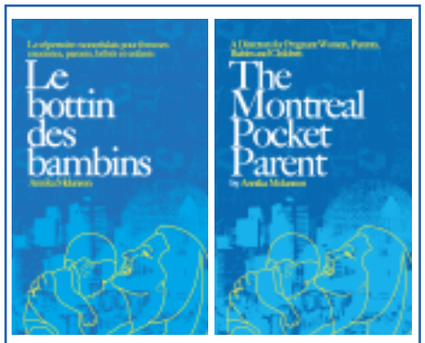

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One Year Anniversary

What are you doing tonight?

June 2007–v2.6 **Arts & Entertainment on the Island and Beyond** 27,000 copies

Inside...

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From the Mondial de la Bière and the F1 Grand Prix of Canada to the Jazz fest and the Montreal Fringe Festival

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GARDENING Mulch by Mary Soderstrom *p. 12*
THE URBAN TOWNSHIPPER *p. 15*

Gardens create an edible cityscape

by Stuart Woods

It's a bright Saturday morning in mid-May and about a dozen young volunteers have gathered to move a garden across town.

They're standing on the cracked concrete rooftop of a Université du Québec building in the Plateau in a landscape that's more grey than green. Yet this desolate expanse was home for the past three summers to a remarkably productive garden, the result of an innovative project to find ways of gardening in tight urban spaces.

An initiative of **Alternatives**, a Montreal-based non-profit organization, the Rooftop Garden Project isn't your conventional earthbound garden, but instead uses a combination of traditional gardening techniques and *continued on page 9*

Amy, Lloyd and Diane in the Westmount garden behind Westmount High.

Restaurant Review

Traditional Chinese: Lao Beijing and Village Mon Nan

by Stuart Woods

There's a joke that the world's best Chinese food can be found in Chinatowns of North American cities. Try telling that to a hungry tourist in Beijing and you'll begin to see the humour.

The wisecrack belies the fact that Westerners often regard Chinese food as a strictly down-market cuisine, a perception that is partly justified by the fact that many signature "Chinese-Canadian" dishes have more in *continued on page 11*

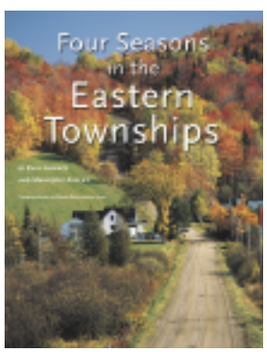
Maternally Yours

Avoiding toxins in household products

by Annika Melanson

Scary stuff! After reading a recent article in *The Globe and Mail* about dangerous compounds found in cosmetics, I started to reflect about which products I buy for my 4-year-old daughter, Amel.

After visiting www.lesstoxicguide.ca, I was shocked to find that some traditional items such as shampoos, bath gels, plastic baby bottles as well *continued on page 7*



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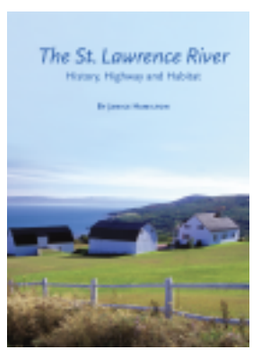

HAPPENINGS *Vivva Montreal's* guide to what's on around the island.

Festival City

- **Mondial de la Bière** is an opportunity for beer enthusiasts to taste over 350 beers from around the world. Admission is free. Tastings are between $1 to $5. Windsor Station and Courtyard, 1160 de la Gauchetière West. For more information call 514.722.9640 or go to www.festivalmondialbiere.qc.ca. **May 30 to June 3**.
- **Mutek** is a festival of electronic music and "digital creativity" that brings together over 150 international artists. A weekend pass is $90. Events take place at several locations downtown. For more info go to www.mutek.ca. **May 30 to June 3**.
- **Montreal Fringe Festival** showcases theatre and performance artist of every persuasion. For more information call 514.849.3378 or go to www.montrealfringe.ca. **June 7 to 17**.
- **F1 Grand Prix of Canada** is cherished by racing fans and a great weekend for everyone else to get out of town. General admission is $25 on Friday, $50 on Saturday and $75 on Sunday. Circuit Gilles Villeneuve, Île St. Hélène. For more information call 514.300.0000 or go to www.grandprix.ca. **June 8 to 10**.
- **Suoni Per Il Popolo** is a month-long festival of independent and avant-garde music featuring Akron Family, Nihilist Spasm Band and a rare performance by Jandek. Casa del Popolo (4873 St. Laurent) and La Sala Rossa (4848 St. Laurent). For more information call 514.284.0122 or go to http://casadelpopolo.com/. **June 1 to 30**.
- **Festival International de Jazz de Montréal** landed a coup when they added Van Morrison to an already star-studded roster including Bob Dylan, Keith Jarrett and Manu Chao. For more information call 514.523.3378 or go to www.montrealjazzfest.com. **June 28 to July 8**.

