Dining Out On Local: Pathways, Practices and Transformations of Food from Field to Restaurant

by

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The incorporation of consumption-oriented activities into rural space can be observed in the appearance of newly valued rural amenities and the increasing frequency and popularity of culinary tourism destination marketing. In exploring the relationships between local food and culinary tourism, this research sought to better understand the impact of culinary tourism on the production and consumption of local food in Prince Edward County, ON. Interviews revealed that opportunities presented by culinary tourism are a prime motivation for restaurants to engage in the local food system, and that local food producers are less tied to their restaurant linkages than to alternative marketing channels owing to high levels of product substitutability and the opportunity costs associated with direct exchange. Additionally, it was observed that culinary tourism both inherently and paradoxically contributes to expansion of local food systems beyond regional boundaries, giving rise to a discussion on the positioning of local food as an alternative or complementary component to the globalized food system.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Research Problem

Interest in the relationship between local food systems and culinary tourism fits within research surrounding a larger set of transformative processes that are unfolding in rural Canada today. The transition towards a so-called ‘multifunctional countryside’ can be broadly defined as a change in rural spaces from functioning primarily as spaces of production to performing a multitude of functions (Wilson 2007). Where in the past rural spaces were dominated by the extraction of commodities (e.g. forestry, agriculture, mining, etc…), today these spaces play host to a range of activities that are based more on consumption than production, and are reflected strongly in pursuits such as tourism and recreation and the development of non-commodity outputs including environmental benefits and landscape amenities. The transition towards a multifunctional countryside has been driven forward by several factors including declines in the agricultural and natural resource sectors, the increasing value placed on rural amenities by urban visitors and the lifestyle aspirations of rural newcomers. This transition can be observed to varying degrees on a global scale, with discourses emanating from Australia and the UK featuring prominently in the literature (see for example: Hall et al. 2004; Holmes 2006; Wilson 2007; Maye et al. 2009; Sims 2009; Sims 2010; Kneafsey 2010).

The multifunctional countryside is manifested in the host of assorted activities that now coexist with the production of traditional commodities. Spurred by the ‘re-imaging’ of rural spaces by planners, producers and consumers, rural amenities, services and products have emerged to attract consumers into these regions. This contrasts sharply to traditional commodity production, with high production costs and low profit margins driving a production ‘treadmill’ and ultimately leading to the oversupply trap (Potter and Lobley 2004; Holmes 2006; Wilson
2007). The multifunctional countryside is also seen as a response to new consumer demand for non-market goods from rural regions, including the valuing of farmland as cultural heritage, for biodiversity and other public goods related to the environment (Hall et al. 2004).

In a broad sense, this project investigates the processes associated with this change from a production to a consumption landscape, and focuses specifically on the change that is occurring in agricultural rural regions seeking to capitalize on inherent amenities and urban accessibility. It is in these regions that instances of agri- and culinary tourism are growing in frequency, variety and significance to regional economies, with proposed benefits pertaining to local food systems often guiding the agenda. The local food system is presented as a catch-all solution, acting as a mechanism for regional economic development that addresses a range of economic and social woes, from offering farm-scale benefits associated with pluriactivity and diversification to resolving issues surrounding quality, authentication and trust in the food system. As such, it involves the repositioning of regional identities to better align with local food-related development goals (see, for example: Morris and Buller 2003; Hinrichs 2003; Smithers et al. 2008; Sims 2009, etc.). As a result, food emerges as a central component of ‘re-imagined’ rural spaces and as a key factor in the increased ‘consumption’ of rural areas by visitors, coinciding with the emergence of new demands on land use and for new production systems and product offerings.

It is not surprising that food, arguably the most fundamental of products from agricultural regions, sits prominently at the intersection between an evolving farm sector and the development and promotion of an increasingly service-based rural economy. A new rural economy oriented towards the service sector and to the value of differentiated products and experiences is emerging, in which a ‘turn to quality’ and value are increasingly favoured over
quantity and efficiency, along with the declining focus on traditional commodities (Winter 2003; Goodman 2004; Ilbery and Maye 2005; Smithers et al. 2008). Using a case study approach, this project seeks to investigate the ways in which the deployment of ‘local’ as a defining feature of food and experience finds expression in production and consumption activities through an interrogation of direct procurement practices between producers and restaurants of local food in Prince Edward County, Ontario.

With the transition towards a multifunctional countryside, rural land uses are increasingly being determined by the interests of rural and non-rural residents alike, thereby creating contestation over the meaning and value of the countryside. The emergence of new rural amenities, services and products, including local food and culinary tourism, has been a result of both proactive and reactive processes. In a reactive sense, rural regions have responded to increased interest in land use and growing societal awareness of sustainability and conservation issues. In a proactive sense, rural regions have acted as innovators of novel value-added markets and products, supported through the re-imagining of rural identities and the creation of regionally-linked brands. More and more, value-added industries have become a mainstay of entrepreneurial activities designed to capture the increased earnings associated with the processing of raw materials, and with aestheticization and certification schemes (Hall et al. 2004). The transition to a multifunctional countryside is enabled by an influx of people with novel skills, knowledge and resources. The arrival of new voices and visions introduces both dynamism and complexity into the advancement of a rural development agenda. This, along with changing ideologies concerning the production and consumption of food, is playing a central role in the emergence and popularization of local food systems.
Food system localization, a process that can be defined as the real and figurative shortening of food supply chains, has received much scholarly attention to date, both in theoretical and empirical realms. Empirical investigations include detailing producer and consumer motivations for participating in local food systems, the variety of local food initiatives and their terms of engagement and the interpretations, both operative and conceptual, of local food itself. A fundamental principle of local food is that it possesses a higher degree of quality, and it is on this basis that local food is marketed to broad and speciality markets alike (Ilbery and Kneafsey 2000; Goodman 2004; Smithers et al. 2008). The ‘opening-up’ of the countryside has supported, and been supported by the localization of food systems. This symbiosis can be observed in the increased visibility of new economic activities related to local food in rural regions. These activities, through the support of regional development and growth strategies, can sometimes act to extend local food systems beyond regional boundaries by designing local food products for export. This seemingly paradoxical nature of local food has given rise to much debate in both academia and popular consciousness and has also created interest from both production and consumption perspectives in ‘authentication’ through measures such as regional identity creation and product branding (Sims 2009).

In parallel to food system localization, culinary tourism draws on perceived cultural and culinary heritage in order to market the countryside as a tourist destination and to create exportable regional brands and products (Gyimóthy and Mykletun 2008; Smith and Xiao 2008). Like other local food initiatives, culinary tourism makes use of the notion of the inherent elevated level of quality associated with local food as a basis for marketing local food products and other consumption-based activities such as restaurant dining and winery tours. In this way, the countryside is transformed into a lifestyle commodity through the creation of market-driven
amenity values (Kneafsey 2010). The transformation of aspects of the countryside into lifestyle commodities is supported by processes of aestheticization and authentication, which involve measures such as packaging practices, including styling, design and provenance labelling (Gyimóthy and Mykletun 2008). Increasingly, rural regions are turning to culinary tourism as a mechanism for rural development and exploring the multitude of possible applications of local food. Many of these applications, as well as the associated impacts, have yet to be fully explored and understood. In attempting to understand the production-consumption dynamic of local food and culinary tourism, it is helpful to acknowledge the potentially transformative impact of one on the other. A central line of inquiry of this research is to discern the extent to which purveyors, such as restaurants, have the ability to influence the production of local food and producers have the ability to influence the consumption of local food. In examining this dynamic more closely, this research seeks to address the following questions: what features characterize the relationship between local food and culinary tourism, in what ways are flexible interpretations of ‘local’ used in the production and provision of local food to tourists, and what are the limiting features of local food encountered by supply chain actors engaging in the production-consumption dynamic of local food and culinary tourism?

1.2 Aim and Objectives

The popularization of local food systems and the emergence of culinary tourism as a regional strategy for economic growth have triggered developments across the province of Ontario, with the number of identified culinary tourism regions increasing from five in 2005 to twenty-six in 2010 (MTC 2010). While gastronomy has been considered an integral part of the tourism experience internationally for some time, in Ontario the industry has only been receiving attention and support since the creation in 2006 of the Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance
following a strategy and action plan commissioned by the Ontario Ministry of Tourism (MTC 2010). An opportunity exists to explore the evolving relationship between local food and culinary tourism as manifest in a recent, but rapidly intensifying, effort to drive food-based farm sustainability and local economic development in Prince Edward County. The specific aim of this project is to understand the relationship between the direct procurement partnerships of producers and restaurants engaged in the local food system and culinary tourism as means for economic development. By interrogating the relationships between restaurants and local food producers, the research seeks to uncover some of the nuanced processes guiding the production, transformation and consumption of local food in a culinary tourism region still in its infancy. This goal will be addressed through the following objectives:

1. Investigate the common and co-dependent features of local food systems and culinary tourism;

2. Understand the place of 'local' in culinary tourism and its role in food production and consumption activities through an examination of the direct procurement practices of producers and restaurants, and;

3. Explore the processes driven by culinary tourism that act to commodify and extend the local food system beyond its regional boundaries.

1.3 Outline

The remainder of this thesis is organised into five chapters. Chapter Two provides an overview of the literature that contextualizes this research. The concept of the multifunctional countryside is explored, as are theorizations surrounding local food and culinary tourism. Chapter Three outlines the research approach, provides the rationale for the choice of study area and describes the study methods. Chapter Four presents the interview findings, with particular
attention paid to the expectations, practices and challenges of local and direct procurement practices and the mechanisms that extend local food systems beyond their regional boundaries. Chapter Five offers a discussion of the findings described in Chapter Four, further examining certain elements of producer-restaurant partnerships, including operational challenges and barriers to participation, as well as exploring some of the ways local food systems are transformed by culinary tourism. Chapter Six summarizes the main findings of the research, outlines its contributions and limitations and identifies possible areas for further research.
Chapter Two: Context and Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to situate this project within contemporary discourses on the transformation of the countryside into a multifunctional space, on local food and on its connection with culinary tourism. First, the concept of the multifunctional countryside is introduced by tracing the origins of this shift in patterns of economic activity and associated land uses to restructuring in the agricultural sector. The incorporation of consumption-oriented activities, such as tourism, into rural economies is seen as opening rural landscapes up to a range of changing development possibilities and new demands on land. Next, the local food system is explored by examining concepts surrounding the use of and value placed on the term ‘local’ and by considering common approaches to studying these systems. The elevated level of quality that is almost always associated with local food is examined and shown to operate more as an assumption rather than a verified attribute. Local food systems are seen to present a number of new consumption-oriented development opportunities, including those embraced in the tourism sector. Finally, culinary tourism is introduced as an increasingly popular strategy in rural community economic development. The actors and activities involved in culinary tourism are outlined and the processes of regional identity creation and branding and ‘value-adding’ to attract consumers are investigated.

2.1 A Multifunctional Countryside

In the past, rural space has acted as the site of primary production-oriented industries such as agriculture, forestry, mining and fisheries. Today, communities that have depended on agricultural production as a livelihood are finding this increasingly less feasible (Wilson 2007), while consumption-oriented activities are playing a growing role in the economic base of rural communities (Hall et al. 2004; Wilson 2007; Kneafsey 2010). Agricultural restructuring, by way
of market-led and state-sanctioned processes including globalization, deregulation and chronic oversupply and reregulation in some sectors, has led to an observable though not entirely pervasive shift towards multifunctionality, the revaluation of rural resources and the integration of consumption-oriented activities into the rural sector (Ilbery 1998; Barrett et al. 1999; Curry et al. 2001; Holmes 2006; Wilson 2007). Tourism and recreation activities in particular have become more commonplace. In addition to economic restructuring, social restructuring has also contributed to this shift. New rural employment opportunities, increased mobility and migration, increased incomes and domestic tourism expenditures, changing ideologies in regard to the production and consumption of food and new demands on rural space and the treatment of nature have all played a role in the reshaping of the rural landscape (Marsden 1999; Evans et al. 2002; Hall et al. 2004; Holmes 2006). Additionally, the transition of the countryside into a multifunctional space results not only in the rise of new commodity types and forms to satisfy changing demands on rural space, but also in the creation of non-commodity outputs such as environmental benefits (Wilson 2007).

Holmes (2006) asserts that the transition of the countryside into a multifunctional space is driven by three primary forces – agricultural overcapacity, the emergence of market-driven amenity values and growing societal awareness of sustainability and environmental issues. Together, these result in the revaluation of rural resources. Agricultural overcapacity, resulting from the intensification, concentration and specialization of agriculture, has led to widespread farm redundancy, prompting rural residents to search for alternate sources of income – giving rise to diversification at farm and regional scales. The emergence of market-driven amenity values are primarily a function of shifting lifestyle preferences and are largely driven by the interests of non-rural residents attracted to the countryside for its consumable potential in
tourism, recreation and other non-economic opportunities. Additionally, a growing societal awareness of environmentalism and social justice is inherently manifested in rural space.

Figure 2.1 traces how these processes factor into the revaluation and allocation of rural resources, and ultimately in the shift towards multifunctionality. In regard to agricultural overcapacity and farm redundancy, producers have the ability to reallocate resources towards alternative uses. For example, land previously used for agricultural purposes can also be used for tourism and recreation. New rural amenity values attract urbanites and tourists to the countryside for its consumption potential, resulting in novel opportunities for on-farm non-agricultural enterprises and the creation of new sources of income. For example, rural landowners can profit from a premium on land values and enterprises related to tourism and recreation. The emergence of environmental and social justice concerns, which are inherently enacted in rural space due to increased proximity and accessibility to the ‘natural environment’, give rise to demands for environmental services and new forms of regulation. For example, both society generally and visitors to the countryside specifically seeking to resolve environmental concerns can act as niche markets for eco-tourism and can lead to the development of environmental regulations that affect production systems (Holmes 2006).

