

from the “Introduction” in *Shop Talk*:

A cook is only as good as her ingredients. The ingredients available to cooks in and around Calgary have never been so rewarding. We can buy produce raised in the rural black-soil fields and gardens around Olds; yoghurt and cheeses from the windy heights of Fort Macleod; hardy greens from the hillsides of Black Diamond; lamb, bison and beef from the plains. We can find goods that are at ease in a Moroccan *souk*—glittering pomegranates, heaps of couscous, Medjool dates — or ingredients as easily found in a French *marché*-- *LePuy* lentils, pork bellies, wheels of Cantal, smudges of *chèvre*. There are South Asian sweet shops, with gleaming rows of pistachio and almond and walnut delicacies drenched in rose water syrup. We spread cultured Alberta butter on *levain boules* and flaky croissants, and buy *molé* sauce or Panang curry paste. And we encounter quintessentially prairie flavours, like maple barley cookies or cranberry mustard. There is no one Alberta cuisine any more than there is a defining Canadian cuisine, but there are some damn fine eats, and they have taken root, slowly but persistently, in the land where the chinook wind blows across the hillside.

But you have to know where to look.

To aid cooks and eaters, this book contains more than 350 businesses producing or retailing foods in Calgary, the Bow Valley and beyond.

The idea of a good grocery directory sprang from my food background: my restaurant, Foodsmith, presented regional cuisine to Calgarians in 1992-94. Finding the good stuff meant hooking up with local growers, driving across town or across the countryside for specialized ingredients. Since, I have put my efforts onto the page instead of the plate, telling cooks and readers where to find what they need to cook fine fare.

Here they are, the good guys and the hardworking women, catalogued by their efforts and areas of expertise: the butchers, the bakers, the beekeepers and green grocers, the specialized ethnic retailers, beverages and kitchenware. Not to be missed are the growers who offer farmgate sales, the farmers markets where local produce gleams on shelves, caterers and a list of relevant food organizations and festivals.

Most of us are immigrants. The influx of new arrivals in Calgary and its outlying districts has had a direct impact on the food culture of the city, as it has impacted every other facet of life. Immigrant parents who are keen to preserve their cultural heritage while helping their children assimilate into their new home are relieved to find food that their kids will recognize. It eases the pangs of homesickness while smoothing the way to integration.