the farmers and the producers and the chefs in Stratford. It was really a wonderful thing to be able to help them celebrate their 35 years in existence. I know you know Stratford very well. I know you know the food scene there and you know the school and you'll recognize with me how important and integral those chefs are and that school is to growing the food culture across Canada. It isn't just in Perth County. It isn't just in Wellington County. It's across the country. A lot of these guys and gals that are chefs now in other places across Canada have really been leaders for good food movement, from the farm to table movement but also respecting food, understanding how to cook food, and really being the backbone and the anchor of keeping alive a tradition that could've very easily turned very sour with factory farming and mass production of food, mass production of processed food. They represent that sort of – I don't want to say a dying breed – but that minority that I think is increasingly growing, if not slowly at least growing. I think that's kudos to them for 35 years of teaching.

Marion Kane:

Now on to your cookbook. I've made various things out of it and we had a lamb dinner last night that was superb! Slow-Braised Lamb Shanks from the Butcher and the Baker and you've paired up producers with cooks. They've used products from local growers.

Andrew Coppolino:

Yeah. That was the brainchild of the Stratford Chefs School that they wanted to highlight their graduates but then the people that are supporting their community and that are supporting the school, often the producer like Antony for instance, not only does he supply the restaurants with the greens that he grows but he's often in the classrooms teaching students. The same with the Butcher and the Baker. Yeah. Ruth has been an instructor and she's a graduate so that kind of pairing is really, really unique, I think. There's a real connection there. It's more than just, "Here's the recipe. I'll cook it." It's a sort of melding of the minds. It's people being on exactly the same page and sharing the same synergies and energies. There's 25 of those, I think, in the book and they are all Stratford Chefs School graduates and the local producers, whether it's Ruth's cheese – or C'est Bon cheese or whether it's Max Loss's pigs or chickens they're paired into these recipes that I applaud you for testing some of the more difficult ones.

Marion Kane:

(laughs) I braved it.

Andrew Coppolino:

Well, you're a special case though because you're an excellent cook. Some of the recipes are a little bit more "chefy", shall we say. I think Ryan O'Donnell's...

Marion Kane:

Chefy?

Andrew Coppolino:

... yeah... they're very involved so if you want to dedicate a weekend to cooking that's the one for you. But there's another one that's a very simple cheese sandwich. There's a wonderful macaroni and cheese recipe using Blyth Farm cheese by Devin Tabor who's a chef in Huron County.

Marion Kane:

Have you tasted the Slow-Braised Lamb Shanks?

Andrew Coppolino:

I haven't tasted any of these recipes. I didn't get to do taste anything. All the Stratford Chefs School students and instructors – they got to test them. Not me. I was too busy writing. I couldn't eat.

Marion Kane:

The sauce has cumin and cinnamon and star anise. Incredibly rich and aromatic. It has tomatoes and beef broth and red wine. I adore that recipe and I like the cheese biscuits from Monforte Dairy.

Andrew Coppolino:

Yeah, there's a number of recipes like that, that are just so delicious. The biscuits are – they look great. Again, I haven't had any. I don't get to eat them...

Marion Kane:

(laughs)

Andrew Coppolino:

What am I going to do? I've got to sit down and make all of these recipes? All 25? Yeah, I know we were really lucky to get these people to contribute.

Marion Kane:

And I made the Char Siu Pork Shoulder from Kathleen Sloan-McIntosh at the Black Dog in Bayfield. It's a Chinese dish – a pork shoulder cooked in barbecue sauce that you make yourself and it's delicious.

Andrew Coppolino:

I've tasted that in a book-signing event at Indigo that we had.

Marion Kane:

Okay.

Andrew Coppolino:

And Eli Silverthorne from the Stratford Chefs School made it but he served it in a lettuce cup, I think. And it was like Bo Ssam - the Korean dish, and it was just lovely with the crispiness of the lettuce. They did a vegetarian version of it as well with all those flavours but none of the pork.

Marion Kane:

Yes.

Andrew Coppolino:

I'm not a vegetarian but I respect the people that don't want to eat meat. There's some great recipes in it.

Marion Kane:

I have guilt in eating meat.

Andrew Coppolino:

Yeah, you know what, it's really important to be mindful about what you're eating. I really think you need to think about where your meat is coming from. I think the time has come for us to probably think about how much vegetables we eat compared to how much proteins we eat. I think it's something that we need to be wary of in our future in terms of the environment and that kind of thing.