Figure 2.1 - The Revaluation of Rural Resources

<table>
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<tr>
<th>PRODUCTION</th>
<th>CONSUMPTION</th>
<th>PROTECTION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural hyper productivity</td>
<td>Enhanced access, higher incomes and lifestyle changes</td>
<td>Emergence of environmental and social justice concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endemic overcapacity</td>
<td>Urban penetration: residential, recreation, tourism, etc.</td>
<td>Identification of rural ‘solutions’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translation of commodity surplus into land surplus</td>
<td>Amenity premium on land value</td>
<td>Policies and programmes towards sustainability, protection of biodiversity and indigenous land rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>Release of surplus resources to alternative purposes</td>
<td>Farm adjustment via plurality and off-farm income</td>
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Source: Holmes 2006

While agricultural restructuring primes rural regions for a multifunctional shift, new rural amenity values and growing societal awareness of environmentalism and social justice have created new demands on rural land and an impetus for rural gentrification and counter-
urbanization flows (Liepins 2000; Curry et al. 2001; Wilson, 2007). This in-migration is characterized by the arrival of investors, ‘lifestylers’ and tourists, as well as the popularization of local food, the development of local food networks and the rise of culinary tourism in agricultural regions (Hall et al. 2004). Investors, such as land speculators, retirees and more affluent members of the middle class, are attracted to investment opportunities existing alongside ample rural amenities and consumption potential (Curry et al. 2001). ‘Lifestylers’, a group consisting of ‘counter-culturalists’, are attracted to the countryside for a variety of reasons, including affordable land and the ability to gain access to alternative modes of living (Holmes 2006). Tourists venture into the countryside for its consumption potential above all else, and seek to access any number of experiences, from cultural activities such as culinary tourism to recreational activities such as boating or cycling. Sims (2009) draws an important link between tourism and food. In order to meet demands from the growing domestic and international middle class, tourism and recreation destinations are increasing in number and diversifying the array of experiences and activities marketed to tourists. Representing an effort to increase the environmental and economic sustainability of these destinations, ‘sustainable tourism’ draws on the consumption of food and coinciding experiences to benefit local economies, quell concerns over the conventional production of food and to gain greater market share (Sims 2009).

The opportunities of the new rural economy, made possible by the transition to a multifunctional countryside, are enabling an influx of novel skills, knowledge and resources and fostering innovation in rural areas. Increasingly, rural development policies are designed to attract and meet the demands of the so-called ‘creative class’, those individuals seen by some theorists as society’s valuable innovators and creative problem solvers and as essential to development in the post-industrial era. Florida (2002) asserts that, whereas in the past places
attracted people by matching them to jobs, today places attract people by providing desirable lifestyle amenities. Regional governments that subscribe to this development philosophy take measures to actively attract entrepreneurial talent. According to Florida’s (2002) research, these measures include the provision of amenities, particularly cultural amenities, a ‘coolness index’ or other indications of the level of energy or vibrancy of a place and a high degree of demographic diversity, also defined as possessing a high degree of openness and low barriers to entry. These policies, along with changing ideologies concerning the production and consumption of food, are playing a central role in the emergence and popularization of food system localization. For example, the municipal corporation of Prince Edward County added an Officer of Gastronomy position to develop and promote local food as part of a larger plan to position Prince Edward County as Canada’s first ‘creative rural economy’ (PEC Economic Development 2012).

2.2 Local Food Systems

Most commonly, local food systems are defined using geographic references, for example by a distance radius, with the 100 Mile Diet being a prime example, or by political or biological boundaries (see Kirwan 2004; Sims 2010; Allen 2010). However, it is clear that a high degree of flexibility is employed by those studying and by those acting from within these systems, and that this flexibility pervades almost every aspect of discourse on local food. For example, Kneafsey (2010) observed that the terms ‘local, ‘alternative’ and ‘regional’ are often used interchangeably, although these terms each possesses known nuanced meaning. Furthermore, local food is approached in the literature variously in terms of ‘systems’ or ‘networks’, with a systems-based approach focusing on structural dimensions and a network-based approach being concerned with the flows, processes and relationships within the food supply chain.
The phenomenon of food system localization is often presented as a binary opposite to the process of globalization, with globalization diluting the meaning of place and food production and localization seeking to reclaim its significance (Hinrichs 2003; Feagan 2007). Further dualisms between globalization and localization exist, including a focus on quantity and subsequent loss of quality with globalization in comparison to a primary focus on quality and artisanal-scale production with localization. Table 2.1 provides a summary of additional dualisms often ascribed to ‘global’ and ‘local’ as presented by Hinrichs (2003). In contrast to this ‘hard’ delineation of the local food system, it is evident that more flexible usages of the term ‘local food’ exist, often in conflict with noted theoretical characteristics. For example, a study by Sims (2010) of the relationship between local food and sustainable rural tourism found that the practicalities of the production, processing and retailing of local food often outweigh the ideals attributed to the notion of local food, such that producers construct and reconstruct definitions and usages of ‘local food’ while navigating consumers demands and strategies to gain competitive advantage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>GLOBAL</strong></th>
<th><strong>VS.</strong></th>
<th><strong>LOCAL</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Market economy</td>
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<td>Moral economy</td>
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<td>An economics of price</td>
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<td>An economic sociology of quality</td>
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<td>TNCs dominating</td>
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<td>Independent artisan producers prevailing</td>
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<td>Corporate profits</td>
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<td>Community well-being</td>
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<td>Intensification</td>
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<td>Extensification</td>
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<td>Large-scale production</td>
<td></td>
<td>Small-scale production</td>
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<td>Industrial models</td>
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<td>‘Natural’ models</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monoculture</td>
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<td>Bio-diversity</td>
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<td>Resource consumption and degradation</td>
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<td>Resource protection and regeneration</td>
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<td>Relations across distance</td>
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<td>Relations of proximity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commodities across space</td>
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<td>Communities in place</td>
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<td>Big structures</td>
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<td>Voluntary actors</td>
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<td>Technocratic rules</td>
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<td>Democratic participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Homogenization of foods</td>
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<td>Regional palates</td>
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Source: Hinrichs 2003
Tovey (2008) presents an account of this notion of flexible usages of the term ‘local food’ in a report on the contestation of the meaning of local food in an Irish context. Two interpretations of local food systems are shown to come into conflict as they relate to the social forms and relations of production seen, through the eyes of the state, as appropriate for rural development. The ‘hard’, or ‘radical’, interpretation of the local food system is represented by a producer-run farmers’ market in which stallholders decide what is sold and the focus is mainly on food staples. Here, an alternative network of food exchange exists outside the conventional system of exchange. In the second example, a flexible interpretation of local food is exemplified by the use of the concept of local food employed by a rural development group that latched onto the popularity of ‘local food’ and used farmers’ markets as the testing ground for the development of exportable local food commodities. Here, the local food system is a reformation of the conventional system, using and operating within conventionalized structures of exchange. Other examples of flexible or ‘reform-based’ local food systems can be found in the involvement of big industry through developments such as the conventionalization of organic agriculture, the patenting of associated terminology by corporations and the participation of globalized supermarket retailing and distribution chains in the marketing of local food.

An elevated level of quality is often credited as the alleged benefit of local food from both production and consumption perspectives (Ilbery and Kneafsey 2000; Murdoch 2000; Winter 2003). From the consumer perspective, the ‘turn to quality’, as described by Winter (2003) has been motivated by consumer concerns over food safety, human health and nutrition, animal welfare, environmental degradation and unethical trade between the developed and the developing world, all of which are linked to the productivist mode of agriculture. In contrast, the work of Ilbery and Kneafsey (2000) focuses on producer-defined quality. Here, producer-
defined quality is based on four criteria: *certification* through government or other external bodies, *association* with a region, tradition or culture, *specification* of production method or raw materials and *attraction* through factors such as product design, flavours, freshness and price.

Jarvis (2002) further develops this classification of ‘quality’ by dividing the construction of quality into ‘informal’ and ‘formal’ aspects (see Table 2.2). Formal aspects of quality that can be used by producers to gain competitive advantage include certification and accreditation schemes by some recognized body. Examples of this include the Appellation d’Origine Controlée (AOC) certification first created to protect the wine industry in France and the more recent ‘organic’ and ‘fair trade’ certifications used to ensure environmental and social sustainability in production. Specification also falls into this category, with examples including the promotion of the origins of ingredients or the treatment of materials in the production system. Informal aspects of quality used by producers to achieve competitive advantage are less tangible, but equally convincing in how quality is conveyed. Examples include the appropriation of idyllic rural imagery in marketing and labeling, customer service and investments of expertise into the development of niche markets and speciality products (Jarvis 2002).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Table 2.2 - Aspects of ‘Quality’</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>INFORMAL</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriation of local and generic rural images as a marketing aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer service and business etiquette</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment of knowledge and experience in special products and niche markets</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Beyond ‘quality’, the alleged benefits of local food include, from a production perspective, the possibility of local food acting as a strategy that supports on-farm pluriactivity and income diversification through the potential for greater returns derived from premium
pricing and niche marketing, as well as networks of local food acting to enhance regional economic development. From a consumption perspective, local food acts as a means for social differentiation, as a centrepiece for tourism and recreation and as both a symbolic and material response to concerns with the conventional production of food.

An important lens for understanding how local food comes to be seen in these ways is the concept of embeddedness (Goodman 2003). According to Hinrichs (2000), the face-to-face nature of certain localized food systems, such as farmers’ markets and community-supported agriculture (CSA), results in them being uniquely embedded within a sense of trust and reciprocity, social capital and knowledge that is lost in the distancing of more globalized food systems. This embeddedness leads to an enhancement of human economic interactions based on the advantages of proximity, familiarity and mutual appreciation. Localized food systems are specifically embedded with place-based knowledge – the ‘where’ of production, and often also the ‘how’, that can be supported by certifications and labelling schemes.

A study conducted by Smithers et al. (2008) into the terms of engagement with local food at farmers’ markets in Ontario found that consumers regularly operate under a number of often unconfirmed assumptions regarding the alleged benefits and embedded properties of local food, supporting the fluid nature of the term ‘local’ in practice as well as in theory. In relation to this, Allen (2010) recognizes that while food system localization is viewed at a very general level as a remedy for environmental, social and economic issues in the food system, the assumption that local food inevitably leads to equity and social justice is not necessarily true. Citing structural inequalities, such as the unequal distribution of wealth and resources and neoliberal political economic ideology, Allen (2010) suggests that, while local food systems do present possibilities
for achieving social justice, massive social change accompanied by new legislation would be required to bring this about.

Local food systems can be conceptualized in terms of the identity of a product (Sims 2009), by the configuration of the supply chain (Tregear 2007), or through the use of analytical fields to describe how local food systems are organized at an individual scale (Holloway et al. 2007). In taking the supply chain approach, the local food system can be defined in terms of proximity or distance between production and consumption points or by the number and nature of nodes in the supply chain (Hinrichs 2003; Feagan 2007). Large distances between nodes characterize a globalized supply chain, while smaller distances between nodes characterize a more localized chain. The number of nodes in a supply chain can also define the local food system. Regardless of the distance between the production and consumption ends of the chain, local food systems are said to exist where the producer and the consumer are linked either directly or by a condensed number of nodes.

Using the supply chain concept as a framework for studying local food systems has two obvious advantages. First, a supply chain approach allows for a cumulative examination of the processes involved in the production of local food and in its ultimate consumption. In this way, actors and activities operating at each node along the supply chain can be examined in turn. Secondly, this approach also tends to uncover the interactions between nodes along the supply chain. For example, a study conducted by Sims (2010) sought to trace the various understandings and uses of ‘local food’ employed throughout the tourist food chain by carrying out interviews with producers, suppliers and consumers of local food. Rather than functioning as separate entities, a key finding of the research was that actors in this particular supply chain tended to occupy more than one role along the chain, lending added complexity to how we
understand the motivations for engaging in local food systems of both producers and consumers. Additionally, the study found that producers employ a broad range of usages of ‘local’, not only resting on geographical definitions, but also on more nuanced social, economic and cultural factors. For example, it was found that ‘local’ to some producers meant using local ingredients, while to others products were considered ‘local’ if they underwent some form of value-adding within the region or if they were imbued with some sort of historical or cultural identity associated with the region. According to Sims (2010), the implication of this is that the ‘local’ in local food is not only a spatial description, but a tool used by producers to explain and justify a particular form of production. The study also highlighted the importance of considering both the ideals attributed to local food, as well as the practicalities involved in its production, supply and consumption, in order to understand the role that local food can play in sustainable tourism and regional economic development more generally.

Similar to the findings of Sims (2010), Renting et al. (2003) categorize some of the mechanisms employed by producers to extend local or short food supply chains (SFSCs) beyond regional boundaries into three categories (see Table 2.3), thus enabling more flexible usage of the term ‘local’. Direct producer-consumer networks and personal interaction that is imbued with trust and authenticity characterize the first category, face-to-face interaction, and include ventures such as farmers’ markets and community-supported agriculture (CSA). The second category, based on relations of spatial or cultural proximity, extends the reach of SFSCs into a regional scale and creates more complex institutional arrangements, such as country markets and restaurants. Finally, the third category extends SFSCs onto a global scale, including internationally recognized production codes and certifications, such as the federal grading of beef in Canada or the French AOCs. Here, according to Renting et al. (2003) SFSCs are still
considered ‘short’ because products are embedded with information related to identity, value and quality.

Table 2.3 – Face-to-face vs. Proximate vs. Extended ‘Short’ Food Supply Chains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FACE-TO-FACE</th>
<th>PROXIMATE</th>
<th>EXTENDED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farm shops</td>
<td>Farm shop groups</td>
<td>Certification labels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers’ markets</td>
<td>Regional hallmarks</td>
<td>Production codes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roadside sales</td>
<td>Consumer co-ops</td>
<td>Reputation effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pick-your-own</td>
<td>CSA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box schemes</td>
<td>Food routes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home deliveries</td>
<td>Special events, fairs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mail order</td>
<td>Specialty shops</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online shopping</td>
<td>Institution cafeterias</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sales to emigrants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Renting et al. 2003

Holloway et al. (2007) suggest the use of analytical fields, such as the site of food production, food production methods, avenues of exchange, the ways in which producer-consumer communication occurs, the motivations of producers and consumers for participation and respective individual and community identities of the parties involved, as another way to describe various key features of the local food system (see Table 2.4). This approach is notable because it preserves the distinct characteristics of individual systems, an important consideration when examining systems that are defined by place-specific identities.

