

Reesor's

Agri-Food
SPOTLIGHT
SERIES

FALL 2020

If you live in Markham or Stouffville, then the Reesor's name is one that you will likely recognize. This industrious family has been farming in the area since 1804. Reesor's Farm Market began in 1985, so 2020 marks its 35th anniversary. But the business is more than just a farm market. It has evolved significantly over the years.

Today, owner Jay Reesor leads a team of 40 year-round staff who grow, make and sell good food.

In addition to the farm and farm market, Reesor's has a production kitchen and a popular retail store based in Stouffville, Reesor's Market & Bakery. Each day, the kitchen creates baked goods and prepared dishes, salads and soups from original Reesor's recipes. These items are available at the farm market stores along with fresh produce and grocery items.



When Challenges become Opportunities

While many businesses shut down and were gripped with uncertainty through 2020, the Reesor's team searched for opportunities to continue to safely support their local community. Starting with phone orders for pick up, the team quickly realized that this process was unsustainable. With determination and an investment of many hours, a new online store with curbside pickup was created within weeks. Customers can order farm fresh produce as well as the full compliment of ready-made meals, baked goods and pantry staples from the comfort of their homes.

The digital ordering system was taken a step further after its launch. The Reesor's team identified that it would be safer for staff and customers if online orders were packed and picked up in a location separate from their physical stores. This would enhance safe social distancing and minimize any inconvenience for in-store customers. The agile team accelerated their commitment to the web market by investing in a

new off-site warehouse, where online orders are packed and prepared for pickup.

On the farm, the Pick-Your-Own experience for strawberries and pumpkins offers an annual tradition that countless families look forward to. However, it can lead to massive crowds at the farm. Having successfully launched their online shop, Reesor's extended the web service to support their Pick-Your-Own farm operations. An online reservation system was established before strawberry season to provide continuity through the pandemic crisis. This enables guests to reserve one-hour picking slots before they come to the farm. Anyone who visits without a reservation is welcome to buy pre-picked berries at the farm market shop.

With visitors evenly spread through each day, the Pick-Your-Own experience was more relaxed than usual, despite COVID restrictions. Guests enjoyed knowing that they could come to the farm safely and pick without delay.

This service is expected to continue into the future for both strawberry and pumpkin picking seasons.

The Reesor's business has evolved over the years but one constant has been Jay Reesor's commitment to build a great team. His enthusiasm for mentoring students and affording opportunities to engage his staff have not only provided numerous youth with their first job ever, but many individuals with long term careers. According to his wife and business partner, Miriam, "What I'm most proud of, is that he is hardworking, a visionary and an extremely kind and generous person."

For more information about Reesor's, please visit them online or in person.

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Reesor's Market and Bakery: 5758 Main Street, Stouffville

York Region Agriculture and Agri-Food Strategy

York Region is committed to supporting our vibrant and thriving agriculture and agri-food sector. This work is being guided by the Agriculture and Agri-Food Sector Strategy – an action plan that was endorsed by York Regional Council in 2017.

With five strategic goal areas accompanied by 45 recommended actions, the strategy is an ambitious framework designed to achieve results and demonstrates York Region's commitment to the sector.

To learn more about York Region's agriculture and agri-food sector, visit york.ca/agrifood