

# THE CHICKEN FARMER

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## EFFORTS CONTINUE TO RESUME WTO NEGOTIATIONS

**Despite best efforts from world leaders and from WTO Director General Pascal Lamy, progress in the Doha Round has remained modest so far this year.**

The U.S. Administration's involvement in negotiations has remained only declaratory, as did the European Union's. Key developing countries, like Brazil, India and China, are still hesitant as well: they oscillate between being more aggressive on agriculture and more defensive on industrial goods and services, so their signals are mixed. Australia and New Zealand are the only ones pushing for a quick resumption and completion of the Round, but their ability to move the machine forward is limited.

On the ground the situation seems to be stuck. Both at the recent G-8 summit and at the APEC summit, leaders stated that WTO negotiations should resume promptly and should conclude by the end of 2010. So far, though, this has not translated into concrete steps at the negotiating table in Geneva. The situation was such that the Australian envoy commented that an "embarrassing gap between political support and progress in Geneva" persists. It has been months since Pascal Lamy pressured for serious engagement in talks and for completion of modalities. "The best way to keep trade open is to keep opening trade, hence the need to conclude the Doha Round as soon as possible" is his most recent slogan, but like others in the past, it seems to fall on deaf ears.

What is needed at this stage is a clear action plan that would identify all remaining contentious issues and would spell out precise steps to address them. And, of course, the will to follow such a plan. The month of September is packed with opportunities to finally set things on the right track. On September 3-4, trade ministers from the G-20 group is most advanced nations in the world will meet in Delhi (India) to have a serious look at the needed action plan. Later in the month, on September 24-25, the G-20 summit will take place in Pittsburgh (U.S.) when leaders of the same countries would probably be asked to endorse a proposed plan and provide the necessary political engagement.

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FOR A WEEKLY UPDATE  
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**WWW.CHICKEN.CA**  
AND CLICK ON  
**GENEVA WATCH.**



## EFFORTS CONTINUE TO RESUME WTO NEGOTIATIONS (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

In parallel, things will move in Geneva as well. In agriculture, the week of September 7 is dedicated to technical consultations on outstanding issues, while during the week of September 21, a technical workshop on scheduling (the process of converting modalities into a legally binding document of concessions) will take place. Lamy felt that even if modalities are nowhere near completion, such technical work is useful to prepare countries in advance of what they will have to do once an agreement is reached. He hopes in this way to speed up the process that will normally take place during the post-modalities period.

In addition, on September 28-30, the WTO will host another Public Forum where the private sector, academics and NGOs are invited to provide their views on where the Doha Round should go. Finally, a WTO Ministerial Meeting is scheduled for November 30 – December 2, and remains, so far, a “housekeeping” ministerial whose purpose is not to deal with Doha issues, but with WTO administrative matters.

One way or an other, the month of September will be very indicative of the future of Doha talks. The question is when and how they will resume and what timeframe for completion can we expect?

**What** is needed at this stage is a clear action plan that would identify all remaining contentious issues and would spell out precise steps to address them. And, of course, the will to follow such a plan.

## CFC ANNOUNCES NEW GUEST BLOGGER

**AUTHOR AND FOOD NETWORK PERSONALITY, THERESA ALBERT, WILL BE CONTRIBUTING REGULARLY TO THE CHICKEN FEEDS BLOG, AND WILL ALSO BE STARRING IN OUR VIDEO PODCAST SERIES, DEBUTING IN EARLY AUGUST.**



As guest blogger and podcast host, Theresa gives CFC some star power to help get messages out on the role of chicken in a healthy lifestyle and how to eat right, every night.

Theresa's ability to communicate comes from a passion for simple and economically-sound answers to today's food and nutritional challenges. She educates people on the easy ways to make small food changes which lead to great, healthy results.

Theresa's best selling cookbook *Cook Once a Week, Eat Well Every Day*, provides guidance on how to get delicious and nutrient rich meals on the table, in real time, saving real dollars. She is currently working on another cookbook.

Recognized for both her knowledge and engaging ability to communicate to individuals and audiences, Theresa began hosting *Food Network Canada's* popular show *Just One Bite*: a daily television show where she teaches parents to feed their kids better while not giving up on their own plate.