Table 2.4 – Describing Food Projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANALYTICAL FIELD</th>
<th>EXAMPLES FROM SAMPLE PROJECTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Site of food production</td>
<td>Community garden, urban brown-field site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food production methods</td>
<td>Organic, biodynamic, horse powered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supply chain arena of exchange</td>
<td>Farmers’ market, pick-your-own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Producer-consumer interaction</td>
<td>Direct selling, cooking demo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivations for participation</td>
<td>Business, social/environmental concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constitution of individual/group identities</td>
<td>Customers, stakeholders, various groups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Holloway et al. 2007

Drawing on place-specific identity to conceptualize local food systems relies on reclaiming the importance of place and the establishment of special territorial character, with considerable emphasis placed on the development of identity at national, regional and individual
product scales (Marsden et al. 2000; Ilbery and Kneafsey 2000; Hinrichs 2003; Ilbery et al. 2005). Designations of authenticity of geographical origin act as an example of this. Identity is further enhanced by various marketing techniques including labelling schemes, slogans and logos that specify ingredients and production methods thereby making products easier for consumers to identify. The construction of a regional scale identity is a key concept in the study of culinary tourism. By means of marketing a unique identity based on cultural and culinary heritage, regional identity is commodified into a culinary tourism product in order to attract visitors seeking to access and consume the cultural capital offered by a particular region.

2.3 Culinary Tourism

Culinary tourism, defined here as any tourism experience in which one learns about, appreciates or consumes branded local culinary resources, represents one of the ways the countryside has been transformed into a lifestyle commodity (Deneault 2002; Sanitch 2004; Gyimóthy and Mykletun 2008; Smith and Xiao 2008; Smith and Costello 2009; Kim et al. 2009). Culinary tourism involves a large network of interested parties, such as tourism departments, destination marketing organizations, restaurants, convention centres, wineries, and cooking schools, and embraces a variety of cuisine-related and agri-tourism activities, ranging from food festivals to farm visits. Table 2.5 provides a sample of the culinary tourism activities available in Canada. It is important to note that, while Canada does have a number of distinctive regional cuisines, at the national scale Canada does not have a recognizable or cohesive cuisine, as many of the foods and cooking styles used here have been adopted from other cultures (Deneault 2002). Instead of having a national cuisine, Canada can be thought of as hosting a number of different cuisines, some specific to certain regions and others adopted from other cultures. This lack of gastronomic identity makes it difficult to market a single Canadian cuisine
on the global market (Hashimoto and Telfer 2006). Instead, we find individual regions creating their own unique brands and products for export.

Table 2.5 – Examples of Canadian Culinary Tourism Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aboriginal feasts</th>
<th>Tasting/buying packages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agri-tourism activities</td>
<td>Tours of food/wine/beer routes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooking schools</td>
<td>Traditional ‘Cabane à sucre’ (sugar bush)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dinner and theatre packages</td>
<td>Traditional dining experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine dining</td>
<td>Visits to cheese factories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm vacations</td>
<td>Visits to farmers’ markets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Festivals</td>
<td>Visits to food-related museums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit picking</td>
<td>Visits to smokehouses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lobster/oyster/mussel/scallop hauling</td>
<td>Winery tours and tastings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Deneault 2002

The development of a regional brand in culinary tourism acts as a way for regions to differentiate themselves from one another in terms of a cuisine-based identity. This trend towards regional branding parallels the localization of food systems and other efforts to counteract the homogenizing processes of globalization. Regions draw on heterogeneity and individuality to market rural amenities and culinary heritage as lifestyle commodities. Tourists are attracted to the opportunity to access cultural capital by consuming, touring or learning about the local food of the region. This could involve engaging in experiential activities such as dining in restaurants, touring wineries and attending cooking classes. If successful, indigenous or locally cultivated products become identified with the region and the region becomes the brand (Hashimoto and Telfer 2006). According to Richards (2002: 5), food is a natural means of identity creation because “what we eat and the way we eat are such basic aspects of our culture”. In this way, regional products create a distinct sense of place, in contrast to the placelessness of standardized foods marketed through mass retail outlets (Kneafsey 2010).

The culinary heritage that forms the basis of regional identity and branding can be real or invented, and is supported by processes of aestheticization and authentication involving
packaging practices, including styling, design and provenance labelling (Gyimóthy and Mykletun 2008). In Europe, Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) regulations, modeled after the French system of Appellation d’Origine Controlée (AOC) first created to protect wine producers, are used to attach authenticity to exported regional identities and brands (Kneafsey 2010). Rural landscape amenity is also used in the construction of a regional identity and brand. Here, iconic images of an idyllic countryside and rural nostalgia are drawn on to create a visual nostalgic appeal for the region. These images are employed on culinary tourism websites and in the brochures and other promotional materials developed by tourism associations, restaurants, wineries, farms and other establishments.

In addition to rural imagery, it has been found that landscape designation can also act to enhance the level of quality associated with local food products and thereby plays a major role in the construction of a regional identity. For example, in Devon County, UK, it was found that the elevated profile of Dartmoor National Park as a tourist destination benefited local food businesses in the region (Ilbery et al. 2006). Tourists and 'alternative lifestylers', drawn to the park because it offers the opportunity to connect with the natural environment, discovered local food businesses, thus allowing them to satisfy environmental concerns via their food purchases. Drawing on Jarvis' (2002) work on 'quality', a link can be drawn between the high quality of the national park's environment and associated imagery to the high quality of the region's food offerings. Similarly, in Prince Edward County, known to many as the home of Sandbanks Provincial Park, there is evidence that some of the region’s local food enterprises have designed their business models to align with the demands of the Park’s substantial clientele, such as catering to families with children and showcasing an environmental awareness (see Chapter Four). For example, a prominent attribute of Fifth Town Artisan Cheese Co. is the company's
Platinum LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified manufacturing facility (Fifth Town Website 2009). Culinary tourism, therefore, is a key component of sustainable tourism and, increasingly, sustainable tourism destinations are drawing on culinary tourism to round out the sustainable tourist experience (Sims 2009).

2.3.1 Tourist Motivation

More and more, social status or ‘difference’ is achieved through patterns of consumption. One of the alleged benefits of local food is its prowess in acting as a means of social differentiation, an appealing characteristic in the marketing of local food products. Culinary tourism, in particular, offers tourists an array of distinct or even unique combinations of want-satisfying products through the offering of a variety of regionally specific lifestyle commodities and experiences (Wilson 2007).

To look more closely at the role of food in tourist motivation, Fields (2002) employs a four-category typology of motivation to better understand what makes culinary tourism appealing. The first category, physical motivators, encompasses the physical experiences tourists will undergo during their holiday. The physical aspects of eating new foods, such as taste, smell and sight, and appeals to better health, either through a change in diet or through the physical activity related to touring, fall into this category. Local food plays an obvious role in this category, fulfilling a need that every tourist will seek to satisfy.

The second category, cultural motivators, consists of the search for opportunities to access new forms of cultural capital; that is, novel and authentic, or perceived authentic, experiences of culture other than the tourist’s own. Here, local food that has been augmented through various authentication strategies, such as the use of rural imagery, offers tourists an opportunity to try foods that they may not be able to access at home. In addition, exportable
local food products, such as wine, have the ability to act as a ‘cultural capital souvenir’, allowing tourists to bring a piece of their experience home with them.

The third category, *interpersonal motivators*, encompasses the social function of meals, the chance to build new social relations and strengthen existing social bonds. Dining in restaurants that showcase local food on their menus not only allows tourists the chance to build and strengthen social relations, it also gives them a shared and unique experience that cannot be found elsewhere.

The fourth category, *status and prestige motivators*, refers back to culinary tourism acting as a means of social differentiation or status distinction. Two attributes of local food and culinary tourism experiences enhance this motivation. On one side, the consumption of local food while traveling acts as a limited-access-only experience, in which tourists share with locals an experience that cannot be had anywhere else in the world. On the other hand, exportable local food products allow tourist to take a part of their experience home with them, adding to their status and prestige in relation to their neighbours and friends upon returning home.

2.3.2 Adding Value

From production to consumption, the nodes along the culinary tourism supply chain are connected by structures of interdependencies between collaborating enterprises. The integration and sophistication of these linkages are regarded as vital for adding to the value of the final product (Hjalager 2002). Hjalager (2002) explores a hierarchal model to reflect the increasing sophistication and complexity that can be developed in the culinary tourism supply chain in order to increase value in the end product. The first order, *indigenous development*, is characterized by the development of the culinary tourism industry using existing structures, networks or knowledge. An example of this is when restaurants and other food-related businesses advertise
at the local tourist information centre, adding the local consumption of food to the list of activities tourists might choose to engage in. Adding steps or nodes to the production process or increasing the level of the integration in the supply chain through the use of production standards or certifications characterizes the second order, *horizontal development*. For example, a restaurant might choose to identify the use of locally-produced foodstuffs on their menus and elaborate on the production method or certification in the description (e.g., 'locally-made, organic maple syrup'). The third order, *vertical development*, is characterized by adding peripheral and complementary activities meant to enhance the experiential value of the product, such as the creation of food or wine routes. In Prince Edward County, for example, restaurants can display the region's culinary tourism agency (Taste the County) logo on their menus to advertise their use of local food and their participation in the Taste Trail. Finally the fourth order, *diagonal development*, is characterized by enhancing the knowledge base of the industry, feeding back into the system through research and training of culinary tourism professionals. Attendance and participation in a culinary tourism convention is an example of this. In Ontario, the Ontario Culinary Tourism Association (OCTA) holds an annual summit where producers, suppliers and retailers of local food can gather to share and discuss pertinent topics in the industry.

### 2.4 A Research Opportunity

It is evident that local food and culinary tourism possess deep and complex ties. While the supply of local food can come to greatly depend on a culinary tourism market, culinary tourism draws heavily on the value and experience of local food to attract tourists. It follows that producers of local food are able to influence the consumption of local food through product identity creation and other value-adding mechanisms. Additionally, restaurants that offer local
food play an important role in both its production and consumption by enabling demand through the showcasing and promoting of local food and by enhancing supply through the enriching and transforming of the product identity. In addition to contextualizing the emergence of local food systems and culinary tourism within the shift that is occurring in the countryside towards multifunctionality, this review has revealed a high degree of contestation, and an array of flexible uses, of the terminology and meanings of ‘local’ and ‘quality’.

In regard to the assumed elevated level of intrinsic quality associated with local food systems, it is evident that different users draw on and reflect this assumption to varying degrees depending on their level of meaning or trust in the food system. The rate at which local food systems have come to dominate rural development agendas and the range of local food initiatives that have emerged in a short time are impressive. Yet there have been only limited inquiries focusing on the relationship between local food and development initiatives such as culinary tourism. Indeed, in considering directions for future research into local and regional food systems, Donald et al. (2010: 174) write “there remains a surprising lack of research on the actual business practices and competitive strategies of new food firms as they adopt a more regionalized food system strategy”.

Of the few studies that do exist into actual business practices of actors operating in a local food network, one particular study holds considerable relevance for this project. Drawing on qualitative interviews with actors in a local food supply chain in the UK, Sims (2010) found that there is a need for actors to negotiate between the ideals of local food and the practicalities of food production and consumption resulting from the relationships between actors in the commodity chain. Here, a gap was identified in our knowledge of the on-the-ground workings of the provision of local food and its relation to culinary tourism. This project seeks to build on
this research by exploring a key relationship between local food and culinary tourism, through an investigation of the direct procurement practices of producers and restaurants of local food in Prince Edward County, ON. The intent is to come to a better understanding of how the ideals attributed to local food are constructed and navigated in light of the practicalities of food provision in the arena of culinary tourism.
Chapter Three: Research Design

Following an overview of the research approach, including a reiteration of goals and objectives, this chapter presents a rationale for the choice of Prince Edward County as the study area. It also outlines the sources of data and sampling strategies, provides an overview of key sample characteristics and outlines approaches to data reduction and analysis.

3.1 Research Approach

The central line of inquiry of this research is directed to the relationship between local food and culinary tourism. Of specific interest is the impact of culinary tourism on local food production and consumption activities. By looking at direct procurement practices and gaining a perspective on the logic for participating in (and advancing) a local food system, the goal is to understand the forces that are guiding or at least influencing production and consumption activities. An integral question is to discern the extent to which restaurants have the ability to influence the production of local food, and producers have the ability to influence the consumption of local food. A secondary line of inquiry of this research is to understand how local food systems come to be extended beyond their regional boundaries. By examining the ways in which culinary tourism impacts the extension of local food systems, the goal is to facilitate a discussion on the meaning and validity of 'local' in local food once it becomes an export commodity.

A review of relevant literature was conducted in order to examine how local food and culinary tourism might be related. A case-study approach grounded in qualitative interviews with producers and restaurants operating in the local food supply is adopted in order to investigate and calibrate facets of this relationship that are not well understood. A case-study approach can enrich data collection and quality in a number of ways. First, it provides a
geographical context for the research, a particularly pertinent feature given that the creation of a place-specific identity is a key component of both local food and culinary tourism. Second, it provides a cultural context for the research. To date, much of the research surrounding the shift towards multifunctionality and the commodification of the countryside has emerged from the UK (see for example: Marsden 1998 and 1999; Goodman 2004; Kneafsey 2010), so providing a Canadian context is a valuable addition to the larger discourse. Finally, this approach creates the opportunity to uncover relationships that remain unseen from a more generalized perspective. Without an on-the-ground vantage point, less prominent but not less interesting observations can be glossed over or missed entirely. Case studies seek to uncover these sorts of unique observations in order to create new points of discussion, interrogate accepted concepts and expand overall understanding.

3.2 Study Area

Prince Edward County is an island-shaped peninsula located on the northern shore of Lake Ontario, adjacent to Highway 401 and linked by bridge to the city of Belleville (see Figure 3.1). The County, as it has come to be known, is situated at the centre of a ‘golden triangle’ between Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal and is estimated to have over 125 million people living within a day’s drive (PEC Economic Development 2012). In recent years, Prince Edward County has sought to develop itself as a grape growing region, based on a combination of its temperature-moderated location on Lake Ontario and mineral-rich soils. Additionally, the County is Ontario’s newest Designated Viticultural Area and is now home to over a dozen wineries, and these are quickly becoming known for quality in viniculture as well. The County has been deemed ‘the Gastronomic Capital of Ontario’ in the popular press (Globe and Mail
2008), housing over a dozen fine dining restaurants and offering a Taste Trail, culinary festivals and numerous winery tours to attract tourists and showcase the region’s culinary assets.

