

## ***North Interlake GO Team*** **organic, brick-oven-baked ancient grains**

"Look at your surrounding area, and find your niche". These are **Dora Friesen's** words of advice to other rural Manitobans who may be looking for alternatives to keep their family farm viable.

Only a couple of years ago Dora and her husband Cornelius were at a crossroads – needing to diversify their financially stressed farm in order to be able to remain on their farm just north of Riverton, Manitoba

(90 minutes north of Winnipeg). Starting Integrity Foods, an organic bakery specializing in spelt and Kamut® grains, has allowed the Friesen family to do just that. Located just off of Highway #8, the Friesens saw themselves as a gateway to three provincial parks and jumped on the opportunity to serve this untapped niche market with their Pizza Nights. These summer evenings on the Friesen farm draw scores of visitors who come to see the unique outdoor brick-oven and taste their very popular pizzas. But location does not necessarily need to dictate your business entirely. "Since we are a niche business, we don't serve our community alone", says Dora. In fact, Integrity Food's main source of business is wholesale. They supply seven organic and health food stores in Winnipeg with their delicious, wholesome, brick-oven-baked goods.

They are able to supply fresh baking to their Winnipeg customers by utilizing Greyhound bus service, and they have no plans to get into the delivery business themselves because as Dora sees it, "Let's all do what we're good at doing." Partnering with local businesses, and maintaining good personal relations with the stores carrying their products and the growers who supply them with ancient grains are very important aspects to their business.

The Friesen's don't just measure their success in terms of dollars, although certainly the niche bakery provides them with adequate income to pay their bills. Dora knows they're getting it right when she gets a phone call from a customer raving about their product. And these calls are frequent. Dora's passion reaches beyond the tantalizing aromas in the bakery. She is passionate about educating communities on the benefits of good nutrition. Last year, Dora and Cornelius sold a grain mill to a nearby Hutterite colony, and taught several others how to bake with whole grains. Cornelius and Dora also just recently made the trip up north to Cross Lake, Manitoba to share their passion for baking with whole grains with members of that community. The school purchased a grain mill from the Friesen's last year, which is now used in their Home Economics program.

Integrity Foods is also a member of World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF), and, over the last few years, has had over 30 young people from around the world stay with them. This winter **Rieko Miki** from Osaka, Japan is helping out in the bakery during the day and learning English in the evenings. Sharing their success with community is what Integrity Foods is all about.



Dora Friesen's son Jason (r) intends to take over the family business one day.