Theresa believes that it is very important for families to learn how to cook: “Parents today are in a hurry and the family meal has become a chore instead of a labour of love. I hope we can find the love!”

She feels that audiences benefit from her show and knowledge because she deals with real families, in real mealtime situations, and will shed some insight on common mealtime dilemmas regarding children and what they eat. “Kids are getting the short end of the stick when they eat out of a box day after day, both socially and nutritionally. If I can share what I know to help one more kid love food and eat well, I will have done my job.”

The guidance Theresa provides is realistic, concrete and geared toward helping those who love to eat and want to learn how to have it all. Her sensible and honest approach to cooking and all things food, resonates with those who struggle to get health and wellness back into their busy daily routines.

CFC is pleased to welcome Theresa to the *Chicken Feeds* family. Check out the blog at [www.chickenfeeds.ca](http://www.chickenfeeds.ca)!

## 2009 SUMMER MEETING REPORT

CFC's summer meeting serves as our yearly opportunity to meet somewhere other than in Ottawa. By holding the meeting in a different province each year, CFC gets to experience the diversity and beauty of Canada and each province gets to play host.

The 2009 summer meeting was held in Saskatoon, and was hosted by the Chicken Farmers of Saskatchewan.

Saskatoon, nicknamed "Paris of the Prairies", which rests on the South Saskatchewan River and is home to some 300 acres of riverbank parklands, provided a picturesque background for CFC's summer meeting. Attendees had the opportunity to golf, visit historic sites and galleries as well as get a taste of the "Wild West" with memorable visits to Changers Country Wild West Resort and the Western Development Museum.

### CFC BIDS FAREWELL

Every year, CFC welcomes new Directors to the Board table. Unfortunately, this means saying goodbye to other Directors retiring from their positions. This year, CFC bade farewell to retiring Directors Todd Grierson, Matthew Harvie and Diane Pastoor, thanking them for their tireless contributions, helpful insights and hard work on various issues and CFC policy development.

### CFC BOARD MEETING

The lengthy meetings provided ample opportunity for CFC Directors to discuss several important matters, especially at this fiscal and strategic mid-point in CFC's year, when it is important to review activities and determine if any previously stated directions must be modified.

Meeting highlights included:

- > An update on the Avian Biosecurity Advisory Council's guidelines and an agreement that comments will be submitted by August 31.
- > Ron Hamilton, an Alberta producer, was nominated as representative to the Canadian General Standards Board (CGSB) Organic Standards Poultry Subcommittee.
- > CFC Directors approved the budget, themes and audiences for the 2010 Provincial Promotions Program as well as a motion to look into options for 2011 and beyond.
- > Directors approved a Corporate Social Responsibility pilot project.
- > Directors had an extensive discussion on six options for differential growth. They narrowed down the options and agreed to meet again in September to discuss further.
- > Directors reiterated CFC's conditional support for the National Farmed Animal Health and Welfare Strategy.

Chicken Farmers of Canada would like to take this opportunity to thank the Chicken Farmers of Saskatchewan for organizing and hosting a very successful event.



Photo credit: Tourism Saskatoon – The Marketing Den, F11 Photography



## NEWS FROM THE HILL



### ANNUAL AGRICULTURE MINISTERS' MEETING

A Federal/Provincial/Territorial (FPT) Agriculture Ministers' Meeting was held from July 8–10 in Niagara-on-the-Lake. CFC Chair, David Fuller, Martin Dufresne, CFC's Vice-chair, and CFC staff attended the FPT as part of a larger supply management contingent that included representatives from the national dairy, poultry and egg industries, as well as representation from provincial dairy, poultry and egg marketing boards.

### CANADIAN FEDERATION OF AGRICULTURE (CFA) ROUNDTABLE

David Fuller was among industry representatives who participated in CFA's Tripartite Roundtable. The Honourable Gerry Ritz, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, and the Honourable Jean-Pierre Blackburn, Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Agriculture), along with many provincial agriculture ministers were also in attendance. The discussion provided a valuable exchange among Ministers and industry representatives from all regions of Canada in three key areas: agriculture as a competitive and innovative sector, a sector that responds to society's objectives, and a sector proactive at managing risks.