Figure 3.1 – Map of Prince Edward County

Source: Insider’s Guide to Prince Edward County, 2010

‘Taste the County’ is a culinary tourism development and promotion organization that has been operating in the County for over a decade (Taste the County 2007). Taste the County’s stated goal is to “sustain long-term marketing and quality enhancement initiatives that will ensure the continuation of Taste the County services and encourage ongoing growth in the local agricultural and tourism market” (Taste the County 2007). Taste the County has created two touring routes for visitors to Prince Edward County – the Arts Trail and the Taste Trail, and has
established three culinary festivals – Taste!, Maple in the County and the biannual Countylicious set-menu event.

The municipal corporation of Prince Edward County, in collaboration with Taste the County, has been working to construct a unique and marketable identity for the region. The region’s culinary heritage is based on both historical and more recent agricultural production systems. At one time dubbed the ‘fruit basket of Ontario’, the region has a rich agricultural history dating back over 200 years (PEC Economic Development 2012). Settled by United Empire Loyalists in 1784, early colonies brought skills in the dairy and grain crop industries. The pre-prohibition ‘Barley Days’ era saw Prince Edward County supplying hops and barley to breweries across North America, and at one time there were over two-dozen different cheese factories in the County. The region’s history in the production and processing of tender fruits has been drawn on and incorporated into the new focus on viticulture and viniculture, the growing and processing of grapes into wine. Here, an identity associated with sophistication, elegance and exclusiveness has been fostered to attract affluent tourists seeking to satisfy physical, cultural and interpersonal desires and desires for prestige and status as well. The County’s offering of cultural and culinary tours and culinary festivals positions it in Hjalager’s (2002) third order development path, indicating a high level of sophistication in the interdependencies between collaborating enterprises involved in the culinary tourism and local food network.

Widely seen as an up-and-coming culinary tourism destination in Ontario, Prince Edward County was chosen as the study area for this project because of its prominence in the popular press (see Globe and Mail 2008, 2009 and 2010, Chatto 2007, Aspler 2009, Toronto Life 2012), the various awards in tourism and economic development it has received and the success of
certain keystone products, but also because it is not yet a mature culinary tourism region, despite its many accolades. The region is undergoing a period of rapid change that has yet to plateau. Additionally, Prince Edward County possesses a number of physical and human resources, from a high quality natural environment to energized entrepreneurs, that make a high degree of sophistication possible. This development potential is supported by what are considered vanguard development policies and marketing techniques. This is therefore a unique point in time to take a snapshot of this region as it currently stands and to uncover some of the processes guiding its development path. At this early stage, many newcomers are now present alongside some of the region’s original actors and a chronology from the region's onset as a culinary tourism destination to the present and into the future can be established.

3.3 Data Sources and Sample Profiles

The sampling strategy was based on a preliminary reconnaissance survey of the restaurant population, or more specifically, restaurant menus, located within the boundaries of Prince Edward County, and within comfortable distance to residents and visitors in the County, Brighton, Trenton and Belleville areas. The initial purpose of the menu survey was to identify restaurants that have signifiers of local food on their menus. Signifiers include place of origin, name of producer, certification schemes and other language intended to indicate the presence of local food, such as ‘farm-fresh’ and ‘home-grown’. The rationale for this approach is that menus encapsulate how restaurants use local food to attract culinary tourists. Menus were accessed either in-person, or via the restaurant's website. The survey identified 28 food and drink establishments with some sort of claim to local food on their menus out of an overall estimated population of 35, or 80% of the total population. Of these, 20 were categorized as target restaurants and 8 were excluded from the study as they were categorized as primarily bars or
coffee shops. This narrowing of the sample was performed in order to focus on establishments either sought out by culinary tourists or those possessing a considerable tourist clientele. Interviews were conducted with 8 of the 20 target restaurants. These reflect the diversity of restaurant types that exist in the study area, in terms of price point, cuisine and target clientele (see Table 3.1). The high season for tourism in Prince Edward County occurs during the summer months, attracting families to a range of affordable outdoor activities (e.g. camping, beach-going, boating), as well as tourists without children in tow seeking opportunities to tour wineries and dine in up-scale restaurants. The sample of 8 of the target restaurants reflects this divergent population, with businesses targeted to families (e.g. ice cream shop, hot dog vendor), as well as businesses targeted to more up-scale clientele (e.g. fine dining, offerings of artisanal cheese and wine). In addition to acting as a tool in the identification of the restaurant sample, the menu survey also served as a rich source of data relating to how the inclusion of local food impacts the menu itself, in terms of style of cuisine, flexibility in menu structure and seasonal rotation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Casual dining, family-oriented</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Café, coffee to go, lunch crowd</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant with inn attached</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bistro, medium level of refinement</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Dining, high level of refinement</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following the menu survey, restaurants displaying signifiers of local food on their menus were contacted to arrange an interview. The restaurant sample for this study is comprised of restaurants located within Prince Edward County that exhibit an observable commitment to local food. An observable commitment was essential for inclusion in the study because the primary focus of this research is the reciprocal relationship between local food production and restaurant-based food sales and consumption in the wider context of culinary tourism. Without an
observable commitment, it would be difficult for culinary tourists to discern what restaurants to visit in order to sample local ingredients and cuisine.

Qualitative interviews ranging from thirty minutes to one hour in length were carried out with restaurant owners and chefs (and chef/owners). Respondents were asked questions pertaining to their employed definition of local food, their rationale for offering local food, their suppliers and direct procurement practices (see Appendix A). Working backwards, the producers of local food supplying restaurants were then identified and contacted for an interview. Again, producers were asked questions pertaining to their methods and rationale for participating in the local food systems and the nature of their direct exchange with restaurants (see Appendix B). In addition, interviews were carried out with key informants involved in the economic development office and the County’s tourism promotion agency. Here, informants were asked questions pertaining to the rationale for participating in local food and culinary tourism from a government perspective, primary marketing strategies and desired directions for future development (see Appendix C). The intent of these key informant interviews was to gain perspective on how a local food agenda focusing on culinary tourism as a means for economic development is unfolding at the ground level in the day-to-day production, distribution, marketing and retailing of local food products.

Restaurants were chosen as a chief source of data for this project because they are the primary sites of exchange and consumption of local food by residents and tourists. In addition, as buyers of local food and also because they inherently augment the value attributed to local food, restaurants are ‘actors’ that have the potential to exert a significant amount of influence over the local food supply chain. The restaurant sample, consisting of 8 restaurants with which an interview was conducted, is quite diverse and represents a range of types, styles of food
preparation and targeted clientele. Figure 3.2 depicts the location of these restaurants along the Taste Trail. Generally, restaurants are concentrated in the region’s village and town centres where they are easily accessible to culinary tourists.

**Figure 3.2 – Restaurant Locations**

The producer sample, consisting of the producers identified in the restaurant interviews as having a direct relationship with at least one restaurant in the sample, is also quite diverse with operations ranging in size from hobby farm to larger-scale operations and from focused specialty production to more diverse product offerings. Rather than conducting interviews in the participants’ place of business, many of the producer interviews were conducted in the
participants’ homes over lunch or outside in the fields, giving these interviews a much more casual feel and flexible structure. Figure 3.3 shows the location of producers in relation to restaurants and the Taste Trail. Table 3.2 organizes the 7 producers by their product offerings. Interviews determined that the marketing strategies employed by the producers in the sample and importance of restaurant sales to overall operation were quite varied.

**Figure 3.3 – Producers Locations**
Key informant interviews were conducted with both the head of Prince Edward County’s gastronomy cluster in the economic development office and with the executive director of the Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance (OCTA), who was also the founding executive director of Taste the County. The purpose of these interviews was to gain insight into concepts and processes guiding the production and consumption of local food from both the economic development and tourism perspectives, including definitions and usages of the term ‘local’ in local food and the creation and promotion of relationships in the local food supply chain. The information gleaned from these conversations acts to inform the analysis of data collected from restaurant and producer participants. The key informants were able to shed light on how government sanctions impact the shape of a local food system. These interviews tended to be longer than the restaurant and producer interviews and also covered a wider range of topics. In addition to providing insights specifically on the role of culinary tourism, they offered more general perspectives on how Prince Edward County has and continues to evolve.

3.4 Analytic Approach

The results of this research are presented and discussed in the next two chapters. Chapter Four will give an overview of the findings gleaned from both direct observations and the qualitative interviews. The aim of this chapter is to describe current dynamics, both observed and reported, between producers and restaurants engaging in the local food supply chain and
culinary tourism. First, details of the restaurant and producer samples will be presented. Second, the motivations and rationales behind participation in local food and culinary tourism networks will be outlined. Particular attention will be paid to the basis for the creation of direct procurement relationships. Third, the defining and noteworthy features of these direct procurement practices will be outlined and discussed, including shared challenges and approaches to navigating the ideals of local food along with the practicalities of its provision. Finally, the ways in which the influence of culinary tourism has led to the expansion and commodification of local food beyond the region's boundaries will be detailed. The main purpose of Chapter Five is to extract noteworthy findings from Chapter Four and to apply them to a larger discussion on the processes guiding the production and consumption of local food. In addition to examining operational challenges of local direct procurement partnerships and barriers to participation in the restaurant local food supply chain, this chapter will also put forward questions surrounding how the local food system is or might be transformed through culinary tourism. Chapter Six summarizes the contributions of this research, suggests areas for further investigation and reflects on the limitations of the dataset.
Chapter Four: What’s on the Menu?

In this chapter, findings related to the second and third objectives of this research will be presented. In regard to the second objective – to come to an understanding of the role of culinary tourism in the production and consumption of local food – interviews with producers and restaurants participating in Prince Edward County’s local food supply chain are examined to assess whether culinary tourism forms a compelling motive for the creation of direct procurement partnerships, particularly from the perspective of restaurants. Concerning the third objective of this research – to explore how culinary tourism commodifies the local food system – the interviews are used to assess whether culinary tourism presents an opportunity to adopt outward-oriented growth strategies in food processing industries. These findings will be examined in the subsequent sections. These address: (1) how restaurants communicate offerings of local food to customers, (2) how direct procurement partnerships are organized, (3) how the relationships formed between producers and restaurants are navigated, given the practicalities of the production, supply, processing and ultimate consumption of local food, (4) why producers and restaurants engage in direct procurement, and the nature of the challenges presented by the arrangements, and (5) how producers and restaurants contribute to the commodification of the local food system by taking advantage of opportunities presented by culinary tourism.

4.1 The Restaurant Sample: Local Food as a Means to Attract Customers

An effort was made to consider both the symbolic and material aspects of the place and the importance of local food in selecting and observing the restaurant sample. In a figurative sense, signifiers of a restaurant’s commitment to local food, and the ways it is communicated to customers, were observed on menus, in aspects of décor and in accompanying promotional
leaflets and other materials on display. The actual place and importance of local food was seen to be reflected in the scale of effort placed on the procurement and treatment of these ingredients.

4.1.1 How is a Commitment to ‘Local’ Communicated to Customers?

The primary mechanism through which restaurants communicate with their customer is the menu. For this reason, signifiers of local food on menus were given highest priority in judging a restaurant’s engagement with local food and its strategic decision to make this visible to potential patrons. Direct menu signifiers of local food include the identification of an ingredient’s place of origin or the name of the producer, and indirect signifiers include reference to any related certification schemes held by the producer (e.g. Local Food Plus certification, (LFP Homepage n.d.)) and other language intended to indicate the use of local food on the menu such as ‘farm-fresh’ and ‘home-grown’. Figure 4.1 depicts a mock menu that illustrates how this language is used.
Figure 4.1 – An Example of Local Food Signifiers on a Menu

![Dinner Menu](image)

- **Appetizers**
  - **Pea Soup**
    - Pete’s peas, fresh mint, truffle oil
  - **Tomato Salad**
    - Tom’s heirloom tomatoes, Daisy Dairy mozzarella, fresh basil
  - **Steak Tartare**
    - Bessy Farm’s beef tenderloin, Daisy Dairy pecorino, local arugula

- **Entrées**
  - **Pickerel**
    - Lake Ontario pickerel, County greens purée
  - **Pork**
    - Boris’ smoked hock, Ingrid’s sauerkraut
  - **Lamb**
    - Ewe’d’a Boss Farm’s lamb rack, locally grown seasonal vegetables

- **Desserts**
  - **Apple Tartlette**
    - Served with maple syrup ice cream from Susie’s Sugar Bush
  - **Almond Ricotta Cake**
    - Served with local blueberry compote
  - **Dark Chocolate Ice Cream**
    - Served with seasonal berries
Outside of their menus, restaurants can and do employ further signifiers of a commitment to local food through design imagery and décor used to create an aesthetic and ambiance aligned with the regional identity of Prince Edward County as a culinary tourism destination. An unmistakeable form of imagery linking the restaurant to the region is the use of a regional map showing the provenance of ingredients and supplier locations. A prominent map of the region displaying exactly this was observed in one restaurant (see Figure 4.2).

**Figure 4.2 – Ingredient Provenance Map**

Source: Buddha Dog, Picton

A ‘County aesthetic’ intended to communicate a commitment to ‘local’ can also be observed, which includes imagery referencing the County’s Loyalist settlement, as well as its agricultural and food processing heritage. Additionally, drawing links to Prince Edward County’s agricultural heritage is an outright development goal of the economic development
office, as expressed by one producer when investigating the depth of support for her new business:

“One of his concerns was there was lots of food and lots of grape growing happening, but traditional agriculture is really the base, and what made this project attractive for him, was that it was not about the new agriculture in Prince Edward County, this was about the old agriculture in Prince Edward County.”

Figure 4.3 provides an illustration of this, with the image on the left drawn from a promotional brochure that uses a stylized topographic map of the region to emphasize the importance of the location of the business to the identity of its products; the top right image of beer coasters draws on nostalgic images of the countryside to both name and promote the brewery; the middle image of a restaurant logo intended to evoke nostalgia for the region’s rich agricultural history; and, the bottom right image of a wine label references Prince Edward County’s iconic sand dunes.

**Figure 4.3 – Examples of the 'County Aesthetic'**

![Image showing examples of the 'County Aesthetic']

Source: Fifth Town Brochure, Sandbanks Website and the Taste Trail Guide
In addition to imagery, physical artefacts which further support this aesthetic are also visible in restaurant décor (e.g., the use of recycled barn boards and limestone in construction and grape vines and canned vegetables used as decorations). ‘By-association’ signifiers of a local food commitment also exist, including display of the Taste the County logo and of promotional materials and brochures for culinary tourism events and activities (see Figure 4.4). These secondary signifiers, though not the primary method used by restaurants to attract culinary tourists, can be compelling in bolstering a customer’s overall culinary tourism experience by enriching the restaurant experience and advertising events that offer additional opportunities to ‘consume’ the countryside.

