

Fairground attractions

Sisters Moira Sanders and Lori Elstone bring their culinary training home with a book of recipes from their local harvest festival



Moira Sanders (L) and Lori Elstone



Cheddar loonies

INGREDIENTS makes 4 dozen

- 2½ cups** all-purpose flour
- 1½ tsp** fine sea salt
- ¼ tsp** cayenne pepper
- 1 cup** shredded sharp Canadian cheddar cheese
- 2 tsp** finely chopped fresh thyme

- 1** Sift together the flour, salt and cayenne pepper in a medium-sized bowl. Cream the butter for 2 minutes in the bowl of a stand mixer. Mix in the shredded cheese and thyme. Add the dry ingredients to the butter mixture. Mix on low speed until the dough comes together.
- 2** Turn the dough out onto a floured surface and knead gently. Form the dough into a disc, then divide in half. Roll each half into a cylinder slightly larger than 1 inch in diameter. (Loonies are slightly more than 1 inch in diameter.) Wrap each cylinder in parchment paper.
- 3** Refrigerate for at least 1 hour and up to 24 hours.
- 4** Preheat the oven to 350° F. Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper. Slice the dough into ¼-inch loonies. Bake for 20 minutes or until golden brown. Cool the loonies on a baking rack. Serve warm or at room temperature.

SANDERS AND ELSTONE PHOTO: CHARITY SAMPSON

Tomato, mozzarella and pesto sandwich



INGREDIENTS serves 4

- 8** slices crusty white bread, ¾ inch thick
- ¼ cup** extra virgin olive oil
- ½ cup** basil pesto
- 1 cup** sliced fresh mozzarella
- 2** large fresh tomatoes, sliced

- 1** Brush one side of each slice of bread with olive oil. Spread 2 tbsp of pesto evenly on 4 slices of the bread (on the side opposite the olive oil).
- 2** Place the 4 slices of bread spread with pesto (olive oil side down) into a skillet set over medium-low heat. Place a layer of cheese on top of the pesto, followed by a layer of tomatoes. Top with the remaining slices of bread (olive oil side facing out).
- 3** Grill each side for 3 minutes or until the cheese has melted and the bread is golden brown.
- 4** Serve immediately.

Midway rides and sugar highs – that’s what many of us think of when we recall the summer fairs of childhood. But for sisters Moira Sanders and Lori Elstone, two food-focused professionals from southwestern Ontario, the community fair they attended year after year is a celebration of local food, history and family.

That’s why the two women wanted to capture the essence of the Harrow Fair, held each Labour Day weekend in the small community on Lake Erie’s north shore near Windsor.

Boasting some of Canada’s most fertile farmland, Harrow plays host to one of the country’s oldest summer rituals, dating back to 1854 and attracting as many as 70,000 people each year. Attending the harvest festival has been a tradition in Moira and Lori’s family for six generations. Now that they both have children of their own, they’ve decided to capture that history in *The Harrow Fair Cookbook*.

“I’ve always loved the connection between agri-

culture and food,” says Lori, 35. She now lives in St. Catharines and is eager to give her own kids, Hugh, 3, and Erica, 1, an appreciation of local farming’s importance. “I know that seems obvious, but a lot of times these days it isn’t. Just going to the supermarket to get food, you kind of forget where it’s coming from.”

Growing up in crop-rich Harrow, that was a lesson Moira and Lori learned early. Moira, 37, says that she became hooked on cookbooks when she was in elementary school. Still, it took a false start in business marketing before she realized her true calling. “At my job, I would think, ‘You know what? I’d rather be cooking,’” says Moira with a laugh.

Following her heart, Moira headed to the culinary program at St. Clair College and went on to hold high-profile restaurant jobs in Vancouver and Toronto. She also ran the kitchen of a chateau-turned-cooking-school in the Limousin region of France. These days, she works

from her home north of Toronto, where she writes a recipe blog and cares for her two kids, Gavin, 7, and Ellen, 5.

