

LAKE PLACID NEWS

SAVOR THE SEASON: North Country School head of kitchen reflects on local food



North Country School Head of Kitchen Paulette Peduzzi is retiring at the end of September after 26 years on the job. (Provided photo)

LAKE PLACID — It's hard to find an institution around the region more dedicated to producing its own food than North Country School/Camp Treetops on state Route 73.

This boarding school for grades 4 through 9 includes students from around the globe. And they get to eat the freshest food around; most of it comes straight from the school's gardens, greenhouses and animal pens.

For the past 26 years, Head of Kitchen Paulette Peduzzi has been using this fresh food to make meals for students and staff. She's set to retire on Tuesday, Sept. 29, so the News took this opportunity to ask her about the school's commitment to local food.

Peduzzi said she's not moving away after retirement. She'll continue to live in Jay. And she looks forward to enjoying all the Adirondack Mountains have to offer.

—



North Country School, Lake Placid (News photo — Andy Flynn)

LPN: From the kitchen's point of view, how is North Country School unique — when it comes to food?

Peduzzi: Because we have so much from the garden and our farm here, the meat as well as the vegetables, it's fresh. It's so fresh. We can get it in all during summer camp and during the school year, we can get vegetables fresh from the garden in the morning, and then we can cook them. And it's obviously better when it's fresh from the garden. We have such a variety of vegetables, and also we have meat that we raise. We have our pigs and our lamb and some chicken.

—

LPN: Tell me about the seasons. Specifically, what produce?

Peduzzi: Each season is a little different. In the springtime, before the children leave the school, we're already getting early things from the greenhouse. We're getting spinach, lettuce, arugula, radishes.



Chickens at North Country School (News photo — Andy Flynn)

And we're still using things that are processed that we've put in the freezer from the fall before. So we're still using winter squash, making zucchini bread, rhubarb sauce and rhubarb cakes. And we still have tomatoes leftover that we had in the freezer. So even though it's seasonal, we get the fresh things in, we're storing a lot of produce, too, so that we have things to use through the whole year.

And in the summer, it's a bounty of food because everything is coming in fresh. And in the fall, again, we're starting to use up things that were in the garden, but then there's still new things.

The root crops are coming in. So now we're starting to use more rutabaga, onions, leeks. The carrots we'll have for a long time. The potatoes. ... We don't do any canning. We don't do that, but we can freeze things.

—

LPN: When you say freeze, you mean like tomato sauce?



Vermont cranberry bean (News photo — Andy Flynn)

Peduzzi: Right. This year, we did a lot of tomato sauce, a lot of basil. We made pesto, and we dried basil, oregano and parsley. We shred a lot of zucchini for making cakes and breads. ... We freeze rhubarb, a lot of green beans. We froze some peas.

LPN: Since you arrived in 1994, how has the local food sourcing changed?

Peduzzi: It varies form year to year because of the farmer and what's actually coming out of the garden. Even the meat that we raise, sometimes there may be a bad year and we can get piglets, and so we have fewer pigs. But the school was founded on feeding the children wholesome food, good food, and we've always done that since day one. And probably trying to buy more now locally when we are out of season.



Red onions cure in the North Country School greenhouse on Tuesday, Sept. 22. (News photo — Andy Flynn)

LPN: You've just come from lunch. What was on the menu today that you produced here at the school?

Peduzzi: Today we had chicken fajitas. It was our chicken that we raised here and cooked up. Onions and peppers that were from our garden. And the salsa and sour cream. That was our main course today.

—

LPN: The sour cream comes from?

Peduzzi: The sour cream is Cabot sour cream (Vermont), so it's kind of local.

—

LPN: What crop do you wait for the most?

Peduzzi: Every season is a little bit different. ... I've always like to make spanakopita, which is spinach pie. A lot of people assume that spinach pie has just got spinach in it, but I have learned that you can use all kinds of greens in it. It doesn't just have to be spinach. It can be the Swiss chard that's in the garden or the kale. A little bit of the different greens works wonderfully.

—

LPN: What are you looking forward to now?

Peduzzi: Right now I'm waiting for the winter squash. ... Our squash is harvested. It's kind of curing now. ... I'm waiting for the delicata squash, which I think is on the menu next week.

LISTEN to the entire interview on our We are Lake Placid podcast:

<https://www.lakeplacidnews.com/news/local-news/2020/09/28/we-are-lake-placid-palette-peduzzi-north-country-school-head-of-kitchen/>.