The current crisis in the red meat sector was also highlighted as industry leaders pressed ministers to support the Canadian Pork Council's strategic plan in finding ways to maintain the viability of the hog industry. Other topics discussed included opening up a dialogue on co-operative taxation, a national agriculture and food traceability system, Product of Canada guidelines, and ongoing work on programs and policies that improve the socio-economic situation of the agri-food sector.

### MINISTERS' MEETING

Federal, provincial and territorial agriculture ministers discussed many agricultural issues, as well as the importance of working together to respond to and support the agricultural sector. Key discussions were held around developments in agricultural policy, global economic challenges, as well as domestic issues such as climate and its impact on farmers. Ministers also discussed the situation of the pork industry, *Growing Forward* programs, and strengthening the Canadian food safety system.

Ministers committed to move forward on a comprehensive national traceability system for livestock and poultry, expressed support for the Market Access Secretariat, and addressed bilateral and multilateral trade matters, including trade restrictions related to H1N1, U.S. country-of-origin labelling

(COOL), and South Korea's treatment of Canadian beef exports.

Ministers also reiterated support for advancing Canada's trade interests at the World Trade Organization (WTO) and in bilateral free trade agreement negotiations, notably with the European Union, and discussed the business risk management (BRM) strategic review, livestock insurance, and the roll out of the Agricultural Flexibility Fund.

The next FPT meeting will be held in July 2010 in Saskatoon.

### LISTERIOSIS INVESTIGATIVE REVIEW

Sheila Weatherill, the independent investigator into the Listeriosis outbreak in 2008, which claimed the lives of 22 Canadians, submitted her report on July 20, 2009 to the Minister of Agriculture. Ultimately, Ms. Weatherill says that: "no single entity bears the full responsibility of the crisis. Instead, the crisis was a complex series of events complicated by oversight responsibility for the food system that was spread over multiple jurisdictions with a complex series of relationships."

The report details 57 recommendations on food safety with the first being that senior management in both the private and public domains turn their attention to the issue of food safety. Ms. Weatherill conducted over 100 interviews and received over 5 million pages of information in her fact finding mission.

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**No single entity bears the full responsibility of the crisis. Instead, the crisis was a complex series of events complicated by oversight responsibility for the food system that was spread over multiple jurisdictions with a complex series of relationships. - Sheila Weatherill**

## AGRI-FLEXIBILITY

On July 21, 2009, Agriculture Canada held a conference call to detail their new program, Agri-Flexibility.

Agri-Flexibility is a five-year (2009-2014) \$500 million agricultural fund designed to facilitate the implementation of



new initiatives both federally and in partnership with provinces, territories and industry. The program is to improve the sector's competitiveness and adaptation to pressures by supporting non-business risk management projects. It will support initiatives in three key areas:

- > Investments to help reduce production costs or improve environmental sustainability for the sector
- > Investments in value-chain innovation or sectoral adaptation
- > Investments to address emerging opportunities and challenges for the sector

The program will address new initiatives, as well as any gaps in *Growing Forward* that are not deemed to be income support that fall within the parameters of the program.

Although the site is not yet finalized, proposal forms and guides will be accessible shortly at: [www.agr.gc.ca/agriflexibility](http://www.agr.gc.ca/agriflexibility).

## POULTRY RESEARCH UPDATE

**The Canadian Poultry Research Council (CPRC) was established in 2001 by the five national poultry organizations in Canada. CPRC's mandate is to create and implement programs for poultry research and development that address specific industry needs.**

In 2009, CPRC is focusing on research in the areas of Poultry Welfare & Behaviour and Food Safety & Quality: impact of poultry health and disease. CPRC received 32 Letters of Intent (LOI) this year which have since been reviewed by CPRC's Scientific Advisory Committee. In July, the CPRC Board of Directors will be considering which projects to approve for funding. Since 2001, twenty-five research projects have been funded by CPRC with another five under review for matching funding. Research supported by CPRC is designed to address issues in the areas of avian gut microbiology, environmental issues, food safety & poultry health and poultry welfare & behaviour.

