



The shop where every steak has an address

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At Rowe Farms' new outpost on Queen St. E., customers won't have to look far when they want to know the provenance of their meat. The countertop where you pay is a Plexiglas map of southwestern Ontario that lists the 12 names of the farmers who supply the store and pinpoints their locations.

The first of the spring lamb is expected at the store in May from David Sayles in Campbellton, while company founder John Rowe's grass-fed beef is a fall thing. The Leslieville Market, as it is called, opens tomorrow.

"We want to bring people closer to the food they eat," says Jamie Cooney, the new CEO whom Rowe and partners Investeco Capital hired from Loblaws last year. "We can tell you exactly where the cows come from, and a lot of times that is not the case (at other stores)."

Investeco, a private equity company that invests in green businesses such as Organic Meadow milk, bought controlling interest of Rowe Meat Farms in 2006, though you can find Rowe chatting with customers every Saturday at the St. Lawrence Market's north annex. Investeco has controlling interest and three seats on the board of directors but Rowe is still part owner.

And his principles still guide the company. That includes protocols that protect the welfare of the animals and even extend to the feed. No genetically modified plants, herbicides or pesticides, antibiotics or growth hormones are allowed.

The farmers

Rowe Farms has 12 local suppliers and hopes to add more as farmers meet Rowe's strict standards. You can find meat and eggs from these Ontario farmers at Rowe Farms Leslieville Market at 912 Queen St. E.

John Rowe, beef,
Guelph

Don Watson, beef,
Millgrove

Basil Gillyatt, chicken,
Waterdown

Soante Lind, eggs,
Blackstock

Roger Harley,
lamb/beef,
Peterborough

Geraldine Hefferman,
lamb, Peterborough

Heritage Cattle, beef,
Peterborough

David Sayles, lamb,
Campbellford

Ton Meadow Farms.

The 900-square-foot space on Queen St. E. near Logan Ave. employs chefs like Eyren Davis and Matt Bell who know how to butcher, so people can ask for ideas on how to cook the meat.

Staff make marinades and rubs for ready-to-cook products (teriyaki tenderloin roast is \$23.19 a pound; chipotle rub flank steak is \$11.99), while the freezer contains empanadas and quesadillas by Burlington company Sabores Latinos. A wall of condiments features Forbes Wild Foods as well as Kozlik's mustards and Garlic Box products.

There will be some local organic produce, too, beginning with asparagus this spring.

Customer Paula Virany was "thrilled" when she stumbled upon the store yesterday.

"I had never heard of them before." The East End resident had travelled across town to buy meat at the Healthy Butcher on Queen W., but she was happy to have a place to buy organic meat closer to home.

"It's not too much to ask for a product made with a little decency and respect for life," she says. "It's really basic. I expect that from my food source."

Cooney says the company plans to open more stores and they're looking closely at Roncesvalles Ave.

Top Headon Farms,
Collingwood

A&A Martin, beef,
Listowel

Moses Bauman, pork,
Listowel

Royce Family, turkey,
Listowel