

## **Buy Local on Route 49**

You can't buy local if you can't find the product. Two new outlets in the Central Peace feature local food and artisan items.

Last September Heather Porrill opened the Star Bright Farm store on the site of their farm direct operation. Located off Highway 49 just south of the Bay Tree Store or about 15 minutes east of Dawson Creek it's a great destination for families and is a one of a kind shopping experience. Star Bright Farm Store is open Monday and Tuesdays. Call (780) 353-3055 for directions and hours.

A Star Bright Farm store shopper, Amber Gordon of Cotillion, told us what brings her to a local outlet. "I'm talking to the person who made it or to someone who can speak for them," says Amber.

Heather sources her local products from over sixteen local artisans and producers as well as her own farm. An excursion to the store will net you a variety of unique items and gifts; everything from pottery spice measures to two sources of quite different honey products in unique packaging, fresh and frozen home-style baked goods and seasonal garden produce.

Two freezers stock a selection of llama meat and delicious ready to eat desserts such as pumpkin and pecan pie. We sampled llama jerky and went home with our arms full of great food. My family thought the pecan pie and butter tarts were out of this world while my friend was hooked on the pumpkin pie before she even left the store. Do-it-yourself bakers can purchase homemade ready-to-fill tart shells.

Star Bright Farm is for families and more. The compact 240 square foot Star Bright Farm store is clean, bright and inviting. There is a family corner with a llama hide for touching and a comfortable chair for a spouse or non-shopper.

Hot on Heather's heels, Ann Toderian opened Mama and Papa T's in Rycroft in early December. Ann and her husband Lawrence operate Western Spirit Liquor Store in the same facility just south of highway 49 in Rycroft. Open Tuesday through Saturday, Mama and Papa T's has easy access from the south entrance to town. For store information and hours call Ann at (780) 765-2288.

Like Star Bright Farm, Ann and Lawrence identified a consumer need and recognized untapped business potential. They knew Rycroft could support a liquor store. The extra space in the building they secured for that operation was the spark that triggered Mama and Papa T's. Ann produces a popular line of preserves including best sellers like hot pepper spreads and pickled garlic under the Mama T's Preserves label. Available seasonally at the Rycroft Farmers' Market, Ann knew a retail outlet would help get her preserves and other local food products on customers' tables year round. The idea seems to be a winner.

“Moving from idea to start up meant a lot of work and a tremendous learning curve in a short period of time but it’s paying off. People are finding us now,” says Ann. “There is a real demand for local products. People will support local if they know where to get it. Mama and Papa T’s just made it a bit easier.”

Mama and Papa T’s stocks an eclectic mix of local items sourced from over 10 producers, artisans and crafters from across the Peace. “We started with my own product line which includes 7 flavours of pickled garlic, 5 hot spreads, pickled carrots, a variety of relishes and a few jams and syrups. Then we went looking for other items to compliment ours and broaden the selection,” says Ann. “We’re still looking for new products, especially local foods.”

“Customers want local food,” says Ann. “We just started carrying meats from Heart Valley Processors and they’re selling well. Heather’s Buttery Bites go almost as fast as I stock them and I simply can’t do enough processing to keep all of my products on the shelves.”

Barn board furniture by Harold Howard, yard and garden ornaments, bird baths, and octagonal picnic tables are just some of the unique home and yard items you’ll find at Mama and Papa T’s. Pamper yourself with a body scrub or bath salts or one of Jean Bradshaw’s hand made quilts, fleece jackets or sweaters. Relax with Jean Bradshaw’s Portrait of the Peace CD or Jake Meyaard’s autobiographical book, From Wooden Shoes to Cowboy Boots. One of Annette Peacock’s beautiful burnt wood pictures, or a collector Barbie doll outfitted by Monique Jefferies of Eve’s Creations could be the special Mother’s Day gift you are looking for.

This Mother’s Day give mom a one of a kind experience and pick the road less traveled. Visit Highway 49 and experience local.

Proudly Peace Full is coordinated by Karen Goad, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development (780) 538-5629 (dial 310-0000 first for toll free access). This article was written by Karen Goad.

- 30 -

### **Upcoming Events**

#### **Rycroft Farmers’ Market**

Central Peace Agriplex (big blue building), north side of Highway 49

May 8, 2009, 11:00 am through 4:00 pm the market opens for the season. The market will be open each Friday from 11 to 4 between May 8 and December 4<sup>th</sup> 2009.

Come with a friend or bring your family and enjoy a delicious home style lunch on site. Experience local in Rycroft!