Ten research projects funded by CPRC have been completed. Outlined below is a summary of one of those research projects. Additional project summaries are available on the CPRC website ([www.cp-rc.ca](http://www.cp-rc.ca)), in *Canadian Poultry Magazine* and in *The Chicken Farmer*.

### ACTIVITY-SPECIFIC WORKPLACE EXPOSURES OF POULTRY BARN WORKERS

Principal investigator: A. (Sentil) Senthilselvan, University of Alberta

Co-investigators: I. Wenger, N. Cherry, J. Feddes, J. Beach, University of Alberta

Start date: February 2006

Final report received: July 2008

Total project funding: \$33,726 (CPRC \$11,242; NSERC/AAFC \$22,484)

#### Background:

Air quality inside poultry barns can be affected by a number of factors, including ventilation rate, bird age and density, bird activity, type of feed, type of litter, and the type of poultry operation. Farm workers are exposed to different airborne contaminants, depending on the type of poultry operation and on the specific activity they conduct, although there is little firm data available to verify this. The purpose of this study was to log the amount of time poultry workers spend on various activities on-farm and to measure their exposure to environmental contaminants (dust, ammonia, relative humidity, carbon dioxide). Exposures were compared between layer and broiler operations throughout their production cycles and at different times of the year.

#### Current research:

Thirty-three poultry workers from 17 layer operations and 16 broiler operations completed questionnaires designed to determine the amount of time they spent on various farm activities. Workers were also fitted with Personal Environmental Sampling Backpacks to measure contaminant (dust, ammonia, relative humidity, carbon dioxide) exposure during these activities. Farms were visited in both summer and winter and at various stages of the flocks' production cycles. Data collected from the backpacks were linked to activity diaries to estimate total exposure for the workers.

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## SASKATCHEWAN RESEARCHER WINS EXTENSION AWARD

Each year, Chicken Farmers of Canada supports the Canadian Society of Animal Science by sponsoring the Canadian Animal Industries Award in Extension and Public Service.

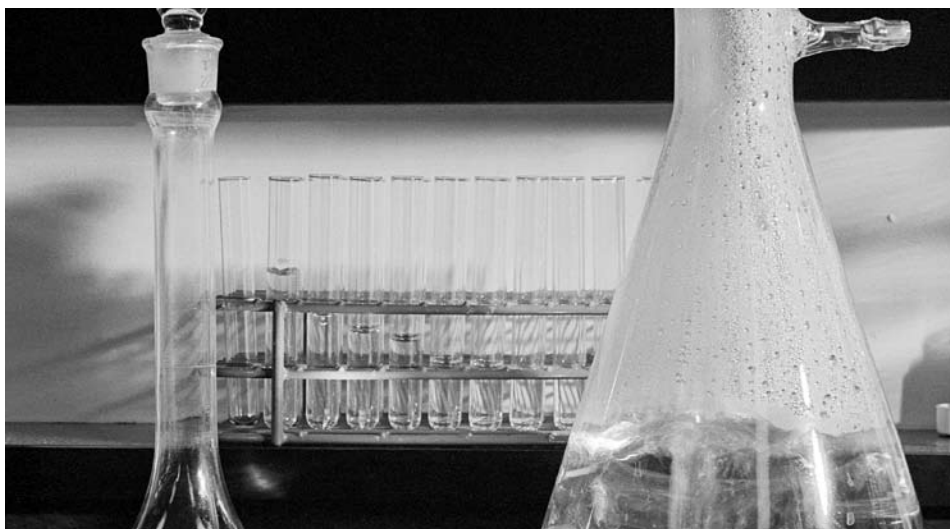
This award is presented annually to an individual with outstanding service to the animal industries of Canada in technology transfer, leadership and education in animal production. This award is a way of encouraging and promoting excellence in the research field of animal science in Canada.

In 2009, the award was co-sponsored by the Canadian Pork Council and Chicken Farmers of Canada.