Younger sibling Lori followed her sister to culinary school. She found her first cooking job in a pub in England, then returned to Canada, where she worked in kitchens and vineyards in Ontario’s Niagara wine region. While working at the acclaimed restaurant On the Twenty, she ▶

Chocolate chip cookies

INGREDIENTS makes 12 large cookies

- ½ cup unsalted butter, softened
- ½ cup firmly packed dark-brown sugar
- ¼ cup granulated sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 tsp pure vanilla extract
- 1½ cup all-purpose flour
- ¾ tsp baking soda
- ¾ tsp fine sea salt
- ¾ cup bittersweet chocolate chips
- ½ cup chopped toasted walnuts

1. Cream together the butter and sugars in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment. Add the egg and vanilla and mix for 1 minute on medium speed.

2. Sift together the flour, baking soda and salt in a medium-sized bowl. Slowly add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients until combined and the dough comes together in a ball. Add the chocolate and walnuts and mix until just combined. Cover the dough tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes and up to 72 hours. (The longer the dough is allowed to chill, the more the flavours will be able to combine and develop.)

3. Preheat the oven to 350° F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

4. For each cookie, take ¼ cup dough and form it into a ball. Place each ball on the baking sheet and press it into a 3-inch round, about ½ inch thick. Bake for 10 minutes or until the cookies are golden brown, but still soft in the middle.

5. Transfer the cookies to a baking rack to cool.

befriended local culinary star Anna Olson – the TV host wrote the foreword to the sisters’ new book – and met her future husband, Jake. “I consider food a real link to bring people together,” says Lori.

When asked why they were drawn to careers focused on food, both sisters credit the same woman as their inspiration: their beloved late grandma Bertha McDonald.

“Walking into her house, the smells were just so incredible, her gardens were great,” says Moira. “She was the whole package. She was a lot of fun and she had a wicked sense of humour.”

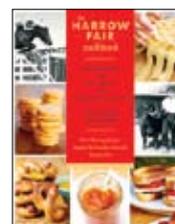
Adds Lori: “She was an amazing cook. She cooked food with love and I really believe you can taste the difference.”

Lori used Grandma McDonald’s recipe for rhubarb custard pie the year she won a first-place ribbon at Harrow Fair. And her victory was no small feat. While the fair also features competitions for rooster calling, tractor pulls, pets and cattle, the baking contest is one of its most popular events and gives rise to a much-anticipated pie auction. Every year, crowds gather on hay-bale benches to hear the auctioneers encourage higher bids on the ribbon-winning pastries. Hundreds – and sometimes thousands – of dollars can be spent on a single item, with proceeds going to a children’s charity.

To make sure their cookbook had the flavour of the fair, Moira and Lori turned to women who have been competing there for more than 50 years and have hundreds of red ribbons to their names, convincing them to turn over treasured pie recipes and family specialties. (The book includes a recipe for a wild black raspberry and blueberry pie that pulled in \$2,400 one year.) They also enlisted a third family member as co-author, their first cousin Beth Goslin Maloney, a food-marketing specialist based in New York City who has worked with Martha Stewart’s empire.

The three women have countless memories of watching the contests, touring the barns and breathing in the wafting smoke from flaming barbecues. And while they no longer live in Harrow, they return to the fair each year to make sure their children collect their own memories.

“In the end, it’s all about family,” says Moira. “Having meals together is so important and the fair brings it all together. When we’re down at the fair, we have history there and it just resonates with the kids.” **H**



A perfect pick for harvest season, when fruit and vegetables are at their peak, *The Harrow Fair Cookbook (Whitecap)* is crammed with recipes for prize-winning pies and cakes, luscious preserves and savoury meat and vegetable dishes that

are sure to win the red ribbon at your next picnic or party. Authors Moira Sanders and Lori Elstone (with Beth Goslin Maloney) combine the back-to-basics appeal of country-inspired cooking – think barbecue chicken wings or corn casserole – with a very modern and creative approach to fresh ingredients. (Chocolate-mint ice cream uses fresh herbs; sour cherry juice turns up in a tempting cocktail.) Lusciously photographed and full of anecdotes, this book captures late summer’s glow.