

Meet Joan and Harpreet

Troy, Ontario



**On the J. Collins & Sons farm,
they're growing more than
vegetables, they're growing
a community.**



Feels like home

"I grew up in India on my father's farm and at 19 I came to Canada with my parents. I started at the J. Collins & Sons farm in 1982. Back then it was a part-time job, but I liked it so much I've been here my whole life," says Harpreet Cheema, farm manager.



Building a community

There's a large Punjabi community in Brampton, about an hour away from the farm. "When you think about the number of people in the world who help produce or grow food, you realize it's not that many. I think our community, and the people here on this farm, contribute a lot in that respect," notes Harpreet. "This is an old generation that loves to work on the farm."

As word got out to the community that "people came in happy and went home happy at the end of the day," more and more people came to work on the farm. Joan Beck, owner of J. Collins & Sons, is equally appreciative saying, "I love the people that we work with as well as the energy and the willingness to do hard work; it's a good feeling."





Coming home

Joan grew up on her family's vegetable farm in Woodbridge, Ontario. After heading to university, where she trained as a dietician, and working in Toronto for 10 years, she came back home: "It's the rural life that I'm used to. I had a very nice childhood with lots of fresh air and space. If you like to be outdoors, it's an ideal life."

"I'm not sure there is a regular day," says Joan, a fifth generation farmer. "That's one thing about the job, things are always changing and you have to be able to revise your plans, drop what you're doing and come back to it later. It's not just one job at a time."

From the ground up

The J. Collins & Sons farm grows bunched vegetables—carrots, radishes, parsley, cilantro and dill—items that involve a lot of hand labour.

Harpreet takes pride in knowing their farm is having a local impact. “Our produce goes to the local GTA (Greater Toronto Area) market. We work with the big players in the food industry and the Ontario Food Terminal,” he comments.

It’s a contribution the whole community can be proud of.





Lentil Soup with Sweet Potato

Ingredients

2 tbsp olive oil
1 onion, chopped
1 rib celery, diced
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 tsp curry powder
1 tsp minced fresh ginger
¼ tsp each ground coriander,
ground cumin & pepper
1 pkg (900mL) vegetable
broth, sodium-reduced
1 can (796mL) no-salt-added
diced tomatoes
2 cups diced peeled sweet
potato (about 1 large)
⅔ cup dried green lentils,
rinsed
¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro
½ tsp salt

Directions

In a dutch oven or large heavy-bottomed saucepan, heat oil over medium heat. Cook onion and celery, stirring occasionally, until softened, about 1 minute.

Add garlic, curry powder, ginger, coriander, cumin and pepper. Cook, stirring until fragrant, about 1 minute. Stir in broth, tomatoes, sweet potato and lentils; bring to boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer until lentils are tender, 15–20 minutes. Stir in cilantro and salt.

Tip: To make this soup with meat, use chicken broth and add boneless skinless chicken breasts.

Notes

Joan Beck
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