This year's recipient is Dr. Phil Thacker, a swine nutrition researcher from the University of Saskatchewan. Dr. Thacker is professor of several courses including Basic Nutrition and Swine Production. He received the Professor of the Year Award in both 1996 and 2001 for his teaching excellence. In addition, he has authored over 165 refereed publications including 6 scientific reviews, 22 book chapters and 65 magazine articles. He also co-authored the *Swine Nutrition Guide* and edited a book titled *Non-traditional Feed Sources for Use in Swine Production*.

Dr. Thacker was a member of the 1998 NRC Subcommittee to establish the nutrient requirements of swine and has given more than 80 talks to swine producers, academia and feed industry personnel in 8 provinces and 14 countries.

The Canadian Society of Animal Science presented the Canadian Animal Industries Award in Extension and Public Service to Dr. Thacker in recognition of his leadership and his continued dedication to high-quality extension work.



### POULTRY RESEARCH UPDATE (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5)

Broiler barn workers were found to spend more time conducting barn or bird health checks compared to any of the other workplace activities, including cleaning, feeding and watering, maintenance and repair or work preparation.

Layer barn workers, on the other hand, were found to spend more of their time conducting egg handling activities, compared to feeding and watering, maintenance and repair or work preparation activities.

Dust ( $<10\mu\text{m}$ ) levels, relative humidity (RH) and carbon dioxide were found to be higher in broiler barns than in layer barns. In broiler barns, no seasonal difference was found in dust or RH, but in layer barns dust was found to be higher in the winter than the summer and RH was found to be higher in the summer than in the winter. Carbon dioxide, on the other hand, was found to be higher in the winter than in the summer for both types of operations. As the broilers aged, dust levels increased, but there were no changes in ammonia, CO<sub>2</sub> or RH. There were no layer flock age effects on any of the contaminants measured.

No seasonal differences in temperature were found in the layer barns. However, broiler barns were found to be warmer in summer than in the winter.

The activity specific ammonia exposure of both broiler and layer operation poultry workers was lower than expected, particularly for broiler barn workers and in fact did not exceed the 25 ppm Time Weighted Average Threshold Limit Value (TWA TLV). The Threshold Limit Value of a chemical substance is a level to which it is believed a worker can be exposed day after day for a working lifetime without adverse health effects. Similar to ammonia, measured CO<sub>2</sub> levels did not exceed the 5,000 ppm TWA TLV.

The authors did point out, however, that the sampling equipment used has a time lag and may have underestimated some contaminant levels since the workers were in the barns for relatively short periods of time.

### Conclusions:

The workplace activities of poultry barn workers did vary by poultry barn type, with layer barn workers spending the most time on egg handling-related activities and broiler barn workers spending the most time on barn/bird health checking activities. Broiler barn workers had the highest overall airborne dust exposures during the work shift during both the winter and summer seasons. None of the other airborne contaminants exceeded the TWA-TLVs exposure limits. In the absence of specific control mechanisms for airborne dust, it is advisable that workers in broiler barns wear N95 or comparable respirators during their short daily work shifts to protect themselves from this particular airborne contaminant.



## AVIAN INFLUENZA SURVEILLANCE

Following up on the on-farm avian influenza (AI) surveillance program conducted in 2008, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) will be continuing its surveillance program, starting in August 2009.

By expanding its surveillance program, Canada is meeting its obligations as set out by the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) and will thus be on par with other countries in the world.

The intent of surveillance is to detect the presence of low pathogenic H5 or H7 AI. In past surveys, the prevalence of low pathogenic H5 and H7 AI has proven to be very low in Canadian poultry flocks.

In 2008, CFIA sampled a total of 601 chicken and turkey farms, for a total of 6,319 samples. All of these samples tested negative for antibodies against H5 and H7 AI.

In a follow-up survey to the recent case of AI in British Columbia, CFIA surveyed 218 farms. Again, all of these farms tested negative for antibodies against H5 and H7 avian influenza. Chickens (5), turkeys (28), layers and hatching egg flocks (168), ducks (5) and specialty flocks including quails and game birds (12) were all tested as part of the B.C. follow-up surveillance.

As was the case in 2008, only chickens with a target weight of over 3.7 kg will be included in the survey. Lower weight chickens are not being included because testing can only occur after 28 days, and the turn-around time on sample analysis prior to processing for broilers is not feasible. In addition, the OIE is more interested in longer lived birds as they are more important from an epidemiological perspective in determining if H5 or H7 AI is circulating in Canadian flocks.