Figure 4.4 – Harvestin’ the County Map Cover Art

Source: PEC Locally Grown Guide and Map, 2010
4.1.2 What are the Most Common Local Food Signifiers Employed by Restaurants?

An array of signifiers of a local food commitment was observed on the restaurant menus. Indirect terminology frequently referenced included ‘local [ingredient name]’, ‘County [ingredient name]’, ‘locally grown’ and ‘locally raised’. This terminology was often used in conjunction with an additional quality qualifier, such as ‘fresh’ or ‘seasonal’. The most frequently cited direct signifier was the mention of the producer’s name (e.g. Pete’s peas).

The most popular by-association signifier on menus was the use of the Taste the County logo (Figure 4.5), symbolizing the restaurant’s participation in the Taste Trail program – a culinary tourism route showcasing participating wineries and restaurants. The Taste Trail Map is the go-to guide for culinary tourists. Highway 401 exit signs for Prince Edward County, which postdate the formation of Taste the County, advertise the Taste Trail. The erecting of these signs are considered a turning point for culinary tourism in Prince Edward County, as expressed by one participant:

“\text{When we started in 2005, it was just the very beginning. Unless happenstance led you to Prince Edward County, it was unlikely that there would be a reason for you to come. And, back then, the conversation would go something like: 'You're going where? Prince Edward County. Oh! I love Prince Edward Island!' or 'You're going where? Prince Edward County. Where? Sandbanks. Oh!'. And the economic impact wouldn't have been that great because it would have been you go to the beach and then pack up and leave.”}  

Markers for the Taste Trail (Figure 4.6) are also posted periodically along the County’s main thoroughfare, the Loyalist Parkway, and on secondary roads along the route.
Figure 4.5 – Taste the County Logo

Source: Taste the County Website, 2012

Figure 4.6 – Taste Trail Markers

4.2 Direct Procurement Partnerships: Configurations and Preferred Methods

Direct procurement partnerships serve as the interface between the point where local food is produced and where it will eventually be consumed, and it is demand for these ingredients by culinary tourists that drives their formation. By examining how partnerships between producers and restaurants function, a clearer picture of the impact of culinary tourism on the production and consumption of local food can be gained.

4.2.1 How are Direct Procurement Partnerships Configured?

Direct procurement partnerships formed between restaurants and producers were found to display a variety of configurations, determined: (1) by the number and nature of linkages restaurants had with local producers, (2) by the method of product procurement used by the restaurants, (3) by the restaurant’s commitment to the producer, and (4) by the resulting impact on the restaurant menu. Restaurants ranged from having a single linkage to a local producer to having multiple linkages to multiple producers. The nature of a linkage can be regarded as straightforward or more complex, with the complexity of the partnership increasing for products with a high degree of seasonality and vulnerability to pests, disease and inclement weather, and according to the level of difficulty associated with the procurement method and the extent to which the restaurant’s commitment to local procurement impacts the menu.

In regard to the number and nature of linkages, restaurants were observed to possess either: (1) straightforward single-product/single-source linkages, characterized by products with stable or consistent availability on a year-round basis (e.g., maple syrup, some types of cheese); (2) more complex single-product/single-source linkages, characterized by products with a high degree of seasonality, namely a short and fluctuating window of availability, a shorter shelf life and/or a higher degree of vulnerability to inclement weather (e.g., strawberries, tomatoes);
and/or, (3) multiple-product/single-source linkages, in cases where restaurants accepted multiple products, usually vegetables, from a single producer, in varying quantities order-to-order depending on the amount and quality of products a producer had available. Straightforward single-product/single-source linkages tended to be more static and were found on menus that had few if any seasonal changes. More complex single-product/single-source linkages tended to be more dynamic and were found on menus that changed seasonally and/or offered seasonal specials. Multiple-product/single-source linkages were highly dynamic and were found on menus that could be changed to reflect what products had been sourced that day or week.

4.2.2 What are the Preferred Procurement Methods of Restaurants?

The restaurants in the sample were found to make use of a variety of procurement methods when sourcing local ingredients. These methods included deliveries to restaurants made by producers, restaurants picking up products from producers and restaurants shopping for ingredients at roadside stands and other retail outlets. By far, delivery to the restaurant was the preferred procurement method, owing to its relative ease, and was often a prerequisite for exchange given the time inputs required for the alternatives. One chef explains:

“We stopped using a local lamb supplier because we had to go to the abattoir to pick them up. We just don't do the volume that I can hire another staff member, so I can drive around and pick it up. And it's the same for them as well. They don't have enough time to drive it down and I understand that completely. We are just not at the point yet that we can work it out.”

The second most employed procurement method was shopping at roadside stands, preferred for its relative ease and the casualness of purchasing. In only a very few cases, restaurants picked up local food products directly from producers, and this was only in cases where there was no other option to procure certain specialty items.
A restaurant’s commitment to a local producer was found to be influenced by the intensity of the obligation to purchase, ranging from informal to more formal. In the case of the roadside stand, restaurants were found to have no formal obligation to purchase. Here, restaurants were able to decide what, if any, products to purchase based on price, quality and available quantity. Explained by one chef:

“'I'm not going to buy something from down the road if it's rotten. It still has to be a quality product. Since we've been here, the growers have worked with us to grow what we would like to see... They are keen and they want to try new things, so we've introduced them to some of the products that we used to use. They're experimenting to see if they will work in the soil here and the climate.”

In more formal cases, restaurants had made a prior agreement to purchase, either pre-season or in set amounts order-to-order while the product is available. Here, the restaurant may be obliged to purchase whatever products are produced, regardless of the actual quality.

The number of linkages between a restaurant and producers did not seem to be determined by the type of restaurant, with all types displaying mixed results. In addition, it was found that restaurants in the sample largely accept in-season produce. As noticed, the preferred procurement methods used strongly favour the restaurants, in terms of the input of time and the degree of formality in the obligation to purchase. As such, it was found that there exists a large degree of uncertainty in these partnerships, particularly from the perspective of producers, with more than half the restaurant sample favouring informal purchasing arrangements.

4.3 Why Source Local Ingredients?: Restaurant Motivations for Direct Procurement

Both the restaurants and producers in the study were asked to explain their motivations for taking part in local-direct procurement partnerships. By far the most frequently cited motivation was customer demand. Restaurants asserted that local and tourist clientele sought opportunities to consume local food in a restaurant setting. The restaurants believed that their
customers were drawn to local food because it offers the chance to experience the particular
flavours of Prince Edward County, commonly referred to as ‘terroir’. Both restaurants and
wineries rely heavily on this term to conceptualize the impact of ‘place’ on a product’s flavour
profile, as expressed by one local food purchaser:

“The wineries will tell you that the limestone affects the taste, well the limestone
affects the hay too. By [sourcing locally], I felt we could make a reasonable case
for our [product] being a taste of place. We wanted to source local, we wanted to
keep it in the local economy and I felt that would help with taste of place."

In addition to acknowledging that a clear rationale for showcasing local food on menus
was to attract customers interested in culinary tourism, restaurant responses also echoed the
much heralded benefits of local food discussed in Chapter Two. These benefits include the
elevated level of quality attributed to local food in regard to taste and freshness and the trickle-
down benefits of supporting local business. There was general agreement amongst the
restaurants sampled that showcasing local food items on the menu is an advantageous approach
to attract both tourists and local customers, particularly local food from an existing core group of
local food producers whose names and products are recognizable to ‘plugged-in’ visitors. Here,
restaurants cited ‘must-have’ ingredients, and these were found on numerous menus in the target
group.

In addition to customer attraction and ‘quality’, another commonly referenced motivation
was that local food and direct dealings with producers create opportunities for ingredient
customization and experimentation that might otherwise be difficult to achieve. When asked
how his restaurant chooses local suppliers, one chef responded:
“Sometimes it's word of mouth. Sometimes we'll get an idea from other restaurants that we go to, and then we'll sort of put feelers out. We'll ask our other suppliers if they know anyone or if they can grow it or produce it or if they know someone. In the winter when I know the farmers are about to buy their seed, I sometimes sit down with them and look through their seed catalogues and ask them to grow specific vegetables for us. That works well.”

Here, specialty or rare vegetables and cultivars were a primary attraction. The direct restaurant-producer relationships allow restaurants to request specific cultivars be grown, such as ones that might be difficult or overly expensive to source from elsewhere. Additionally, restaurants could request special growing and processing specifications, such as vegetables of a particular size or atypical cuts of meats.

4.4 Expectations and Challenges Reported by Restaurants

4.4.1 Operational Expectations of Restaurants

Both the restaurants and producers were asked to describe any necessary conditions required for creating direct procurement partnerships. On the part of restaurants, certain conditions are expected for a local direct procurement partnership to be possible. The primary expectations of the partnership from the restaurant perspective relate to price, delivery, quality and flexibility to match demand. If these expectations are not met, this often prohibits the partnership from being viable for the restaurant, as expressed by one chef when remarking on how to decide what products to buy locally:

“There are various things. Quality. Price. I will pay more for quality, but if it's outrageous and I can't make money off of it, I'm not going to do it. And that happens with some of the produce. To buy organic onions for my stock for the amount I use... I can't charge people the money... Also service, if you're telling me you're going to deliver it to me on this day by this time, I'm going to expect that because we've got deadlines everyday with lunch and dinner service, so that's a huge factor - whether you can consistently bring me the product on time.”
First, the restaurant sample indicated that the product price must be comparable to the price of an equivalent product from a conventional source. Second, where possible, restaurants expressed preference for arrangements where the producer is responsible for delivering the product to the restaurant. In some cases, this expectation could be set aside if the producer’s location is proximate enough for the restaurant to manage a pickup. Third, restaurants expected products to hold comparable or superior quality to a similar product from a conventional source (i.e. level of cleanliness, freshness and flavour). Finally, restaurants specified that producers must be able to match sometimes-variable demand. In cases where a restaurant’s menu changes seasonally and if a producer’s name is to be printed on the menu, the restaurant will expect the producer to be able to match orders continually over the course of the season. In cases where a restaurant’s menu is more flexible, the restaurant will expect the producer to accept varying demand from order-to-order.

4.4.2. Operational Challenges and Barriers for Restaurants

The most significant barrier to direct procurement partnerships from the restaurant perspective was price. Most restaurants agreed that price acts as a prohibitive factor, either upfront (pre-partnership), or in subsequent seasons (in cases where prices have risen, or the chef is unable to continue in the subsequent season at the current price). Most chefs also agreed that timely deliveries were an important operational challenge. Ingredients need to be delivered in advance of the restaurant's opening hours, without fail. In cases where the producer is unable to deliver the order, it can also be a challenge for the chef to arrange for the order to be picked up. Likewise, products that are easier to come by, such as assorted vegetables, result in relationships that are much more volatile, as it is much easier for a chef to substitute or find an alternative
source if the price is too high or if the producer is unable to meet product quality and volume demands.

Additional operational challenges revealed in the interviews included location, knowledge and acceptance of the seasonality of ingredients and the ability of producers to undertake value-adding strategies such as further processing.

4.5 The Producer Sample: Finding a Niche on Restaurant Menus

In approaching the producer sample, much like the restaurant sample, a central aim was to determine both the emblematic and real-world position and importance of local food in relation to the overall marketing practices of producers in the study region. Prince Edward County has a long-standing relationship with food production and processing, with the canning industry in particular playing a formative role in the development of the region. Figure 4.7 shows examples of canning labels from the early twentieth century. As in many rural regions in Canada, agricultural production in Prince Edward County has experienced a decline in recent decades as the globalized food economy has emerged as a dominant force. Procurement partnerships with restaurants are an example of how producers have adapted to the challenges by circumnavigating the global market for food products, but arguably only in part.
4.5.1 Which Producers are Appearing on Restaurant Menus?

The producer sample for this study is comprised of producers located within Prince Edward County that market their products directly to restaurants. The sample was identified through the restaurant menu survey and in the restaurant interviews. In addition to the over a dozen wineries operating in the County at the time of the study, 20 additional suppliers of local food to restaurants were enumerated. These producers supplied a range of products to restaurants, including meats, vegetables, cheeses and alcoholic beverages other than wine. Of the vegetable producers, some offered a single specialty product (e.g. asparagus), while others produced a range of crops. The meat producers generally specialized in a single product (e.g. pork or lamb). There were also 2 cheese producers, a brewery and a cider house. Interviews were conducted with 7 local food suppliers, including a winery, a cheese producer, small- and medium-scale mixed vegetable producers, specialty vegetable producers and a specialty meat
producer (see Table 3.2). In addition to representing a range of local food products, the sample also captures variety in terms of operation size, producer demographics and the amount of product sold for local consumption by restaurants and via other marketing channels in relation to the overall business. Some producers in the sample supplied only a small number of restaurants, while others were found on nearly every menu in the sample. Generally, there was not a predictable relationship between the type of product and the number of restaurants supplied. Both single-product/specialty producers (e.g., cheese) and multiple-product producers (e.g., mixed vegetables) were found to supply a similar number of restaurants. When the size of the operation is considered, as would be expected bigger operations supplied a larger number of restaurants.