Music

- Paris-based singer **Feist** promotes her critically acclaimed new disc *The Remainder*. Tickets are $27.50. Call 514.908.9090 or go to www.ticketpro.ca. Olympia, 1004 St. Catherine St. **June 1**.
- Proto-grunge group **Dinosaur Jr** are reunited. Tickets are $25. Call 514.286.1010 or go to www.ticketpro.ca. Club Soda, 1224 St. Laurent. **June 9**.
- **Rufus Wainwright** plays to a sold out crowd at Place des Arts. Tickets are $37.50 to $48.50. For more information call 514. 842.2112. Théâtre Maisonneuve. **June 14**.

Art

- Beatriz Colomina, a visiting professor of architecture from Princeton, presents a lecture on **Alison and Peter Smithson**'s "House of the Future." Admission is free. For more information call 514.939.7001 or go to www.cca.qc.ca. Canadian Centre for Architecture, 1920 Baile. **May 31 at 6 pm**.
- An exhibition of fifteen illustrations from the children's book ***Twan le Courageux!*** coincides with the book's launch. Admission is free. Maison de la culture NDG, 3755 Botrel. For more information call 514.972.2157. The book launch is on **May 31 from 3 to 8 pm** and on **June 2 from 1 to 5 pm**. The exhibition continues to **June 17**.
- A new exhibition of work by **Bruce Nauman** brings together neon-light sculptures, film and video. The exhibition coincides with the launch of a series of monthly cocktail parties in the museum garden. The inaugural edition on **June 1 from 6 to 9 pm** features music by DJ Champion and his G-Strings. Free with museum admission ($8 for adults, $6 for seniors and $4 for students). For more information call 514.847.6226 or go to www.macm.org. Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 185 St. Catherine St. West. To **September 3**.
- Major international architects **Rem Koolhaas** and **Peter Eisenman** in discussion with Phyllis Lambert. Canadian Centre for Architecture, 1920 Baile. For more information call 514.939.7026 or go to www.cca.qc.ca. **June 8 at 10 am**.
- Two shows take our relationship to the environment as a starting point. ***Éclats de vert*** examines the relationship between nature and creativity (**June 14 to August 18**) and artists **Christine Brault and Thérèse Chabot** invite the public to bring in fruit, vegetables and medicinal herbs to be used in their performance piece about human consumption (**June 14 and 20 from 5 to 9 pm**). Admission is free. Maison de la culture Côte des Neiges, 5290 Côte des Neiges. For more information call 514.872.6889.
- ***Projet Cameroun*** relates the experience of students of urban planning from Université de Montreal in a small village in Cameroon. Admission is free. Maison de la culture NDG, 3755 Botrel. For more information call 514.972.2157. **June 16 to August 25**.
- Paintings and drawings by **Mary Martha Guy** depicting the Newfoundland landscape, as well as fabric collages by **Catherine Hoey**. Admission is free. McClure Gallery, 350 Victoria Ave. For more information call 514.488.9558 or go to www.centredesartsvisuels.ca. To **June 16**.
- Two exhibitions comprising photographs, engravings and collages look at life and landscape on the St. Lawrence River's North Shore. Admission is free. Maison de la culture NDG, 3755 Botrel. For more information call 514.972.2157. **June 21 to August 25**.
- ***Emily Carr: New Perspectives on a Canadian Icon*** brings together 150 works by the renowned Canadian artist and examines her influence on succeeding generations of artists. Admission is $15 for adults, $7.50 for students and seniors, and free for children under 12. For more information call 514.285.2000 or go to www.mmfa.qc.ca. The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 1380 Sherbrooke St. West. **June 21 to September 23**.