If selected for the survey, farmers will be notified that their flocks require testing. Farmers will have the option, at no cost to them, of using their private veterinarian to take blood samples or to use CFIA veterinarians.

Prior to shipping birds, farmers will be provided with a survey report to send to the processing plant to identify that the flock has tested negative.

For its part, CFIA has indicated that part of the survey policy will allow for a flock to go to processing if the results from the test samples are not ready prior to processing – provided that CFIA is responsible for the delay.

With any surveillance, there is the possibility of finding positive flocks. In the case that CFIA does detect an H5 or H7 virus, CFIA will order the flock and any flocks on the same premise to be depopulated. Any flock ordered destroyed by CFIA will be compensated as per the *Health of Animals Act*.

The infected premise will be quarantined and CFIA will conduct an investigation and perform a trace-out to determine if the virus has spread to other locations. For example, premises under common management, even if they are outside of the 3 km region, will be tested to ensure they are H5 or H7 AI negative.

For any farm that has tested positive, there will be a minimum 21-day required downtime after the cleaning and disinfecting is completed and approved by CFIA.

While there are reactionary measures when a low pathogenic NAI virus is detected, these measures are significantly less devastating on the industry and the surrounding farms (e.g. limited movement restrictions and testing regimes, etc.) than a highly pathogenic reaction. Finding low pathogenic H5 or H7 AI is important, as these strains may be able to mutate to highly pathogenic forms. There have been numerous reports worldwide whereby low-pathogenic H5 or H7 AI has mutated to the highly pathogenic form (e.g. Italy 1999, B.C. 2004).

## NEW CANADA ORGANIC LOGO RELEASED



The federal government has released the final version of the “Biologique Canada Organic” logo for use on certified organic food sold in Canada.

“This organic logo allows consumers to make informed, confident choices,” Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz said in a release June 24, 2009. “At the same time, the new regulations will allow Canadian organic farmers to have their products recognized in this emerging market.”

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#### NEW ORGANIC LOGO RELEASED

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Domestic and imported products that meet the production requirements of the government's new Organic Products Regulations (OPR) and contain at least 95 per cent organic content may be labelled as "organic" and feature the Biologique Canada Organic logo.

As of June 30, 2009, any product with an organic claim must comply with the requirements of the *Organic Products Regulations*.

- > Only products with organic content that is greater than or equal to 95% may be labelled as organic or bear the organic logo.
- > Multi-ingredient products with 70-95% organic content may have the declaration: "contains x% organic ingredients." These products may not use the organic logo and/or the claim "Organic".
- > Multi-ingredient products with less than 70% organic content may only contain organic claims in the product's ingredient list. These products may not use the organic logo.

The OPR, which came into force on Tuesday, June 30, lay out the standards for the certification of products as organic by accredited certification bodies. Regardless of origin, all products seeking organic certification must meet Canada's standards, the government said.

To that end, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and U.S. Department of Agriculture recently inked an "equivalency" agreement to allow Canadian and U.S. products to be certified as organic in either country.

About 2% of Canada's licensed chicken farmers raise organic chickens (2007 numbers).

A working group is being established to review the current organic standards for poultry and swine to determine if changes are required. Discussions will continue over the coming months.

## SMILE, SEVENTEEN TIMES IS A CHARM!

Chicken Farmers of Canada (CFC) celebrated its 17<sup>th</sup> Canada Day as a proud National Sponsor.

CFC views its sponsorship of Canada Day as a way of celebrating the country that allows us to be such a prominent chapter in Canada's agriculture success story. It's also a way of thanking the entire National Capital Region for giving the CFC team such a wonderful place to work.

Located right behind the Château Laurier, the *Chicken Corner* was steadily busy all day long as we served over 8,000 chicken sandwiches to visitors in Major's Hill Park. Each year, *The Great Canadian Chicken BBQ* is highlighted by a delicious grilled chicken sandwich.

