



Yes, there is such a thing as a bad dog, says animal behaviorist Andrew Luesch of the University of Guelph.

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# FLAVOR FRESH

## CAMBRIDGE CO-OP PROVIDES PRODUCE TO FAMILIES ON TIGHT BUDGETS

By Susan Danard Record staff

When you're living on a low income and struggling to keep a roof over your head, buying fresh produce may not be a top priority.

But the process has just become easier, thanks to a new program run by the Cambridge Community Food Co-op in conjunction with FoodShare Metro Toronto.

Launched in Cambridge in September, the Good Food Box program offers monthly boxes of fresh fruits and vegetables at remarkably low prices, explains Rob Brookes, the co-op's program coordinator.

For \$15, a family can purchase a box of about 40 pounds of top-quality produce that would normally sell for around \$25 if purchased in a grocery store.

(For those used to unit pricing, Brookes says the box's cost per pound works out to be only 38 cents.)

Items vary monthly, according to what is in season, and whenever possible are Ontario-grown.

A handy recipe involving that month's particular produce is also included. In September, for example, purchasers found eggplant and zucchini in their boxes, accompanied by a recipe for a delicious ratatouille (vegetable stew).

### Several sizes

Small boxes containing about 20 pounds of produce — perfect for singles or seniors — are available at a cost of \$10.

The co-op also offers a "mom-to-be box" with items rich in protein and folic acid for \$15, and a "Caribbean box" for adventuresome cooks, featuring fresh herbs, tropical fruits and exotic veggies for \$20.

The boxes, prepared with the help of a nutritionist, are distributed to the Cambridge co-op by the non-profit agency FoodShare, as part of its Field to Table program.

The co-op, in turn, distributes the boxes to several Cambridge community centres and neighborhood associations. As well, people can pick up the boxes directly at the co-op at 50 Goebel Ave. in Hespeler.

Payment for the boxes is due on the first Friday of the month and the boxes are available for pick-up on the third Wednesday — just around the

time when households hold money and food are often in short supply.

Anyone can participate in the program, no matter their income, and you don't have to be a member of the co-op.

But the program — which Brookes stresses is not intended to draw business away from grocers — is primarily aimed at low-income families.

"People who are struggling to make ends meet don't always have money left over for fresh fruit and vegetables. Things like rent or gas for the car tend to come first," Brookes said.

According to the 1990 Ontario Health Survey, only 42 per cent of people in Waterloo Region eat the five to 10 daily servings of vegetables and fruit recommended by Canada's Food Guide.

And the less money Waterloo Region residents make, the fewer fruits and vegetables they eat.

### Importance of diet

The health survey showed that 38 per cent of people earning \$20,000 or less ate the recommended servings, compared with 45 per cent of those earning \$50,000 or more.

Given the importance of a diet rich in fruits and vegetables in preventing heart disease and other health

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Rob Brookes  
Cambridge Community  
Food Co-op



Rob Brookes, program co-ordinator for the Cambridge Community Food Co-op, shows some of the fresh fruit and vegetables distributed through the co-op's Good Food Box program.

PHILIP WALKER, RECORD ST

problems, those findings are worrisome, says Susan Close, manager of the Waterloo regional health unit's nutrition promotion program.

### Links to cancer

In his annual report last month, Ontario's chief medical officer of health, Dr. Richard Schabas, noted that diet is responsible for about 20 per cent (4,000 cases) of fatal cancers in Ontario each year.

In particular, a high-fat diet has been linked to breast, bowel and prostate cancer, Close says.

The health unit is promoting the Good Food Box program because "not only does it increase people's ac-

cess to fresh fruit and vegetables, it helps increase awareness about the need to eat more of these items," she said.

So far, the response "has been very positive," Brookes noted.

At the moment, the co-op is ordering about 80 boxes a month and is serving only the Cambridge area.

### Future plans

But the co-op plans to extend the program to Kitchener-Waterloo neighborhood associations and community groups by January or early February. And eventually, Brookes hopes the boxes will be available throughout the region.

FoodShare, which initiated the Good Food Box program in Toronto last February, buys food for the boxes from the Ontario Food Terminal wholesale market on the outskirts of Toronto.

In the future, however, Brookes envisions buying fruits and vegetables directly from local producers.

"Right now we don't have enough volume (in sales), but later on there's no reason why we couldn't do it all ourselves."

Individuals or agencies interested in participating in the Good Food Box program, should call Rob Brookes at the Cambridge Community Food Co-op at 658-5119.