



Corporate Partner of the Year Award Tourism Industry Association of Canada's Starwood Hotels and Resorts

The nomination and selection of the Organic Farm for The Corporate Partner of the Year Award is a tremendous honour. As many of you may know, we started out growing organically for our own family in the mid-eighties. When we had a little extra, we traded zucchinis and lettuce for cheese and bread at Mary Janes. Soon, we were approached by a group of students from MUN about how they could access vegetables. The group buying arrangement known as the Veggie Coop, which now has about 80 family members, was born out of this initiative. About ten years ago, Dave Thoms, who was then Sous Chef with the Cabot Room at the Fairmont, came to visit the farm. We spent the morning around the kitchen table with Dave, pouring over seed catalogues, studying what short season varieties we might be able to grow. We offered to try anything that might grow on the 'rock.' As the old saying goes, we've come a long way, baby, in that, about 1/3 of the things we grow on the farm are produced directly to respond to the interest and demand of local chefs. Our early greenhouse production is always meant for restaurants. Some chefs have given us seeds for unusual greens. If we are able to grow them in the greenhouse, when they become plentiful we offer them to all of our restaurant customers.

In accepting this reward, we want to acknowledge the immense creativity as well as the tenacity of our son, Louis, who has contributed toward these outcomes. It was he, who planted the first edible flowers in consultation with Dave Thoms and who expanded the idea of growing sprouts in soil. These are called shoots and are now one of the healthiest, tasty and popular products we offer. The now well known salad mix and micro-greens are also credited to Louis. One aspect of this development is that as of December 1st, 2008, Louis, created a spin-off company, called, "Bloomin' Shoots." to promote and handle these products. See our farm website for more information.

We continue to rely on the dialogue and interests of restaurant owners and chefs as an important source of inspiration for new varieties and new ideas. We also pass these experiences along to classes of young people, from the several cooking classes at the College of North Atlantic, who visit each year, often to experience herbs and vegetables they have never seen grow and often have never tasted. The same is true for school children. Last fall, over a period of four weeks, the farm hosted around 400 children from kindergarten to grade three, along with teachers and parents. We consider this to be one of the most important things we do because we know these will be the restaurant owners, environmental educators, agriculture specialists, farmers and consumers of tomorrow.

It is truly an honour to be acknowledged as a Corporate Partner of the Tourism industry Association of Canada's Starwood Hotels and Resorts. We welcome you to visit the Organic Farm, anytime you are in the area of Portugal Cove. For a more formal tour, please contact us in advance.

Mike and Melba Rabinowitz, Co-Owners