This year's sandwich, a chef's creation, was called the *Sweet Chili Maple Grilled Chicken Sandwich* and was really sweet. Actually, more like sweet with heat because this year's recipe had a little zing to get the fireworks started early! The delicious sandwich featured chili sauce, maple syrup, ground ginger and orange juice.

In addition to the delicious food, the *Chicken Corner* featured three cooking demonstrations that delighted and inspired cooking enthusiasts of all ages. Executive Chef Fouad El-Jaydyle of the Centurion Conference and Event Center showed off his culinary expertise with savoury chicken dishes made on the grill.

As in the past, 50 cents from the sale of each chicken item was donated to the Ottawa Food Bank, which distributes over twelve tons of food from their warehouse each and every working day. Last month, 40,000 people received emergency food assistance through the various agencies supported by the food bank with nearly 40% of people needing help being children. For every \$1 donated to the food bank, \$5 worth of food is generated for the community.

We are proud to be affiliated with such a distinguished and necessary organization.

Back to the Sandwich...

### SWEET CHILI MAPLE GRILLED CHICKEN SANDWICH

4 (4 oz) boneless, skinless chicken breasts  
leaf lettuce  
sliced tomato  
sliced cheese  
4 kaiser rolls (split)  
salt and pepper to taste  
2 Tbsp mayonnaise

#### CHILI MAPLE SAUCE:

3 Tbsp sweet chili sauce  
2 Tbsp maple syrup  
½ cup mayonnaise  
¼ tsp ground ginger

#### MARINADE:

orange juice, brown sugar and olive oil

#### Preparation:

1. Marinate chicken breasts for 3 hours.
2. Grill chicken breast on medium heat for 5 minutes each side until cooked through.
3. Place chicken breast, 1 slice of tomato, 1 slice of cheese, dollop of mayonnaise and leaf lettuce on a kaiser.
4. Top with chili maple sauce.
5. Salt and pepper to taste.



## U.S. CONSUMERS WANT MORE SAY IN FOOD PRODUCTION

The National Chicken Council's annual Marketing Seminar took place recently in Carlsbad, California near San Diego. There were many interesting points to take home from the seminar. Even though the Canadian market is slightly different, more often than not, trends in the U.S. trickle up to Canada.



The main topics covered at the conference were the environment and how consumers are focusing on the environment and the trend of eating local. Chicken in the U.S. has a much smaller carbon footprint than beef at \$1.27 per lb compared with \$10.50 per lb for beef. Those numbers might not be exactly the same in Canada but they likely would be very similar.

There is an anticipated decline in the U.S. market of approximately 3%. This is mainly due to the economic situation. The U.S. is experiencing the largest decrease of household wealth since the depression and this is starting to affect even non-discretionary spending such as groceries. Consumers are trying to save money and to do so they are replacing chicken with non-meat meals, such as pasta.

The decrease is also attributed to the demise of low carb diets such as Atkins, which contributed to a significant increase in U.S. chicken consumption in 2004/2005. Comparatively, drops in consumption for other proteins such as

beef and pork have been much more significant and have probably been a stabilizing factor in chicken's decline.

Pork experienced a 15% decline in U.S. consumption at the peak of the media frenzy over the so-called "swine flu" and still hasn't recovered its market. Beef also experienced a 4% decline in per capita consumption in 2008, mainly due to the bad news stories focusing on the link between higher beef consumption and cancer rates.

Another factor that has likely helped chicken is that there have been considerably fewer recalls of chicken products in the U.S. compared to those of beef products. The few chicken recalls have each been much smaller in scale and therefore had a much smaller public and media profile.

The upward swing in feed costs due, in large part, to a significant increase in the demand for ethanol, has caused American processors to offset their losses by decreasing production and increasing prices. Although some measurable increase in costs is being passed on to the consumer at the retail level, it was mentioned during the marketing seminar that chicken is, compared to beef and pork, on sale regularly so many consumers simply wait for the sales and then stock up.

Ketchum, a public relations and marketing agency which specializes in corporate and product positioning, conducted a global food survey in the U.S. and several other countries around the world and presented some of the following results during the conference:

> Today's consumer is more cynical than ever and has easy access to

information, be it true or false.

