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*Building on a tasty
family tradition*



Canada

Building on a tasty family tradition

When a customer enters Compton's Farm Market and Berry Patch, they are treated to a feast for the senses.

The unmistakable smell of fresh strawberries, the colourful displays of fruit and vegetables and if your timing is right, the delightful aroma coming from the back room where the mouth-watering gourmet doughnuts are produced. Just to name a few tasty distractions.

Even with all those choices, Katharina Mueller, who also answers to Farmer Katie, admits it is often the back wall that first catches a visitor's eye. That is perfectly alright with her since the wall really tells the story about what this new/old business stands for.

The business itself is new, having just opened in June of 2022. However, as the pictures on the wall attest, its roots stretch back to 1957, when the Compton family set up a berry patch and vegetable stand at the same location on the All Weather Highway in Summerside. The family highlight reel even includes a baby shot of Matt Compton (aka Farmer Matt), Katie's business and life partner.

"It has always been Matt's dream to open a business like this," said Katie, who comes from a human resources background and is the operations manager of the location.

When the couple began planning the new store, it was important to not only honour the family legacy but to take it to the next level and create a year-round business. Now that goal is in sight thanks to help from the Product and Market Development Program, which is funded by the federal and provincial governments under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership.

It has allowed the couple to add not only refrigeration and storage space, but also equipment for fruit and vegetable preserving so they could develop their line of jams, jellies, pickles, and salsa, just to name a few. Everything is made on site using fresh Island product the couple either grows or sources from other farmers.

They have also added a kitchen that has been busy producing a line of doughnuts, cookies, and squares. All the preserves are both gluten free and nut free, the latter an easy decision because Farmer Katie suffers from a nut allergy.

Of course, they have remained true to their roots as a vegetable stand, offering a wide array of products. They are one of two strawberry growers in the province to be certified under the



CanadaGap program. The food safety program involves a third-party audit to ensure the company is implementing Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) in their operation. In addition to strawberries, the agricultural side of the operation (which operates as Hy-Croft Farm Inc.) is also certified for corn, beans, pumpkins and squash.

The store's opening coincided with strawberry season, meaning a busy time both filling orders at the store and operating the farm's U-Pick in Indian River.

The company now has the capacity to vacuum seal and store fruits and vegetables like strawberries for sale out of season, product that would previously be destined for the compost. Since opening in late June, Farmer Katie said there has been steady growth as the store proved to be a popular spot with Islanders and visitors alike.

"We are getting people driving from all over the Island to shop with us," explained Katie, who recalls with a chuckle being told by one customer she let her children who were in the back seat hold the doughnuts. They were unusually quiet during the trip and when they arrived home, the mother found nothing left but some powdered sugar in the container.

Katie is a firm believer in the power of social media and both her and Matt are often seen on the company's Facebook page highlighting products and specials.

"I really try to make the posts as fun and interesting as I can," Katie says.

Just a week after the market held its official opening in September, Post Tropical Storm Fiona struck the province. Thanks to a generator, the market was open limited hours and provided free soup to those in the dark. Katie explained "we have received phenomenal support from the community, and we wanted to do something to give back.

"With no refrigeration at our old location, we were really limited to a seasonal operation," she explained. "We are really thankful for the help we obtained through the program."

In 2022, the market was open until just before Christmas, as Katie and the staff were busy putting together Christmas baskets featuring an assortment of their products. She is also hoping to branch out into catering events in the future.

While the market will be closed during the winter months in 2023, she is hoping the dream of being a year-round business will come true in 2024.



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