

# COMMUNITY-SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE: **FOOD FOR BODY AND MIND**

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**D**aniel Hoffmann is an entrepreneur extraordinaire. He started up the first Jewish CSA in Vaughan last year and business is blooming. CSA is community-supported agriculture, whereby produce is grown locally and organically and member families pay an annual fee to receive a bounty of weekly produce from June through October. At the weekly pickup, in addition to selecting one's veggie quota, there is wonderful opportunity for community socializing and learning.

Daniel runs his farm according to the wisdom of the original farmer's almanac, the Torah. His ultimate goal is to heal the earth, hence his CSA's Hebrew name, *Tikkun Adamah*. Soil preservation is the insurance policy for future fertility. When participating in the CSA, enjoying delicious organic produce, you become part of the solution to the earth's current serious challenges.

Daniel demonstrates that there is an alternative to mass-scale agriculture, which totally relies on fossil fuels. Instead of petrochemical fertilizers, intense composting, mulching and manure to enrich the soil; instead of exhausting the land, leading to erosion and top soil loss, each season a section is "retired" to the growing of nitrogen-rich rye or clover, to restore nutrient balance.

Instead of wasting vast quantities of water for irrigation, quantities of mulch and straw blanket the fields and a white fabric shelters the tender shoots, capturing and trapping moisture. Instead of pesticides, "friendly" plants mature side by side where one repels the enemy of the other (e.g. marigolds with tomatoes). Instead of risking loss of a single type of crop to a pest or disease, polyculture (interspersing of a variety of species) is practiced. Instead of adding preservatives, produce is distributed within hours of harvesting. Instead of long distance transportation, the local community is served. Instead of eating nutrient depleted vegetables, you are eating the healthiest, most delicious produce that ripened "on the vine".

The weekly pickup for Daniel's Vaughan CSA is at the Kavanah Community Garden situated at the Lebovic Jewish Community Campus, at Bathurst and Rutherford roads. There, Director Risa Alyson Strauss does a stellar

job of educating the community in a fun, relaxed atmosphere. At the garden, during the growing season, school groups, synagogue groups, and community organizations participate in hands-on workshops to learn about Jewish environmental ethics, Jewish agricultural laws, and the connection between Jewish holidays and the growing cycle. Most of the food grown at the Kavanah Garden is donated as tzedakah.

Both Daniel's farm and Risa's garden strongly encourage volunteers from the community. There is something magical about helping on the farm at sunrise, listening to the birds sing, surrounded by fields of green, knowing that a few weeks later you will be partaking from the bounty.

The community support component includes education about tolerance. Some lettuce leaves may have ragged edges, depending how the wind blew or tomatoes may be delayed due to a cooler or dryer spell. However, when one realizes that what ultimately passes your lips comes free from chemicals and fossil fuels and is picked at its nutrient and flavour peak, then one begins to understand.

Influenced by his parents' South African roots and trained as a social worker, Daniel realized that he could leverage his love of the land and his skills to serve the community. From the first frost Daniel continues to educate the community. Through the winter he offers various courses on topics like "how to preserve the harvest" and "planning your vegetable garden". Via the CSA he demonstrates how easy it is for each one of us to start to make the transition to a more sustainable way of living.

Jared Diamond in his book *Collapse* theorized that civilizations potentially become extinct from such factors as environmental damage, climate change, hostile neighbours, sour trade relations and inappropriate responses to environmental problems. By acting locally but thinking globally, CSA is one step towards "saving the world".

The Kavanah garden is *the* place to be Thursdays between 3-7pm to pick up your weekly consignment, get to know your personal farmer, exchange recipes, learn about Jewish gardening and socialize, before rushing home to eat the most delicious produce you have ever tasted.

You can join the CSA now and delight in the fall crops; or email Daniel and ask him to add you to his e-newsletter so you can learn about the realities of organic farming in Southern Ontario. To sign up for the newsletter or become a member of the CSA, email [daniel@thecuttingveg.com](mailto:daniel@thecuttingveg.com), telephone (647) 388 7444 or visit [www.thecuttingveg.com](http://www.thecuttingveg.com). Contact Kavanah garden at (416) 805 8382, [risa@torathateva.org](mailto:risa@torathateva.org) or [www.kavanahgarden.org](http://www.kavanahgarden.org)