- > The more they know the more they want to know.
- > Twenty six percent of Americans see food as enjoyment, and unlike many other countries, see food as a culinary adventure.
- > They want to know where the food is from and what is in it.
- > Ideally they think food should be simple and with as few ingredients as possible.
- > Taste, price and quality are the top considerations when shopping.

Consumers want to be involved in the products they are buying:

- > 67% of consumers want a say in the ingredients that go into a product.
- > 58% want to say who should be responsible for food safety and quality.
- > 54% want a say in where the ingredients come from.
- > 51% want a say in how the animals used for food are treated.
- > 51% want a say in what the nutritional and caloric content is.

The consumer market is changing and due to technology and the amount of information available to them, it is changing at a faster pace than it ever has in the past. The chicken industry's challenge, in the U.S. and here in Canada, is to keep up and consistently provide consumers with the product they want at an affordable price.

## IT'S A DATE – BEST BEFORE OR EXPIRY?

With stories in the news about Listeria and other causes of foodborne illness, consumers are beginning to pay more attention than ever before to food safety. Checking the labels on foods you are buying at the grocery store is one way of ensuring that you are buying the best or freshest items possible.

Many foods are dated and labelled 'best before', 'packaged on', 'sell by', and even 'best if used before'. Here's a little background on the differences, but first, note that there is a difference between dates indicating when the food is safe to eat and dates indicating when the food is of optimum quality.

In Canada, manufacturers and retailers must determine the 'durable life' of the foods they are producing. Durable life of a food is defined by the Canadian Food and Drug Regulations as the amount of time, starting on the day a food is packaged, that the unopened food will retain "its normal wholesomeness, palatability and nutritional value, when stored under appropriate conditions". The Regulations go on to stipulate that any pre-packaged food with a durable life of 90 days or less must have a durable life date stamped onto the packaging, known on food labels as the 'best before' date.

For foods that are susceptible to spoilage, generally most dairy and meat products, the 'best before' dates should be followed closely. These foods need to be used before the date on their package expires, and as a general rule should not be consumed if this 'best before' date is past.

The operative word in the definition of durable life is 'unopened'. After the

seal on any food package is broken, it is susceptible to micro-organisms that can cause spoilage. For example, if a carton of cream has been opened, it may in fact begin to spoil well before the 'best before' date provided. Remember that once a product is opened, it should be used quickly.

Closely related are the 'packaged on' dates required for foods packaged in the retail store. This label must also include a date indicating the durable life of the food, unless this appears on a poster next to the food. Most fresh meat and store-wrapped deli meat and cheese carry 'packaged on' dates whereas fresh fruits and vegetables are exempt from this labeling.

For foods with longer shelf lives such as breads, baked goods and eggs, the 'best before' dates are more an indication of their quality than of food safety.

If the durable life of a food is greater than 90 days, manufacturers are not required to put 'best before' dates on their products, although many do so. Dates stamped on these products are determined by the manufacturer to indicate when the product is the most flavourful and nutritious. Such foods can usually be safely consumed after their 'best before' dates, although they may have lost some of their original flavour and nutritional value.

Drugs and natural health products carry yet a different kind of date, called an 'expiry date', which indicates the shelf life and stability, and therefore effectiveness, of the product. However, 'expiry date' is not a term used for food in Canada. Even so, it has become common to think that the 'best before', 'sell by' and 'best if used by' dates stamped on food packages are, in fact, expiration dates rather than indicators of safety or quality. Infant formula, which does carry an expiration date, is the only exception to this regulation.

Before consuming any perishable product, consumers are advised to carefully check the 'best before' date and to follow the rule: "When in doubt, throw it out."

*Adapted from a release by Ellie Topp, an Ottawa-based Professional Home Economist and a certified culinary professional. She is co-author of several cookbooks, including The Complete Book of Small-Batch Preserving and Savoury Wisdom: Delicious, Healthy Recipes for Two.*

The Ontario Home Economics Association, a self-regulated body of Professional Home Economists, promotes high professional standards among its members in order to assist families and individuals to achieve and maintain a desirable quality of life. You can find them online at: [www.ohea.on.ca](http://www.ohea.on.ca).



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