Cinema

- **Films that Transform**. The McGill medical faculty's film series wraps up with a screening of *39 Pounds of Love*, a documentary about a man suffering from a rare form of muscular dystrophy. Tickets are $10, $5 for students and seniors. Moyse Hall, 853 Sherbrooke St. West. **June 12 at 7 pm**.

Theatre

- The 2007 season closes with the Dora Wasserman Yiddish Theatre's production of ***Those Were the Days***, a musical tribute to Yiddish theatre. Tickets start at $38, $34 for seniors and $25 for students. For more information call 514.739.7944 or go to www.saidyebronfman.org. The Leanor and Alvin Segal Theatre, 5170 Côte des Neiges. **June 3 to 28**.

The Police are reuniting (for now) and coming to Montreal on July 25-26

Community Events

- Westmount Public Library presents **Howard Richler**, author of *Global Mother Tongue*, giving a talk on how the English language is being affected by the addition of new words. Admission is free, but registration is required. For more information call 514.989.5386 or go to www.westmount.org. Westmount Public Library, 4574 Sherbrooke St. West. **June 13 at 2 pm**.
- Don't miss The Rotary Club of Westmount's annual **auction and garage sale**. For more information call 514.935.3344 or go to www.rotarywestmount.org. Westmount Arena, 4675 St. Catherine St. West. **June 1 at 6 pm** (auction preview) and **June 2 from 9:30 am to 2:30 pm** (sale).
- Author Janice Hamilton gives a talk with slides on her book ***The St. Lawrence River: History, Highway and Habitat***. For more information call 514.935.7344 or go to www.atwaterlibrary.ca. Atwater Library, 1200 Atwater. **June 5 at 12:30 pm**.
- **Atwater Book Club** discusses Ian McEwan's *Saturday*. For more information call 514.935.7344 or go to www.atwaterlibrary.ca. Atwater Library, 1200 Atwater. **June 13 at 7:30 pm**.
- Author **Joan Edward** will read from her book about Newfoundland, *This is Our Place, This is Our Home* with live musical accompaniment. For more information call 514.935.7344 or go to www.atwaterlibrary.ca. Atwater Library, 1200 Atwater. **June 5 at 12:30 pm**.
- Harmonia Westmount Choir Presents a concert titled "Kungala: A Place to Sing and Shout." Tickets are $10, free for children under 12. St. Mathias Church, 10 Church Hill Rd. **June 14 at 7:30 pm**.
- Group show at Galerie d'Este, 1329 Greene Ave. Admission is free. For more information call 514.846.1515. **June 15 to July 1**.
- McClure Gallery hosts a group exhibition by **LOVE** (Leave Out Violence), a Montreal-based NPO that mobilizes youth to communicate a message of non-violence. Admission is free. For more information call 514.488.9558 or go to www.visualartscentre.ca. McClure Gallery, 350 Victoria Ave. June 22 to July 14. Vernissage is on **June 21 at 6 pm**.
- **Secret Garden Tour** is a tour of eleven of Westmount's hidden horticultural gems. Tickets are $35 and include a box lunch. For more information call 514.989.5265 or go to www.westmount.org. **June 14 at 9 am**.
- **Words & Music** celebrates words and music in an eclectic fashion. Admission is free. For more information call 514.989.8671 or go to www.westmount.org. The Gallery at Victoria Hall, 4626 Sherbrooke St. West. **June 14 at 7 pm**.
- Author **Hélène Jasmin** gives a slideshow and French-language talk on the history of the **Reford Gardens**. For more information call 514.989.5386 or go to www.westmount.org. Westmount Public Library, 4574 Sherbrooke St. West. **June 20 at 7 pm**.

At the New Forum (Bell Centre)

June 7	Roger Waters
June 9	Champion and his G-Strings
July 6	The White Stripes
July 10	Tool
July 17	Def Leppard
July 19	Hillary Duff
July 25 & 26	The Police
July 28	Deep Purple
August 7	Daft Punk
August 8	Marilyn Manson
August 13	Meat Loaf
August 14	Beyoncé
August 18	Justin Timberlake
August 25	Frank Sinatra Jr.

