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NATIONAL POST

Field Trip: A Growers' Market



Jesse Senko

We're Jesse and Melanie, and Field Trip is a series from our blog [Crackers](#) which documents our quest to stay out of the supermarket. If you want to learn along with us, follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

From Jesse:

It was exciting when the [Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation](#) got a hold of us and offered to take us shopping last Saturday. The only catch was that we had to visit a new market. They armed us with \$50 worth of their "Market Bucks" and we headed down to the [Ottawa St. Farmers Market](#) in the east end of Hamilton, Ontario.

It's one of the markets listed on the [Greenbelt's Market Finder](#). The Greenbelt, the band of green that surrounds the [Golden Horseshoe](#) in Ontario is vital to preserving green spaces, watersheds, and farmland that, in turn, are the main source of local food for Canada's most populous region.



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The Ottawa Street market has been operating for over 50 years, year-round. It was formerly at a mall just down the road that was recently demolished. When the land was redeveloped with big-box stores, there were no considerations for the market, and it was immediately homeless. The [Ottawa Street BIA](#) took them in and the year round, 100km, outdoor market now has a home just off of Ottawa Street.



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We were amazed as we walked through the vendors. The first thing that struck us was, on top of the usual small baskets of produce, there were also full bushels of romas, beans, apples and pears. Quantities that a home-preserved love.

We learned that the market is a growers' market. We've had criticisms of local markets in the past, full of vendors who simply buy produce as a grocery store would and resell. But at this market, you need to be a grower to sell. This takes out a profit-seeking middleman, and often gives you a lower price at the market, and a higher profit to the farmer.



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But the more important thing with a growers' market is that there is no broken link in the story of the food. Chances are the person handing you that food knows exactly how it was grown and when it was picked. Right down to the hour.

So what did we buy with our Greenbelt Market Bucks? Plums, peaches, a bushel of pears for canning, a huge bag of onions, maple syrup, honey, orange cauliflower, popcorn on the cob, and root parsley.



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A little sign mix-up on the celery root, but my favourite picture from our visit.

The Market Bucks initiative is coming to a close for this season, but we'll be sure to let you know when they're on for next year. They're a great gift to push someone into a farmers market, or for someone who does a lot of preserving. If you still want to do some preserving, but didn't get to it, the late summer this year has lots of things still in season. Find your closest [Greenbelt market](#), call a vendor ahead to bring you a bushel of whatever you're looking for, and preserve a taste of the Greenbelt to enjoy when it's covered in snow.