With the exception of the winery, chosen to act as an exemplar for the wine industry, the local food producers interviewed in this study were chosen because their names appeared most frequently on restaurant menus. This core group appeared over and over again. In fact, if a restaurant showcased only a single local food item on their menu, it was likely to be one of these 7 producers. This relatively small number stands out in comparison to the large number of producers participating in Prince Edward County’s larger local food system, as can be seen from the listing of over 90 producers in the region’s Harvestin’ the County map. Of all the local food producers in Prince Edward County, fewer than 10% have strong ties to restaurants. Although this observation will be discussed further in Chapter Five, it is worth noting here that participation as a supplier to restaurants is hindered by several factors, including barriers imposed by local government, such as the promotion of value-adding production systems over the production of raw ingredients, as well as barriers arising from the producer-restaurant dynamic itself.
4.5.2 Restaurant-Focused Marketing Strategies and Channels

The interviews revealed that a variety of marketing strategies were employed by the local food producers in order to attract and maintain partnerships with restaurants, including meet and greet events, backdoor marketing, roadside stands, online ordering forms, pre-processing of products and the promotion of novel specialty items. Farmer ‘meet and greet’ events, organized by the culinary tourism marketing agency Taste the County, help producers and restaurants to connect in a casual and economical way, laying a groundwork for a future partnership. Backdoor marketing and roadside stands are the two predominant methods used in the distribution of local food products. Backdoor marketing, used in both a figurative and literal sense, requires higher inputs on the part of the producer, but can be an advantageous strategy to both attract and maintain business. This type of marketing relies on the quality or novelty of a product as the primary selling point, as these transactions are based on the impulse of the chef. The appeal of employing a roadside stand is the convenience of not having to make deliveries; however, the downside is that there is a requirement on the part of the restaurant to visit the stand. This requirement might not be problematic if the stand is centrally located relative to restaurants. The use of online ordering forms and the pre-processing of products are two methods used to enhance the value of a partnership. For some restaurants, submitting orders via an online form can be seen as an advantage. From the producer perspective, online ordering streamlines the ordering process. Pre-processing, such as washing and trimming vegetables, is appealing to restaurants because it minimizes waste and reduces processing time in the kitchen. For some restaurants, pre-processing is a prerequisite for business, for others it is an added bonus.
4.5.3 Other Marketing Channels

None of the local food producers interviewed relied solely on restaurant sales. The highest proportion of restaurant sales for any one business was estimated at 30%, with most hovering around 10% or less. When asked why this was the case, most producers cited failing demand as the primary factor, with the challenges of the producer-restaurant dynamic itself (discussed below) playing a contributing role. In addition to restaurant sales, the most common local marketing channels used were roadside stands and farmers’ markets. Roadside stands, a familiar sight during peak season in many agricultural regions, are an institution in Prince Edward County. One farm in the target group (not interviewed) is a particular testament to how important a roadside stand can be to a farm’s overall business, with family members from three generations helping to run the stand during peak season (Horntrip 2010). Farmers’ markets were a major marketing channel for roughly half of the sample. Despite the fact that Prince Edward County does not play host to its own farmers’ market, it was reported that the extra labour required to access nearby markets posed less of a barrier than the practicalities of direct restaurant sales. These producers travelled to nearby cities (e.g. Belleville, Kingston, Peterborough) and to Toronto to access the markets there. Because markets often occur on the same day, producers were sometimes required to enlist extra help in order to visit more than one market. Other less common channels included co-operative selling, community shared agriculture (CSA), and on-site farm stores. Like roadside stands, on-site farms stores are location dependent. Farm stores require additional infrastructure, but can allow the producer to sell a wider range of products with refrigeration, as well as to stay in operation in inclement weather and in the shoulder seasons.
4.6 Why Sell Locally?: Producer Motivations for Direct Procurement

While direct commercial gains constitute the obvious motivation for marketing to restaurants, interviews with producers revealed that although restaurants were not a primary marketing channel, indirect commercial advantages could also be gleaned where restaurants listed the producer’s name on the menu. As mentioned earlier, this was the most common local food signifier used on menus and the filter through which the producer sample for this research was selected; however, most producers cited this as a benefit of the partnership, not a prerequisite to do business. The relatively small core group of producers participating in direct marketing to restaurants implies that producers can derive a certain amount of prestige or celebrity from these partnerships. The tight network connecting restaurants and producers to the larger local food system, including culinary tourism nodes, means these producers benefit from exposure to media and scholarly attention and are relied upon for marketing in culinary tourism as well. For the majority of the producers in this study, taking time out of the workday for an interview was old hat. Furthermore, producers in the sample can frequently be found featured in the promotional materials of the culinary tourism industry and of the County more generally. Related to the third objective of this research, this finding suggests that these producers contribute to the outward expansion of the local food system through their celebrity status and marketing potential as it pertains to culinary tourism.

In addition to the commercial motivations stemming from sales to restaurants, the non-commercial advantages of direct dealings with local restaurants were also expressed by producers. In the case of one grower of assorted vegetables, direct dealings with a local restaurant made sense due to the scale of the operation as a hobby farm and its proximity to a particular restaurant that offered daily local specials. The grower also claimed simply to enjoy
the interaction with the restaurant, and so was willing to invest the time required to maintain the relationship.

4.7 Expectations and Challenges Reported by Producers

4.7.1 Operational Expectations of Producers

Not surprisingly, the operational expectations expressed by producers conflict with those of restaurants. From the perspective of local food producers, the primary expectations of direct marketing partnerships expressed in the interviews relate to price, timely ordering and payments, pick-ups where possible and flexibility to match supply and accept sometimes inconsistent quality. First, local food producers in the sample that are limited in scale reported that they seek a market price that reflects the cost of production and this cost is generally higher in comparison to large-scale conventional operations. Second, it was observed that producers tend to play multiple roles within the business. Given high time and managerial demands, these small scale producers require restaurants to submit timely orders, unlike larger distributors that can often accommodate last minute requests. Third, the reduced profitability of these partnerships, given specifications by restaurants that go beyond standards that apply in other markets, necessitates timely payments as well. Finally, the producers expressed a need to seek a degree of flexibility in supply and quality to accommodate unforeseeable production challenges, such as seasonal variation and lower (or higher) crop yields.
4.7.2. Operational Challenges and Barriers for Producers

The most important barriers to local direct procurement partnerships from the producer perspective seem to be primarily organizational in nature. Most producers cited last minute orders as a key challenge. Price, as mentioned, was also listed as a major barrier, with chefs comparing the price of locally produced goods with the price of conventionally sourced alternatives, as well as prices offered by other local producers. More generally, marketing was cited as a challenge for producers, with many in the region relying solely on back-door marketing to create and maintain partnerships. In some cases, producers addressed this challenge by advertising in local print media and offering online ordering on their websites. Some producers had modern websites and used email contact heavily, while others could only be reached by landline.

Producers offering specialty or refined products (e.g., artisan cheese and bread, heirloom cultivars of vegetables, heritage breeds of livestock, beer and wine) tended to form more stable relationships because these products are less elastic or harder to substitute. Over time, these types of products become recognizable to consumers, sought out and demanded on menus.

Location played a major role in the formation of partnerships, not just in regard to delivery, but also in regard to the success of a farm stand (if present). If a producer operated a successful farm stand, they were less likely to be willing to devote extra energy to the development and maintenance of restaurant partnerships. This suggests that for producers in a central location, the potential benefit of delivering directly to restaurants does not outweigh the potential benefit of running a farm stand which does not have delivery obligations and can be managed in a more informal manner, as is the case with the ‘honour-system’ type stands frequently found along busier driving routes.
4.8 When Local Food Becomes a Tourism Experience: Commodification and Expansion

A third objective of this research was to investigate the processes related to culinary tourism that lead to the commodification of local food systems and the marketing of local food products beyond regional boundaries. Restaurants contribute to this process in multiple ways. For example, once a chef finds a supplier they are consistently happy with, they may take this supplier’s product with them when they move out of the region, thereby showcasing the product on menus outside the region. Additionally, chefs contribute to this promotion by using their signature ingredients on the road when participating in special events, television appearances, fundraisers and competitions. As well, enterprising restauranteurs and chefs can seek to expand the production of a successful product they have developed, and sell their products in other markets in the province, country or abroad, as expressed by one business owner:

“One of our fall projects is trying to do a CSA-abattoir… to raise the money… to take the provincially inspected abattoir and turn it into a federally inspected abattoir… so that when we make our [product name], we can package them to go to a Big Carrot, a Whole Foods, a Loblaws… which is a huge win. All of sudden we can support a whole bunch more family farms. If we can actually help create a larger economic development impact, it's a great story, it creates jobs.”

Local food producers contribute to this process by selling their products into outside markets. This case is easily observed in Prince Edward County, where many producers sell their goods in several surrounding markets each week. It is important to recognize that, by and large, these processes are heralded as markers of success and do indeed reflect a boon to the regional economy. What this might mean for the local food system will be discussed in Chapter Five.

It is inherent in the nature of tourism that tourists take away a piece of the place they visit, through photographs and souvenirs. When culinary tourism relies on local food as the basis of appeal or attraction, a paradox emerges. Culinary tourism plays a major role in the commodification of local food and the expansion of local food systems. Culinary tourists are
drawn to a particular region in order to consume local flavours and culture. A useful way to extract more revenue from tourists is to package local food items to sell as souvenirs to be brought home. Purveyors that participate in this sort of marketing are also able to use it as a form of advertising for their products and businesses, either to attract potential customers or create new markets for their products in different regions. In this way, local food systems become extended beyond their regional boundaries. Products become known more widely, and can act as a mechanism for attracting tourists to the region. At some point in history, for example, Parmesan cheese was a relatively unknown cheese made in Parma, Italy. Today, it is rare that this cheese would not accompany a spaghetti dinner made in any kitchen around the world. Similarly, the sparkling wines of France's Champagne region are so renowned that sparkling wines from other regions are often referred to erroneously by their protected name. The difference between Parma and Champagne and culinary tourism regions like Prince Edward County is that the identities, cultures and products of these well-established culinary regions have evolved over centuries, whereas Prince Edward County has only just begun to brand itself as a culinary tourism destination. In places like Parma and Champagne, the regional identity has been associated with these products long before living memory. In Prince Edward County, there is much contestation over what the promoted identity of the region should look like, what products the region should be known for and which actors should be involved in its promotion.

4.9 Summary

This research situates local food producers and restaurants that showcase local ingredients as central players in the culinary tourism supply chain, with producers supplying restaurants with seasonal vegetables, meats and value-added products such as cheese and wine, and restaurants showcasing these ingredients on their menus in order to attract tourists and local
clientele alike. This supply chain is largely supported and driven by the marketing efforts of the culinary tourism industry, which highlight the quality-imbued goods and consumable experiences offered by local producers and chefs while drawing on natural, cultural and historical attributes of the region to market it as a culinary tourism destination. In this way it can be said that the culinary tourism industry is reliant upon a visible and vibrant local food system to create and market products and experiences that attract tourists to the region.

The findings suggest that direct procurement partnerships formed between local food producers and restaurants are largely driven by opportunities created through culinary tourism. It was found that restaurants primarily seek out local food suppliers to satisfy a demand for local ingredients on restaurant menus by culinary tourists. Local clientele were not found to act as a significant source of revenue for restaurants. Although the potential of this market was acknowledged, most restaurants reported a scarcity of business from locals in both the high (summer months) and low (winter months) seasons. In addition, it was found that restaurants generally source local ingredients from a core group of local producers, particularly those that produce specialty and value-added products, that the relationships formed between these two groups generally favour the restaurants, but also that the restaurant market is not a major source of revenue for producers.

In regard to the maintenance of relationships, the partnerships were variable in nature, with some being long-standing and stable, and others being highly volatile, due primarily the type of product and the personalities of the actors involved. Personality type is a contributing factor to partnership maintenance simply because the actors have to interact face-to-face and often day-to-day. Personality differences or mismatches can be reason enough to end a partnership. Additionally, both restaurants and producers were found to contribute to the
expansion of the local food system by seeking new business or marketing opportunities outside of the region and by participating in the marketing and promotion of the region as a culinary tourism destination.

While the culinary tourism industry appears to be dependent on the local food system, at least as far as the adequate provision of attention-grabbing ingredients, the findings suggest that when this relationship is examined more closely, a more nuanced and telling dynamic emerges. Restaurants were found to be critically dependant on a supply of speciality and value-added local food products to attract clientele, but only a relatively small number of partnerships were required to satisfy their demand. Local food producers were shown to achieve both commercial and non-commercial gains from their dealings with restaurants, but also to rely on other (non-local) marketing channels as their primary source of revenue. It appears that the culinary tourism industry may not be as reliant simply upon a healthy local food system (i.e. one in which the supply and demand of local food is met locally in an economically viable and sustainable way), as was previously suggested, but more so on the provision of products branded with a local food identity. In order to interrogate this idea more closely, Chapter Five will explore the factors that limit the number of producers engaging in the culinary tourism supply chain. Additionally, the discussion will confront the idea of what aspects of local food are drawn on in the culinary tourism industry by examining how the local food system is transformed through culinary tourism.
Chapter Five: Discussion

Drawing on the findings presented in Chapter Four, this chapter examines elements of the producer-restaurant dynamic that have an impact on the production and consumption of local food, either by limiting the supply of local food products to restaurants or by limiting the demand by restaurants. First, factors limiting the number of producers actively engaged in the restaurant local food supply chain will be explored. These include relatively obvious barriers to participation, as well as those obscured by the planning and development process. Next, major operational challenges to producer-restaurant partnerships will be examined more closely, with attention paid to the underlying causes and subsequent impacts of these challenges. The third section of this chapter considers ways to improve upon the producer-restaurant dynamic in a way that favours both groups equally. A fourth section focuses on the third objective of this research, and examines how the local food system is transformed by its extension beyond the boundaries of the region through the influence of culinary tourism. Finally, a brief section outlines some of the ways the local food system in Prince Edward County has continued to evolve in the time since the field research portion of this project was originally undertaken in 2010.

5.1 Factors Limiting Producer Participation

A primary line of inquiry in this research was to investigate the ways in which the development and promotion of culinary tourism is creating or expanding linkages between farms and restaurants in Prince Edward County. The research revealed that while there are a number of local food producers in Prince Edward County (self-identified through participation in the region’s local food map), only a small number of these producers are engaged in direct dealings with restaurants, despite the long-standing role of restaurants in facilitating the consumption of local food. An important question stemming from this finding is why are so few producers
actively engaged in the restaurant local food supply chain in Prince Edward County? Interviews with restaurants and producers uncovered a number of common and idiosyncratic challenges experienced by the participants that limit the success of the partnerships (see Chapter Four). In addition to these operational challenges, certain barriers to participation also exist.