The NDGers

By Marilynn Vanderstaay

Former Miss Canada accepted to Tufts University

After working for the United Nations in several capacities, and months of concentrating on putting together an excellent résumé, NDG resident **Cristina Remond** was accepted to the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University in Boston. It was a competitive challenge for the former Miss Canada who was one of 160 placements from 1,600 hopefuls who applied for the program. The total weight of all the résumés put together was 83 kilograms and the stack of paper was 36 feet high.

Film and Music

Accomplished NDG international artist, musician and now film director **G. Scott MacLeod** will screen his documentary *After the War with Hannelore: A Berliner War Child's Testimony* on May 31 at 8 pm at the McAuslan Visitor Centre and the Maxwell Haus studios at 5080 St. Ambroise. The video pays homage to Hannelore Scheiber by recounting her stories of post-war Berlin in a seven-vignette video documentary dealing with her Cold War experiences in Berlin from 1945 to 1982. There will also be an exhibition of MacLeod's recent series and his exhibition Meeting with the Goddesses. For more information go to www.macleod9.com.

NDG composer/musician **Mark Pinkus** will be presenting a selection of songs from his latest CD *Slowly the Day Goes By* at the Yellow Door Café (3625 Aylmer) on Friday, June 15. Tickets are $10. For more information or to purchase a ticket, phone 514.487.5079.

Loblaws events

On Thursday, May 10 Loblaws Cavendish and Brome Lake Ducks presented a major culinary event. Chef **Jacques Poulin**, executive chef of Château Bromont, gave a sold-out, in-depth seminar on all aspects of preparing roast duck and other dishes, including the preparation and cooking of a duck confit and warm duck confit salad. The seminar was so successful community events coordinator **Paul Shubin** already has a waiting list for the fall event. The cost is $25 per person, plus taxes. To get on the waiting list, phone 514. 481.6959.

On May 25 Loblaws Cavendish continued its Survivor: The Kitchen series with a cooking class for teens. Thirteen young people worked hands-on preparing their dinner, which this week was an Indian meal. The Survivor series continues Friday, June 15 from 4:30 to 7 pm at the store, 6600 St. Jacques West. The cost is $15 and includes dinner. To reserve or for more information, phone community events coordinator Paul Shubin at 514.481.6959.

MUCS community initiatives

The Montreal Urban Community Sustainment (MUCS) program held open houses and info sessions and a community cookout in May at the Northcliffe Square (2000 Northcliffe Ave., Suite 219) to raise awareness about the new community dining initiative. Wheelchair accessible and kid-friendly, the dining co-op will give residents an opportunity to build friendships and community around shared food. With already 40 members of all ages from all sectors of the community, it is a growing group of people interested in working together to create a community space in NDG where people can come together to cook and share meals as well as benefit from group food buying. To learn about the program and the four levels of membership, go to www.mucs.ca, phone 514.312.7074 or email dining@mucs.ca.

The MUCS threw a jar drive and zine launch party on May 12 at **Café Shaika** that rocked the house with music until midnight. The event netted the MUCS 40 jars and $300 for their community canning co-op. Workshops in the how-to's of canning are ongoing in preparation for the harvest months where members will be able to can and take home jars of preserved food donated from local food redistributors and farmers.

Available July 1, the MUCS initiative is also offering inexpensive 4 1/2 and 5 1/2 rental apartments grouped around common living and office space. For more information, phone 514.312.7074 or email cohousing@mucs.ca.

NDG Barter Network

Members of NDG Barter Network can use their NDG bucks at a variety of exchanges that will be held in NDG in June and beyond. To learn more about the organization whose goal is to reduce, recycle, re-use as an alternative to purchase and over-consumption, email claudette. barabe@sympatico.ca

Volunteer drivers desperately needed

A food bank serving over 200 households a week with free emergency food is in desperate need of a volunteer who can drive a cube van to do pick ups of food donations Tuesday mornings or afternoons. If you can help, please phone Wendy at 514.483.4680.

