

Over a century, Wagner's Farm brings more than apples to market



Wagner's Farm Market and Grill on Lockport Road is a mainstay for local produce, meals and apple lovers for over 100 years. Homegrown, fresh and bountiful are constants at Wagner's.

BY DANIEL DAVEY

It began as a stop at the side of the road. A stand, like so many others seen on countless country roads, that sells homegrown produce. That was over 100 years ago. And as things change, so they stay the same.

"It started as just a couple rows of trees. The building wasn't here; it was just kind of a roadside thing, all open. It was my grandfather who really started building the store part up."

So said Troy Wagner, perhaps the heir apparent of Wagner's Farm Market on Lockport Road in Sanborn. And those trees he refers to were fruit trees.

The farm was begun by Wagner's great-grandparents in 1892. The buildup of the store, or market, was started by his grandfather in

the 1960s, before Troy Wagner was born. And as time went forward, the running of the farm and market was passed from his grandfather to his father, Peter, and his aunt, Amy Wagner-Winklemann, now co-owners. Both of them still work at the store on a daily basis.

As does the younger Troy Wagner, who's back on his family's farm after obtaining a degree in agriculture business from Alfred State University. Now, those fruit trees are exclusively apple trees, and have grown to about 100 acres.

"That's what we grow," Wagner said. "That's one of our biggest pulls to bring people in is the apples. Because they know that every single apple we grow right here."

And they grow a lot of them. "We're up to 15 different kinds of apples. That's another draw. You've

got some early apples, some late apples. Sweet apples, tart apples – it's all what people like."

One might be hard-pressed to find the variety and freshness of apples locally, but it's not nearly all that Wagner's has become known for. Working with other local farms, the market provides an impressive variety of local produce.

"We really try to bring in local produce. We grow our own apples here, but everything else, during different times of harvest seasons, we try to use local farmers. Close to all of them are in Niagara County," Wagner said.

He estimates upward of half a dozen local farmers at any given time have produce or product available at the market.

"It depends on what we're going through," he added. "Because we sell everything from flowers, spring flowers, to pumpkins, to your early sweet corns, to peppers, tomatoes, everything."

The outreach to local farmers



goes both ways. Some will contact Wagner's and let them know what is good and ready. And, if there's a need, Wagner's will contact its regular providers to see what's available or when. "Quality is such a big thing, we try to keep our quality up and our prices down."

"But I think people know. Once you sell them something that's good a couple times, they know that it's good and they try other things here. And they're good quality."

This combination of variety and quality are what Wagner sees as the family's bread and butter.

"My aunt and my dad have done a really great job with every little bit of this," he said. "We try to be a

one-stop shop and let people realize that they can just shop here. We've definitely been busy the last couple of years. During COVID, I think people wanted to stay out of the big stores, so people started coming to us."

The market "just got bigger and bigger," Wagner said. "Now we got the little restaurant and the greenhouse, too."

Just as with the market, Wagner's expanded based on customer demand and need with Wagner's Grill. Back in 2016, after a car ran into the front of the building, the family embarked on improvements and upgrades to the restaurant space. They added more seating and upgraded lighting and décor. The space has a bit of a farmhouse atmosphere, and serves up a full menu of diner fare, including a Friday fish fry, and Perry's ice cream.

Extending its reach to the community, Wagner's packs lunch program apples for several local school districts. In that end of things, the family felt the business strains of the pandemic as far as boxes and bag packaging supplies. The prices have gone up, or they're just a little bit harder to find these days, Wagner said. On the restaurant side, they've found the price of wholesale beef has doubled, so they've had to stop processing their own ground.

"It's tough," Wagner said, "but it's the cost of doing business."

Regardless of changes to that cost, Wagner said they'll continue to support the community, and their employees. While they've had some employees come and go, Wagner believes some stay for years because they become part of the family. As do many of their customers.

"You get to know them. They get to know the people who come in. It's good work," he said. "I think they like to see the regulars that come in every week and talk to them, and they get to know the customers, too, so it's a good thing to know the community."

"They've definitely supported us through COVID. We did excellent; we're still here. We know a lot of businesses have shut down because of it. So, we're happy to be here, and we're happy that we support the community."

2021 CHICKEN WING CONTEST

Where do we go to find the king of the wing?
TELL US & WIN!

Vote for your favorite
ENTER TO WIN A FOOD PRIZE FROM
A LOCAL RESTAURANT

Now through the end of the football season, Niagara Frontier Publications wants your input in naming the area's best chicken wing joint. It could be a bar, a restaurant or a social club – the only requirements are that chicken wings are sold to the public from a locally headquartered joint.

The chicken wing place with the most votes will be prominently featured in the Niagara County Tribune-Sentinel, Grand Island PennySaver and Island Dispatch, with additional photos and a video posted at www.wnypapers.com.

When you cast a vote for your favorite chicken wing destination, you'll be entered to win a gift certificate courtesy of an area restaurant. Winners will be chosen by random draw and notified by phone or email.

Good luck – and happy eating!

Visit www.wnypapers.com/2021-chicken-wing-contest for a complete set of rules & to enter online.

Name (Full): _____
Phone Number: _____
Email: _____
Restaurant Name: _____
Why these chicken wings are the best: _____

DROP OFF OR MAIL TO:
Niagara Frontier Publications
1859 Whitehaven Rd., Grand Island, NY, 14072
or visit www.wnypapers.com/2021-chicken-wing-contest

Since 1944

COMPUTER PROBLEMS?

Friendly Certified Computer Repair Experts

Simply mention coupon code **42513** and get
\$20 OFF any service you need!

One time use only. Cannot be used in conjunction with any other coupon or offer. Coupon valid through December 31, 2021. Void for any new service except subscription fees. Must mention coupon at time of sale.

Geeks on Site
Call Now for a **FREE** Diagnosis
1-866-848-0045

Wheels For Wishes
benefiting
Make-A-Wish®
Northeast New York
Your Car Donations Matter
NOW More Than Ever!

We're still accepting donations and pick ups

• Free Vehicle Pick Up ANYWHERE • 100% Tax Deductible
• We Accept Most Vehicles Running or Not • Minimal To No Human Contact

Call: (877) 798-9474 **WheelsForWishes.org**

* Car Donation Foundation d/b/a Wheels For Wishes. To learn more about our programs or financial information, call (213) 946-2000 or visit www.wheelsforwishes.org.

535 Division St. Twin City Highway
North Tonawanda • 693-2802

OPEN DAILY! **MON - SAT: 7AM - 8:30PM**
SUN 7AM - 7PM

VISIT US ON THE WEB FOR
OUR WEEKLY SPECIALS
themarketinthesquare.com

LOCAL FAMILY OWNED & INDEPENDENTLY OPERATED