Visible barriers to participation include market dynamics such as competition from other producers and international distribution corporations, as well as price and quality expectations. In terms of competition from other local suppliers, entry into the restaurant market can be relatively easy or difficult for producers, depending on the products offered. The findings suggest that producers with the deepest and most consistent linkages to the restaurant market are those that have specialized in a highly differentiated and often highly seasonal product, such as heritage tomatoes. When the producers of these sorts of ingredients form successful partnerships with restaurants, and the restaurants identify their producers by name via the menu, other would-be competitors are essentially barred from entering the market, or at a minimum are challenged to find a restaurant partner. The proliferation of producers’ names on menus creates a celebrity effect, as the name becomes familiar to other restaurants and to customers as well. Additionally, the restaurant market is quickly saturated because a single producer can easily match demand for particular ingredients. This is supported by the general observation that restaurants comprise a relatively small share of sales in contrast to the overall sales by local food producers in the region. In contrast to the restaurant sector, it was generally observed that farmers’ markets are more easily accessible and act as a much greater source of revenue for producers, particularly for those engaged in mixed vegetable production. This observation can be accounted for by the greater price goods achieve at farmers’ markets in comparison to restaurant sales, the greater
volume of product that can be sold, room for flexibility in supply and perhaps even a greater sense of gratification from dealing directly with those who will be consuming the product.

The research findings suggest the existence of additional barriers to participation that are less immediate, visible or even intended compared to those discussed above, but which are significant nevertheless. These barriers, which act to limit a greater number of producers from participating in the restaurant local food supply chain, are related to the promotion and support activities of the region's economic development office. While only some of the producers interviewed identified access to development support as an operational challenge, the key informant interviews revealed that support for the local food system in the region is not currently aimed at the production of raw ingredients (particularly vegetables), but rather at the processing of raw ingredients into value-added products. This strategic targeting of development support has an adverse impact on small and medium scale mixed vegetable producers and favours larger scale specialized producers which are better equipped to feed into various value-adding channels such as processing facilities and packaging design.

From the perspective of the economic development office, allocating funds to support value-added local food products, as opposed to the production of vegetables, indirectly supports producers while also creating new business opportunities including processing facilities, and in the areas of product distribution, marketing and culinary tourism. Examples of value-added products that would attract development support include fruit and vegetable preserves, vinegars, mustards, cured meats, cheeses, wine, beer, cider and spirits. The interviews with vegetable producers in PEC suggest that this channelling of funds is viewed as excluding farmers from accessing local food markets, while favouring products with greater marketing potential by means of culinary tourism, as well as through specialty shops both near and further afield.
economic development office is thus seen as being oriented more to tourists than local residents, creating new and competing demands on rural land use and playing a catalytic role in the continuing transition of the County into a multifunctional space. This brings back into focus the paradoxical nature of the relationship between local food systems and culinary tourism, with the perception of some producers being that culinary tourism relies on export-oriented production systems that exploit agricultural and culinary heritage, while at the same time limiting opportunities for farmers.

5.2 Addressing Major Operational Challenges

For those producers who are able to access the restaurant market and for the restaurants with which have created partnerships, a number of operational challenges were identified by the research participants. This section examines the underlying causes and subsequent impacts of a selection of these challenges more closely, focusing on difficulties surrounding product distribution, the impact of seasonality and climatic variability and access to a skilled labour force. The intent is to identify the reasons why these challenges persist and some of the ways in which they might be addressed.

5.2.1 Distribution

Distribution was an operational challenge identified by producers and restaurants, with both groups citing time constraints as primary obstacles. An obvious question stemming from this finding is why has a local food distribution business not emerged in Prince Edward County to fill this need? In other regions of the province, local food distributors service restaurants, food retailers, universities, hospitals and households directly. For example, 100km Foods Inc. services the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and 100 Mile Food Services distributes local food to
Southwestern Ontario (100km Foods Inc. n.d.; 100 Mile Food Services 2012). In Prince Edward County, the economic development office does not currently seek to support a local food distributor and this might explain why no distributor exists.

A constant tension exists between producers and restaurants regarding who will incur the cost of delivery, in light of time requirements, vehicle availability and other associated costs. The issue is further muddied by food safety regulations that impose food storage temperature requirements on food handling businesses. Although current regulations have not been revised to reflect the increasing role of farmers in transporting and marketing their goods directly, the Province of Ontario is moving towards imposing greater food handling regulations on farms in light of food safety scares. This means that transporting food in an unrefrigerated vehicle, while not necessarily illegal, is a risky undertaking particularly if there were to ever be a food safety issue. Currently, most fresh produce and some meat products are transported in the personal vehicles of producers and kitchen staff. At the time of this research, one producer had invested in a refrigerated van for transporting fresh produce to farmers’ markets in Toronto, and also planned on using the vehicle for restaurant deliveries when available. In this case, the associated costs of the refrigerated vehicle were justified because of the importance of farmers’ market sales to the overall business; that the vehicle would be used to make deliveries to restaurants was of secondary importance. In addition to food safety issues, the quality of ingredients in terms of freshness is adversely affected by transportation without refrigeration, which might contribute to the high level of elasticity, or the ease of product substitution, attributed to local food products.
5.2.2 Seasonality and Labour

One oft-heralded benefit of a globalized food system is that ingredients are sourced from a host of different locations around the world, buffering the impact of climatic conditions and seasonality. Indeed, a core feature of the conventional commercial food system in North America today is that nearly all foods are on offer all the time, an expectation that does not co-exist well with local food sensibilities. Local food systems, producers and restaurants must contend with these factors and the subsequent impact of weather on yield and quality of local food products. The volume of precipitation, the timing of frosts and particularly harsh temperatures have a direct impact on the price, volume and quality of certain products, particularly fresh produce, but value-added goods such as maple syrup and wine might also be affected. Indirectly, climatic conditions can have an adverse effect on the level of trust or the perception of risk in a producer-restaurant direct procurement partnership, when yields and quality expectations are not met or the asking price is higher than expected or previously agreed upon. Seasonality can impose a heightened level of stress on a procurement relationship, affecting willingness to maintain the relationship or to form a new one. As previously mentioned, the high level of elasticity attributed to most local food products creates tenuous bonds between producers and restaurants.

Other factors relating to seasonality that can cause strain on direct procurement partnerships include the structure and flexibility of a restaurant’s menu, which are related to organizational capacity and level of skilled labour in the kitchen. Generally, ever-changing menus designed to showcase seasonal ingredients are more difficult to execute because chefs are required to demonstrate a greater expertise, while inventing new recipes and avoiding repetition. As a result, it is possible to surmise that in locales where there is not a concentration of skilled
kitchen help, restaurant menus are designed to be more easily executable and consequently less flexible in terms of ingredient inputs. As a region’s culinary tourism industry matures, some restaurants can sometimes develop a ‘destination’ reputation. For example, the Michelin Guide to Restaurants first developed to promote a road trip style of vacationing, ranks restaurants on a three star rating scheme with one star signifying a restaurant worthy of visiting if you are already passing through the area, two stars signifying a restaurant worthy of making a detour off your main route and three stars signifying a restaurant worthy of planning your trip around. While highly rated restaurants attract culinary tourists, high ratings also attract skilled labour to rural regions, despite limited employment opportunities. Depending on the restaurant’s status, some can even attract young cooks willing to work without wages to gain experience and expand their repertoires.

As a relatively new culinary tourism destination, the sample restaurants in Prince Edward County expressed difficulty in attracting and fostering skilled labour, with many of the region’s chefs at a nomadic stage in their careers. As a result, many kitchens are owner-operated, with relatively small teams, where labour capacity is fully utilized for much of the high season, resulting in little room for flexibility in menus.

5.3 Balancing the Producer-Restaurant Dynamic

In light of the barriers and operational challenges discussed in the previous two sections, successful strategies to form and foster direct procurement partnerships merit attention. Successful strategies employed by producers observed in the study area include specialization in attention-grabbing ingredients and pre-processing (cleaning and trimming of vegetables). Strategies employed by restaurants that help to maintain their relationships with producers include some level of involvement in, or a conveyance of understanding of, the goings-on around
the farm. Farm visits and personal mentions of the producers on menus make a particular impression. For both producers and restaurants, certain personal and professional attributes, such as whether someone possesses an amiable personality, their level of overall dedication to the direct procurement relationship, their ability to communicate clearly and in a respectful manner and the tactics employed in selling or procuring products, act to complement and often sustain the partnership.

It was observed that restaurants in the study area prioritize attention-grabbing local ingredients, such as cheese or seasonal fruit, over everyday pantry items such as onions and carrots. The appeal these items possess in attracting tourist and local clientele is highly influential in this choice. This is why restaurants, despite the fact that everyday pantry items are consumed in larger and more consistent volumes, seek out the producers of attention-grabbing ingredients. In comparison to conventionally sourced alternatives, the often-assumed higher cost of everyday pantry items prevents restaurants from making a local commitment for procuring these items. In general, many restaurants with a seemingly strict local food philosophy do not purchase local staples such as onions because these ingredients are not a large draw for customers and conventionally sourced equivalents can usually be acquired at a lower price. If restaurants were to commit to purchasing all possible ingredients locally, the cost would most definitely trickle down to consumers. Why this is not common practice raises questions about how much money would-be restaurant goers are willing to spend on a meal comprised predominantly of local ingredients. In order to justify price increases, restaurants would also have to raise the value and quality of a meal in regions that already experience difficulty in sourcing skilled labour. In an industry reliant on excess and disposable income, restaurant margins are very small and dependent on market fluctuations. This can be observed in the
mirroring of the rise and fall of the economy and the level of refinement or style of cuisine in restaurants. For example, fine-dining and exclusive restaurants might rework themselves as sandwich shops or around quirky themes with menus styled with small plates and shared dishes to accommodate customers not prepared to consume (and pay for) a three or four course meal.

While Prince Edward County is in its infancy as a modern culinary tourism destination, it is unclear how or if the barriers and operational challenges experienced by producers and restaurants will be resolved. As it stands, the variety of local food products represented on restaurant menus is quite limited given the region’s rich agricultural heritage, the number of self-identified local food producers operating there, as well as its natural freshwater endowments. In addition to engaging a greater number of producers, there seems to be room for many more local actors to become engaged in, and benefit from, Prince Edward County’s local food system and culinary tourism industry. Drawing on Hjalager’s (2002) hierarchal model that describes how levels of sophistication and complexity (and therefore value) can be increased in a culinary tourism supply chain, there exist many opportunities for both vertical and diagonal development in Prince Edward County’s culinary tourism industry to better integrate with other complementary industries and activities. For example, an obvious direction would be to better engage local fishing operations and associated activities, including water protection organizations (e.g. Lake Ontario Waterkeeper), which are such a large draw for tourists during the summer months.

5.4 Transformation Through Extension

One direction the culinary tourism industry in Prince Edward County is developing is through the expansion of the industry beyond the local food system’s regional boundaries by
creating products designed for export outside the region. As mentioned, the economic
development office is actively promoting this direction of development. Entrepreneurs in the
region are increasingly designing and promoting exportable products with longer shelf lives, not
just shelf stable products like wine or preserves, but packaged fresh and frozen products as well.
From a business perspective, this seems like a natural path for local food enterprises seeking to
increase sales; however, when taking theorizations pertaining to local food systems and
associated ideology into account, this sort of development, which mirrors the conventional
system of exchange, can be viewed as contrary to the primary tenets attributed to local food
exemplified by Hinrichs (2003) in Table 2.1.

The local food industry distinguishes itself from the conventional food system by calling
attention to supposed inherent heightened quality markers relating to food safety, health and
nutrition, social and environmental justice and community development. It draws on the
extensive failings of the conventional food system, such as how agriculturally-based livelihoods
are increasingly becoming less feasible, the environmental damage caused by systems dependent
on large amounts of chemical inputs (e.g. fertilizers, pesticides and fossil fuels) and food safety
scares stemming from gargantuan processing facilities and the distribution of food at a global
scale, to bolster support and promote goods branded with a unique regional identity. This
paradoxical condition raises some important questions. For example, can a truly ‘local’ food
system operate alongside the conventional (‘globalized’) system, and at what point is a local
food system no longer local; that is, can a local food system be considered local if it possesses
aspects that are clearly not local in nature or when the system does not uphold the idealized
tenets of local food systems?
Accordingly, local food systems cannot be viewed as entirely altruistic in nature, as many theorizations might insinuate. The expansion of local food systems through the creation and branding of products for export and the subsequent ‘consumption’ of the countryside, in terms of the use of imagery and associated emotional responses used in product branding and the emergence of industries that create and draw on the consumptive potential of the countryside such as culinary tourism, merely mimic the conventional food system. That is, it could be argued that it is not the local food system that is being expanded, but instead we are witnessing the morphing of part of the local food system into the conventional system using a local food-branding scheme. Much conventional wisdom exists to support this direction of development. For example, there is local support for the creation of a federally inspected red meat abattoir in Prince Edward County (revealed in restaurant and producer interviews). This facility would allow value-added meat products with a Prince Edward County local food branding to be sold nation-wide and would create jobs in the region, at the plant itself, and on livestock farms and in areas of processing, marketing and distribution. Does this apparent contradiction in terms matter if actors within the region would benefit through job creation and revenue? And importantly, does this indicate that the upholding of the primary tenets of local food still matter from the consumption perspective (i.e. as a selling point) but not from the production perspective?

5.5 Recent and Future Developments

Prince Edward County’s local food system continues to evolve. In the time since the field research portion of this project took place in 2010, a number of developments have occurred that are worth noting.
In regard to the restaurant industry, new restaurants featuring local food have opened and while others have closed, changed ownership or hired new chefs, including one of the region’s flagship local food restaurants, in response to business opportunities that have arisen elsewhere.

On the production side, interest in the development of a federally inspected red meat abattoir has emerged, which would allow meats processed in PEC to be shipped out of province and internationally. Currently, two provincial red meat slaughterhouses exist in Prince Edward County, while there are none for the processing of poultry (OMAFRA 2012). In addition, alternative marketing has become more prevalent, with one producer adopting a voucher-based CSA model (Vickis Veggies n.d.). The voucher model is a more flexible incarnation of the CSA model that allows customers to purchase vouchers for future use in customizable quantities, as opposed to purchasing an equal share of the year’s harvest. A similar model, CSE (community supported enterprise), has been used successfully in Stratford, with the rebirth of Montforte Dairy, which produces artisanal cheeses made from sheep, goat, water buffalo and cow’s milk (Montforte Dairy n.d.). It is also being used experimentally in the financing of a new restaurant in downtown Guelph, which will have an emphasis on local food (OX n.d.).

The wine and spirits industry has seen the opening of several new wineries and a distillery that produces various spirits including vodka, gin, rum and whiskey. Additionally, several smart phone apps related to wine touring and tasting have been launched.