Westmount Independent

Reports

The joy of Westmount

Speaking at the Rotary Club of Westmount on May 16, City councillor **George Bowser**, commissioner of parks and recreation, shared the City's plans to participate in the national Communities in Bloom competition that will be judged in Westmount on August 13. All Westmount residents are encouraged to participate by cleaning their gardens, yards, streets and even their back lanes. After winning the provincial competition four times, Westmount has progressed to the national level and will compete against Grande Prairie, Lloydminster and Charlottetown.

Turf foes turn out

A public consultation at Victoria Hall on May 16 on the possible use of artificial turf in the fields south of the bike path in Westmount Park was well attended. Opponents of artificial turf were clearly in the majority among formal presenters, questioners and attendees. They presented numerous points against artificial turf, including health, urban planning and financial aspects. Proponents defended the safety of artificial turf, as well as its resilience compared to natural grass. For a longer analysis of the turf debate, please see the June 6 edition of the *Westmount Independent*.

Spring Soirée

Victoria Hall rocked with the fun, food and music of the fifth annual Westmount Spring Soirée on May 24. Over 180 participants, not all from Westmount, enjoyed an elegant black tie evening of cocktails in the Gallery at Victoria Hall followed by an evening of dining and dancing in Victoria Hall.

This year a painting by Westmount artist **Roxanne Dyer** was the signature piece for the soirée and was featured at both the event and on the invitation.

Family Day

Westmount hosted its 32nd annual Family Day on May 26. The event, held at Westmount Park, included many participating groups, including the Rotary Club of Westmount, the Montreal police and Westmount Public Security, the Scouts and the Contactivity Seniors' Centre. The 3rd Field Engineer Unit operated a zip line across the pond, which attracted a long line of eager children. The make-up booth under the gazebo was also a big hit.

Hope for cancer survivors

Westmounter and cancer survivor **Gwen Vineberg** is one of the organizers of the Hope & Cope survivorship day, "Picking Up the Pieces: Moving Forward After Cancer" that will be held on Monday, June 4 at 7 pm at the Block Amphitheatre, Pavilion B, 3755 Côte St. Catherine Rd. Author **Kathy Scalzo** will present a four-stage process for navigating the days after treatment. Admission is free and families, friends and children are welcome. For more information phone 514.340.8255.

Book launch

Westmounter **Anne Renaud**, who works for the City of Westmount in its communication division, launched her latest children's book, Island of Hope and Sorrow: The Story of Grosse Île at Babar en ville on Greene Ave. on May 24, A postive review has already appeared in *Nuacht*.

Full editions of the Westmount Independent *are published the first and third Wednesdays of the month.*

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Art Review

Montreal Biennale: better than ever

by Chris "Zeke" Hand

In the past, the Montreal Biennale was a small, tidy affair that for a variety of reasons was ignored by the general public and most of the art world. This year's event is still likely to be ignored, but this would be a very bad thing as the event for the most part kicks butt from here to Timbuktu (or, if you prefer, Venice).

Initially, I saw **Montreal Comic City**, which in the program is described as a "large scale exhibition (that) demonstrates the importance and specific characteristics found in Canadian independent comic books, mini-comics, 'zines and graphic novels." Let's just say that in the biennale program the location of the show is wrong, the first time in my life I thought something like that could be a good thing.

Art school

That experience did not turn me off the whole biennale. Later that same week I headed downtown to **École Bourget**, an abandoned high school that has been repurposed for the event and turned into something like 32 separate exhibition spaces.

That's where I saw a piece by David Hoffos titled "Scenes from the House Dream, Phase 5: Treehouse." If I were to write "gorgeous, spectacular, breathtaking, amazing, wonderful, stupendous, fabulous and flat out tons of fun," I wouldn't be doing it justice

In a nutshell, you enter a very dark room. Once your eyes have adjusted you realize that there are four tableau-like things in front of you, each viewable through a framed glass window. They are rather benign scenes, things like a suburban street just a little too close to the highway and an empty room with curtains blowing in the wind. But what makes them absolutely spectacular is that these are not your standard-issue tableaus where everything is presented plain and simple. No siree Bob! These tableaus use mirrors, the reflective nature of glass, video and video cameras to play with concepts of perception, reality and what it is that makes something visually attractive.

