



# Con's corner

Conrad Kindrachuk is the man on the street while Carol keeps the books. They both grow the food. Carol starts their story ...

Conrad and I met in 1978. I'd been living at Pidgeon Gully down the river, and before we got together Conrad was thinking of buying a property up near Captain's Flat. Then this property came up for sale and we really liked it.

I contacted the owner who was a friend and he said, "I'm selling it this week. Come and see me." So we bought it.

Conrad: I'd been living in Captains Flat working for the Soil Conservation Service helping to restore the old mine site there. It was leaching contaminants into the Molonglo River. My job was to re-vegetate it by ploughing, planting and irrigating.

My mum and dad were Canadian. They were both schoolteachers. My dad died when I was really young and my mum remarried when I was about six.

In 1967 my stepdad got a scholarship from the ANU to come to Australia to do a doctorate in sociology, so we moved from Canada to Canberra.

I was still in high school and they taught me to speak Australian and all about the Australian way of life. The people were just so friendly.

Carol: I was born in England and we moved to Northern Ireland when I was nine. Mum was Irish, dad was English. I worked in the Ministry of Agriculture

Accounts Dept. for eight years. In 1971 it was getting really nasty in Belfast and, when they started taping up the windows at work in case of bombs, I decided to go travelling.

I ended up going to Spain, South Africa, Madagascar, Mauritius and eventually Australia. I only knew one person here and he was in Canberra so I started there. Then I was brought down here to the Araluen valley, and just fell in love with the Deua River area. I was thinking of buying into a commune but it didn't really suit me

PLOUGHING THE EARLY DAYS WITH ARTHUR THE DONKEY.



## LOCAL FOODIES

though I made some wonderful friends there. I met Conrad, we got together, moved here with our baby son and later our daughter and started organic growing and slowly fixing our old house.

Conrad: My mum's father was a farmer in Saskatchewan. He grew wheat, barley and oats. He always had a big veggie garden and started my love of gardening. I went back there four months ago and my uncle still has that same farm. It's been in the family for over a hundred years and at 85 he still has a big garden.

We had corn on the cob every day for lunch and we'd pick tractor buckets full of pumpkins, carrots and potatoes. It was really emotional to go back there and see where I grew up and to help my uncle do some of his gardening like I used to help my grandfather.

My birth father's side were good farmers too and my Ukrainian grandmother always had potatoes, beans, corn and cucumbers.

Everyone had good gardens in the old days before supermarkets.

Carol: I was born a year after the end of WW2 and we had rationing 'til I was nine. In those days you had lemonade twice a year, on your birthday and at Christmas! We lived on the outskirts of Belfast and everyone had gardens. My great-aunt and uncle had a farm and I went up there often. I loved it. There were also allotments where people could hire a portion of land and grow their vegies. We always bought the things we didn't grow ourselves from those people.

Conrad: It was about 1981 when we

## ARE YOU RIGHT FOR ZUCCHINIS?

had our first saleable organic produce. I've been on the Duncan Street corner for around 15 years but at the start I used to go around door-to-door — to all the people who were never home, they were always down at the newsagent or at the bakery. So I parked opposite Torpeas when the health food shop was down there.

I started to park and sell out of the van at Duncan Street. One day someone parked for the day in my usual spot so I set up on the corner under the verandah of the then Vietnamese restaurant, now Concept Cafe. The residents of the building have always been very friendly and helpful to us and it is a lot safer and more comfortable for me and the customers.

I knew that you weren't allowed to sell within a hundred metres of a shop that sold the same things so I didn't ever park on the main street.

Those nice shady trees really afford me a good place because it's cool, I love it there now and everyone knows I'm there, so I don't have to go anywhere.

I just set up and stay there all day until I sell everything. Years ago, when I still had stuff left, I'd go to all the pubs and try to get the fellas to maybe buy their wife a bunch of flowers or get a few vegies to take home. I sometimes get in



CONRAD AT THE OLD BUS DEPOT MARKETS, KINGSTON IN 2002.

trouble for shouting out across the street! Calling people over, "Come and buy" or telling what I've got today. But I've got to know a lot of people.

Thursdays we pick the vegetables and pack them up ready. On Friday morning, I might go to the local orchardists

to get a few boxes of peaches, nectarines or persimmons from them when in season and then I'll drive up to Braidwood.

I try to arrive in Braidwood about 8:00 and set up my stall ready for the first customers to come along. It gets really

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Sustainably Farmed Meat  
Small Batch Artisan Coffee & Teas  
Humanely Raised Poultry  
Fresh Local Pastured Eggs  
Local Pure Honey  
Fresh Fish from NSW Coast  
Wholesome Bulk Foods  
Gourmet Cheeses, Charcuterie & Antipasto  
Local & Regional Olive Oil  
Catering for Small Groups

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COURTYARD  
@  
PROVISIONS

- Serving Coffee, Tea, Cakes, Deli Sandwiches, Panini & Grazing Platters
- BYO Wine or Beer

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