Another interesting note relates to social media was when one of the region’s cheese factories was struck by a Listeria outbreak in 2011. The fallout remained contained and was eventually seen in a positive light owing to transparent updates via Twitter on the inspection proceedings and testing results. This is an example of how producers who have access to particular marketing know-how can use these tools to promote local food even in times of crisis.
Regarding culinary tourism promotion, in addition to the updating of the Taste Trail Map, a contest was launched to develop a logo to identify pork products from the county on restaurant menus and in stores, but was cancelled when local artists expressed dismay at being encouraged to submit design work pro bono. Finally, the economic development office has seen a boost for gastronomy-related development with a grant from the Ontario Market Investment Fund to be used for investment in value-added products such as mustard, vinegar, charcuterie, cheese, micro-brewery and micro-distillery (PEC Build a New Life Blog n.d.).

5.6 Summary

It is clear that culinary tourism is the driving force in the formation of direct procurement partnerships between local food producers and restaurants. Restaurants in Prince Edward County are compelled to seek out local ingredients to showcase on their menus in order to attract culinary tourists, their principal clientele. For their part, local food producers choose to engage with restaurants for commercial and non-commercial gains; however, only a relatively small number of producers can gain access to this market owing to factors that limit the number of producers who can participate. These factors include external forces that influence the arrangements, common practices and rules of engagement and the volume and nature of restaurant demand for local ingredients. Indeed, the opportunity exists for producers and restaurants to develop tactics that seek to balance this dynamic for producers and restaurants alike; however, in Prince Edward County the direction of development support aimed at augmenting the culinary tourism experience has an observable impact on the production of local food, direct procurement partnerships, and ultimately the consumption of local food as well.

In addition to engaging directly with restaurants, local food producers have developed other avenues for accessing opportunities provided by culinary tourism. On-farm diversification,
such as the development of bed and breakfasts, cooking schools and conference facilities with an associated farm theme, is an observable approach being employed. The Taste Trail local food map that allows farms to advertise farm-gate sales is an example of a collective effort on the part of the culinary tourism promotion agency to assist local food producers. A farmers’ market located in the County would be another example, but it does not currently exist.

Owing in part to the agenda of the economic development office, it appears that the development of exportable products imbued with a regional identity branding is where many actors investing in the future of Prince Edward County as a culinary tourism destination are putting their money. Expansion of the local food system in this way causes a transformation that raises questions about the local food system itself, how to define it, whether or not it can still be called ‘local’ and whether this even matters. It seems that, when talking about local food systems, how the system is defined matters more at the consumption end of the food chain than at the production end. In light of this, it is important to question what the impact of this direction of development will be, if the basis for the identity branding of these products (i.e. Prince Edward County’s local food system) is placed in jeopardy by the narrowing of opportunities for producers, and whether the created identity can persist regardless of whether the ‘real thing’ exists or not.
Chapter Six: Conclusion

This aim of this research has been to investigate the influence of culinary tourism on the production and consumption of local food in Prince Edward County. Following a literature review aimed at uncovering the commonalities between local food systems and culinary tourism, direct procurement partnerships formed between local food producers and restaurants that showcase local ingredients were examined in order to evaluate how culinary tourism shapes the supply and demand of local food in the prime venue for dining out, the restaurant. Prince Edward County, with both its agricultural heritage and its blossoming wine industry, has become a popular culinary tourism destination in only a short time. The region provides a unique opportunity to examine the relationship between local food and culinary tourism at a time when the web connecting producers and consumers, suppliers and purveyors, and a host of other actors together is still being woven, offering a snapshot of the processes guiding local food production and consumption activities on the ground and providing insights into the impacts of these activities on the larger local food system.

Specifically, the objectives of this research were to:

1. Investigate the common features of local food systems and culinary tourism;
2. Understand the impact of culinary tourism on local food production and consumption activities, and;
3. Explore processes driven by culinary tourism that act to extend the local food system beyond regional boundaries.

6.1 Summary of Main Findings

The first objective of this research was approached initially by way of a review of scholarly literature (in Chapter Two) that traced the emergence of food system localization as
well as concepts common to both local food and culinary tourism. Here, the overarching context of this research was introduced, with the concept of multifunctionality presented as a refocusing of the countryside from a production-oriented space to one that houses both production and consumption-oriented activities and coinciding with the creation and valorisation of rural amenities attracting new demands on rural space. Food system localization was shown to impart a number of new consumption-oriented development opportunities, including those embraced in the tourism sector. Culinary tourism, drawing on newly valued local food, is thus seen as a driving force of change in the rural sector.

To address the second objective of this research, interviews were carried out with 8 restaurants showcasing local food on their menus, 7 local food producers involved in direct dealings with restaurants and 2 key informants playing central roles in gastro-economic development in the region. Restaurants and producers were asked to explain their rationale for participating in direct procurement partnerships, as well as to describe the working dynamics of these relationships. These interviews demonstrated the influence of culinary tourism on the local food supply chain in PEC, it acted as a primary motivation for restaurants and offering producers new business opportunities. While nearly 80% of restaurants in Prince Edward County were found to advertise some form of a local food commitment, less than 10% of producers participating in the local food system were found to have strong procurement partnerships with restaurants. The majority of local producers relied on on-farm sales in the form of farm stands and on-site stores and farmers’ markets to sell their products. The key informant interviews were valuable in revealing the processes guiding the development of the region as a culinary tourism destination, as well as shedding light on some of the impacts this development approach on the production and consumption of local food. It was found that the development of the region as a
culinary tourism destination was having a ‘narrowing effect’ on producers – opening doors for some possibilities and closing doors for others. Small and medium-scale mixed vegetable producers, in particular, were observed to be experiencing the greatest challenges, while producers of specialty and value-added goods were observed to be benefiting the most from access to a new culinary tourism market.

The third objective of this research was designed as a means to explore how the perception of local food changes when its intrinsic characteristics are altered. Data collected through direct observation and in the interviews showed that the development of Prince Edward County as a culinary tourism destination is leading to an outward expansion of the local food system with the creation and promotion of exportable products branded with a local food identity. This process raises important questions about the valuation and assigned aspects of quality placed on local food, and about the methods used to promote local food products and to inform decisions on their consumption.

6.2 Scope and Limitations of the Research

Owing to its central location, natural endowments, rural amenities and the efforts of the economic development office and tourism promotion agency, a dense population of restaurants, speciality food shops and local food producers have emerged in Prince Edward County. At the forefront of this influx, chef Willi Fida first recognized the potential of this region as a culinary tourism destination in the mid-1980s, when he left a prestigious position in a Toronto restaurant to open his own restaurant and inn in the village of Bloomfield (Chatto 2007). It was in the late 1990s, however, that a real effort to establish the region’s culinary tourism image began with the formation of Taste the County and the erecting of a Highway 401 sign alerting drivers to the existence of this almost-island and its gastronomic offerings. As a relatively new destination,
Prince Edward County offers a chance to examine new approaches to development and related processes as they are formed.

While only focusing on a single ‘young’ culinary tourism destination, this research produced a dataset that is quite rich. The preliminary menu survey, used to identify target restaurants, accomplished near complete coverage of the region’s restaurant population. The sample of restaurants interviewed covered a spectrum of restaurant types, from a family-oriented shop specializing in gourmet hotdogs to fine-dining establishments focusing on refined executions and flavour profiles. The restaurant interviews revealed that only a relatively small number of the local food producers operating in the county have direct relationships with restaurants and interviews were carried out with this core group of producers. In some cases those targeted for interviews declined to participate, owing to conflicting commitments, reservations regarding sharing details of their business operations and possibly research saturation since the region has benefitted from much media attention in recent years.

Data that is missing from this research includes the perspectives of restaurants and local food producers that choose not to engage in the restaurant-local food supply chain, as well as the perspectives of other businesses targeting the culinary tourism market such as specialty food shops, wineries and tour operators. While the research was informed by direct observations of these enterprises, a picture of how the region’s local food system interacts with the culinary tourism industry that includes reported data on these perspectives was beyond the scope of this research.
6.3 Applied and Scholarly Contributions

In a practical sense, this research offers insights into the working relationships created by the supply of, and demand for, local food driven by culinary tourism. Restaurants, the primary sites of local food consumption by culinary tourists, are key components of the culinary tourism industry. They offer a chance for culinary tourists to experience the local food offerings of a region at a fundamental and essential level. Demand for local food by restaurants, created by means of culinary tourism, offers a point of entry for local food producers to access the culinary tourism market. As the research suggests that when considered in combination with the practicalities of the food sector and restaurant industry, this relationship is characterized by uncertainty and requires continuous renegotiating in order to remain feasible.

In a theoretical sense, this research reflects on the idea of the ‘paradox of local food’ that is created by culinary tourism. While it creates opportunity within the local food system, culinary tourism contributes to the commodification of local food through the development of products designed specifically for export via sales to tourists and brand expansion into other markets. Furthermore, it is observed that culinary tourism draws on agricultural and culinary heritage to attract visitors seeking to access and consume the cultural capital offered by a particular region. This heritage is transformed into a marketable regional identity that may only partially resemble the place it is supposed to represent. This raises important questions regarding the need for authenticity in local food systems and whether or not culinary tourism even requires a local food system as its base at all. The ability to invent a marketable identity, and the idea that this identity changes over time in reaction to the market, makes problematic the perception that some kind of harmony exists between the local food system and the culinary tourism industry.
6.4 Areas for Further Investigation

A number of opportunities for further investigation exist. As previously mentioned, missing from this research are the perspectives of actors who have chosen not to opt into the restaurant-local food supply chain. Insight into the rationale behind this decision might illuminate a broader portrayal of the dynamics of direct procurement partnerships, as well as identify additional groups that have been included or excluded from development support directed at the culinary tourism industry in Prince Edward County. Additionally, investigating the perspectives of other related enterprises, such as wineries, would again add to the conversation on the impact of culinary tourism as an economic development strategy.

In addition, an area for further investigation would be to examine more fully how restaurants navigate the simultaneous challenges of running a restaurant business, demand for local ingredients by their customers and their own ideals regarding local food. Sims (2010), an invaluable resource informing this research, writes about how notions surrounding 'local' are reworked by actors in the local food supply chain in light of the practicalities of the production and consumption of local food. This research observed that constructions and treatments of local food are quite polarized, with some restaurants endeavouring to commit fully to offering only locally sourced ingredients and others only showcasing one or two attention-grabbing items. A more in-depth analysis of how local food is used by restaurants, in contrast to what consumers believe is arriving on their dinner plate, would shed light on the re-storying and transformative processes employed to attract customers on the basis of local food, as well as the validity of local food as a basis for culinary tourism.
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APPENDIX A RESTAURANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

Question Set 1:

Provide some introductory information on you and the restaurant.

Prompts:
Are you a long-time resident of PEC?
How old is the business?
What is the restaurant concept?
Has the restaurant concept changed over time?
Describe the cuisine.
Describe the clientele.

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Question Set 2:

How and why does this restaurant participate in local food and culinary tourism?

Prompts:
Has this restaurant always offered local food?
What events/promotions is the restaurant involved in and to what degree?
What qualifies as ‘local food’?
How does local food offer greater quality?
What is it about local food that attracts customers?
What are the benefits of having local food on your menus? Challenges?
What is the vision of local food for your restaurant in the future?

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**Question Set 3:**
Describe your direct relationships with producers.

*Prompts:*
- What types of products do you source locally and from where?
- How did these partnerships come about?
- What shape do these partnerships take?
  - Seasonal vs. year round?
  - Same products vs. shifting products?
  - Formal vs. informal partnerships?
- What expectations do you have in terms of product specifications/quality/delivery/price?
- What are the benefits/challenges of direct procurement?

**Question Set 4:**
Talk about local food from your customers’ perspective.

*Prompts:*
- What methods do you use to attract customers on the basis of local food?
- How does your restaurant advertise local food?
- What is the message you are trying to get to customers?
- Is local food identified on the menu?
- How is local food identified (place/face/production method/certification/cultivar/breed)?
- What are the perceived demands and expectations for local food held by your customers?
APPENDIX B PRODUCER INTERVIEW GUIDE

Question Set 1:
Provide some introductory information on you and the business.

Prompts:
Are you a long-time resident of PEC?
How old is the business?
What are your products?
Do your products reflect the regional identity of PEC?

Question Set 2:
How and why does this business participate in local food and culinary tourism?

Prompts:
Has this business always participated in local food?
What events/promotions is the business involved in and to what degree?
What qualifies as ‘local food’?
How does local food offer greater quality?
What is it about local food that attracts tourists?
What are the benefits of marketing your products locally? Challenges?
Does local food fetch a better price?
How much of the business is dedicated to local food?
What other marketing channels does this business employ?
What is the vision of local food for your business in the future?
**Question Set 3:**

Describe your direct relationships with restaurants.

*Prompts:*
What restaurants do you deal with?
How did these partnerships come about?
What shape do these partnerships take?
What expectations do you have in terms of product menu specification/order side/frequency of orders/flexibility/price?
What are the benefits/challenges of direct marketing?
What proportion of the business’ revenues can be attributed to direct restaurant sales?
APPENDIX C KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

Question Set 1:
Describe the role of your agency in PEC.

Prompts:
What strategies does your agency use to promote culinary tourism in PEC?
   Internally? – i.e. in regards to farms and restaurants
   Externally? – i.e. in regards to customers and visitors
How has this role changed over time?
How long has your agency been involved in culinary tourism promotion in this area?

Question Set 2:
Why are local food and culinary tourism being used as a primary strategy for marketing the products and services of Prince Edward County?

Prompts:
What is it about PEC that makes this strategy possible?
What is it about local food that makes this strategy possible?
What is it about the local actors, restaurants and farms that makes this strategy possible?
What is it about local food that attracts tourists?
How does local food offer greater quality in terms of (1) value, (2) sensory experience, etc…?
**Question Set 3:**
Describe the relationship between farms and restaurants and their role in culinary tourism as you see it.

*Prompts:*
What (if any) operational challenges exist to farm-restaurant partnerships?

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**Question Set 4:**
What role do restaurants and purveyors play in the promotion of local food and culinary tourism at this level of governance?

*Prompts:*
Are restaurants and purveyors involved in this agency (e.g. board or committee members, event organization, etc…)?
Do they act collectively or as individuals (e.g. in self-promotion)?

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**Question Set 5:**
What vision do you have for local food and culinary tourism in PEC in the future?

*Prompts:*
Bigger/Smaller/Same focus/Different Focus?