Nothing else at École Bourget is as spectacular as Hoffos' piece. But there's still a bunch of mighty cool work, and whatever isn't cool isn't completely cold or off-putting. In no particular order, some of the highlights are: Theo Sims, Michael Awad and Evan Penny, Christine Davis, Eleanor Bond, Numa, Annie Pootoogook, Bill Smith and Sarah Anne Johnson.

Street art

The biennale has an educational component this year as a way of encouraging students. Since most people are likely to pass right by the student room, I figure that I should highlight the good stuff.

One thing that strikes me about the student work is how much it is influenced by street art. Not only your standard-issue graffiti, but other less familiar forms as well, such as the tape casts of body parts popularized by American artist Mark Jenkins.

Evan Penny makes these absolutely twisted and weird busts of people's faces, like something you would imagine seeing after drinking 30 shots of Jack Daniels. For the biennale he worked with Michael Awad to make one of the most twisted faces I've ever seen, and Awad took photographs to accompany the bust. If you want some art-historical allusions, imagine viewing a Ron Mueck sculpture on acid, and you might be close.

Nothing's perfect

The main point is that the show at École Bourget is good, well worth the $6 admission. However, I'd like to make a couple of quick complaints.

In English, the show is called Crack the Sky; in French it's called Remuer ciel et terre. The two names do not mean the same thing: it's sort of like calling the show Rouge in French and Blue in English.

I am also sorely disappointed to say that if you are in a wheelchair or have difficulty getting up stairs, there are no elevators or ramps for you at École Bourget.

But this is just nitpicking. Overall, the stuff I saw was good and makes me want to see the rest of the biennale. And believe it or not, I'm looking forward to the 2009 version as well.

Chris "Zeke" Hand runs Zeke's Gallery. All opinions expressed above are his own. He does not represent, manage, consult or otherwise have ANY affiliation with the artists or galleries he writes about, unless it is explicitly stated in the review.

An image from David Hoffos's darkly lit piece "Scenes from the House Dream, Phase 5". Courtesy: Trépanier Baer.

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Summer Movie Round-Up

Three thirds: pirates, ogres & spiders

Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End

He said:

It is not often that one sits in a movie thinking that Hollywood actors are not paid enough, but any movie that has the phrase "torch of destiny" cannot help but elicit such thoughts.

This movie plays out like a bunch of kids always trying to one-up one another by appealing to higher levels of the supernatural. The progression is from Davy Jones' locker (to rescue Jack Sparrow, played again by Johnny Depp) to the pirates' "brethren court" to scenes aboard the supernatural ship *The Flying Dutchman* to a final apocalyptic fight against the East India Company (which threatens to destroy the pirate way of life). But before that happens, the sea *goddess* Calypso must be freed (or not, depending on your theological viewpoint).

Throughout, Sparrow prances and preens and fires himself around on ships' rigging. This character was based on Keith Richards (who is in the movie, in an utterly forgettable performance). What Depp seems to have missed is that Richards (despite spending his private life drinking and falling out of coconut trees) generally appears cool, collected and macho. Depp's Sparrow comes off as either drunk or gay, neither of which fits the plot.

A multicultural gathering of pirates eventually does assemble and *elects* Elizabeth Swann (Keira Knightley) to be their king (who ever thought there'd be a politically correct pirate movie?). Various speeches align the pirates on the side of hard work, freedom, true love and free love – and against heartless capitalism, (literally) heartless men and the heartless forces of empire.

I think 10 to 12 years olds might really enjoy penetrating the various levels of this movie. For younger kids, the various parental death scenes might be upsetting.

For us older kids, the only real solace is the comic intervals offered by the Frick and Frack duo of Mackenzie Crook and Lee Arenberg. At one point, the two mischievously speculate whether they can drop cannonballs on the souls of the dead. If only they could have heaved a cannonball onto the original prints of this movie.

She said:

Arggg. There be pirates! And plots! And villains! And destiny! And true love! And a dozen stolen scenes from better movies. Orlando Bloom as Will Turner channeling Carey Elwes playing the Dread Pirate Roberts in the eternally excellent *The Princess Bride*; the floating bodies scene right out of the Dead Marshes in *The Two Towers*; the hour-long ship battle too reminiscent of *Master & Commander*; a love scene ripped from the cover of a Harlequin romance novel. In *Shrek*, these homages are funny and intentional. In this movie, they are derivative and bad.

The acting is not much better. When the funniest thing in your comedy is a monkey and two bozos who were unknown before these movies and who will fade into obscurity afterwards, it is not a good sign. Bloom is treading water; Depp is imitating himself imitating Keith Richards imitating a pirate; and Knightley looks like she forgot which Elizabeth she was playing (but I didn't like her in *Pride & Prejudice* either). She acts as if holding her nose high enough will keep the stench of this film from making a permanent impression.

I don't know what happened between the first of these movies, which I enjoyed, and this one. Oh, right, I do: it was called *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest*. If you liked that one, you'll like this. If you didn't...well...don't say I didn't warn you.

Shrek the Third

He said:

In this third installment of the Shrek series, the king of Far, Far Away dies. Although it is Shrek's wife, Fiona (Cameron Diaz), who is the king's daughter, the unenlightened succession laws of Far, Far Away will make Shrek (Mike Myers) king – unless he finds cousin Arthur, the next in line to the throne, and convinces him to take over. Of course, the donkey (Eddie Murphy) and Puss in Boots (Antonio Banderas) tag along on the journey to find Arthur.

Reluctant reviewer

Meanwhile, Prince Charming – chagrined by his failure to marry a princess and become king himself – plots his revenge by recruiting all the storybook villains he can find: Captain Hook, various wicked witches, evil talking trees etc...

I did not want to see this movie. I did not love the first two movies half as much as the rest of North America. And the trauma of being doubly exposed (westwards and eastwards!) to *Happy Feet* on an airplane (there was no escape!) has deepened my mild bias against animated films. But the readers of *Vivva* needed a review. Duty called.

End result? I really enjoyed *Shrek the Third*. Unlike so many of these thinly plotted puff pieces, the plot made *sense* (within the parameters of its unreal world). Prince Charming's desire for revenge was a realistic motive. Shrek's reluctance to be king was believable and sincere. And the jokes were funny.

I am not sure how appropriate the movie is for small children. The king's death throes could really upset some kids. And while the abundant sexual innuendo will go over their heads, I wonder whether it won't burden the movie with dialogue they just won't care about.

She said:

I was more enthusiastic about seeing this movie, if only to see the Puss in Boots character again. (How do they capture Antonio Banderas' essence in a cat?) However, I was less enthusiastic than David about this film, particularly at the beginning, which I found a bit slow. The movie did pick up, however, and I always marvel at the amazing little details that they put in these films.

Two small examples: at one point the Gingerbread Man's life is threatened and he sees his life flash before his eyes in a hilarious montage of scenes. At another point, Prince Charming wears leg warmers as he rehearses for the theatrical show during which he intends to kill Shrek. At the same time, there is a small scene from *A Chorus Line* being re-enacted (very funny).

Jokes galore

I could go on and on and I am sure that I missed a million more jokes just like these. There are also lots of little inside ones: at one point, Fiona's mother, played by Julie Andrews, breaks into a song from *The Sound of Music*. There are visual references to *Lord of the Rings*. In short, a lot of smart and funny people have put a lot of work into this film. It is therefore funny and worth watching.

I think my central issue with the film is that I find Shrek and Fiona kind of boring. I'd rather see a movie about the side characters, and when it focuses on them, this film is at its best.

Spider-Man 3

He said:

Spider-Man 3 has all the attributes of the first two, better, movies: good special effects; villains with comic-book-plausible motives; adequate-to-good acting by Tobey Maguire (Peter Parker/Spider-Man) and James Franco (Harry Osborn); and the presence on the screen of Kirsten Dunst (Mary Jane). And then the plot starts...

Fade to black

I have not read the Spider-Man comics, but I have always been intrigued by the black spidey suit. Did it make Spider-Man evil? Edgier? Tougher? Did he wear it for especially difficult missions? Regardless, the black suit promised to be *cool*. In this movie, it makes Peter Parker callous towards Mary Jane, but just a bigger geek vis-à-vis the rest of the world. Did I write "geek", full stop? That's not accurate: it turns him into a geek who looks like a failed drama/art student posing as the young Hitler (complete with comb-over). Even the characters in the movie see him as a loser. End result? The black suit – the main plot point of this movie – is the opposite of cool.

And there was other stupid stuff, too: an "other woman" in Spider-Man's life who is not even close to tempting, a Peter Parker-as-lounge-singer scene that seems like an outtake from *The Mask* (1994), etc...And it's long (2 hours and 20 minutes). See it, True Believers, if you must, but don't expect much.

She said:

There are all kinds of things that don't work in this movie: the fact that Peter Parker is now (in movie three) letting the fame of being Spider-Man go to his head (even before he puts on the black suit of evilness), the fact that he continuously wears his hapless expression of wide-eyed innocence and guilelessness, the fact that MJ never seems to sleep over, the fact that MJ seems to have more chemistry with both the evil and the temporarily good James Franco, the fact that a conk on the head makes James Franco good and a kiss and a drink make him bad again, the fact that all the characters are related in some way (what is this, an episode of *Lost*?) etc...

Unoriginal and out of place

There are also all kinds of unoriginal things in this movie: e.g., the odd John Cleese look-alike moment in a French restaurant and Franco's butler who looks and acts suspiciously like Batman's.

Additionally, the pacing of this movie is all wrong. It turns into an odd romantic comedy in the middle, and spends so much time in this mode that it then has to cram in the dispatching of three villains into twenty minutes. To do so, characters suddenly know things they shouldn't and people they don't.

On the plus side, it's nice to see Franco acting carefree in the middle. His performance is vastly improved from the other installments. Also good was Topher Grace as an ambitious rival to Peter Parker and a touching scene between Peter Parker and his aunt.

Book Review

When CanLit won't do

by Catherine McKenzie

Blood Sports
by Eden Robinson

Garcia's Heart
by Liam Durcan

What is CanLit? The thought of it always chills my blood. I'm sure this is because of the mandatory force-feeding that we receive in high school of one-too-many depressing books and poems by someone named Margaret.

But what is it? Wikipedia defines CanLit as literature that "whether written in English or French, often reflects the Canadian perspective on: (1) nature, (2) frontier life, and (3) Canada's position in the world, all three of which tie in to the garrison mentality. Canada's ethnic and cultural diversity are reflected in its literature, with many of its most prominent writers focusing on ethnic life."

If a book is set in Canada and written by a Canadian, but doesn't reflect on nature, the frontier life or our marginal position in the world – if there is no sense in the novel that we are garrisoned in our enclave – does that mean it's not really Canadian?

Do these books meet the CanLit criteria? They do not.

Are they set in Canada and written by Canadians? They are, so maybe they should be CanLit.

But in the end I have to measure them against objective criteria that boil down to the questions: Are they any good? Would I recommend these books to another reader?

No bloody good

For Eden Robinson's *Blood Sport*, the answer is a definitive no.

The novel is set in Vancouver's grubbiest neighbourhood, and the characters are appropriately grubby. The story follows Tom, a hapless man-child caught up in the aftermath of his psychotic or sociopathic cousin, Jeremy. Tom is involved with Paulie, an ex-junkie who has also been trodden on by Jeremy. The book opens with Tom writing a goodbye letter to his child with Paulie. What follows is a hectic, fractured journey through the past, which comes out in no particular order and often with an unreasonable and unnecessary amount of violence.

I'm not sure what I dislike most about this book. The fact that the first chapter shows such promise and then it all falls apart? The fact that none of the characters are sympathetic? The fact that Robinson keeps changing tenses, points of view, styles and genres, without any rhyme or reason other than to show us she can? (I don't enjoy it when Fitzgerald does it and I like it even less here).

All these negatives are contenders. When I put them all together, the only reason I could think of for finishing the book was that I was writing this review. Aha! It is CanLit!

A good heart

McGill professor Liam Durcan's first novel, *Garcia's Heart*, was better. The novel is about a man who learns that his mentor (and the father of his first love) may have committed war crimes a lifetime ago in Honduras. When that man is placed on trial in the Hague (or Den Haag as Durcan continuously, annoyingly and pretentiously insists on calling it), Patrick flies in to watch the trial and perhaps assist him in his defence. At the Hague he encounters his old flame, who is there to support her father. The rest of the novel follows the trial and burrows into the past so that we can understand the relationships that are before us on the page.

Predictable fodder

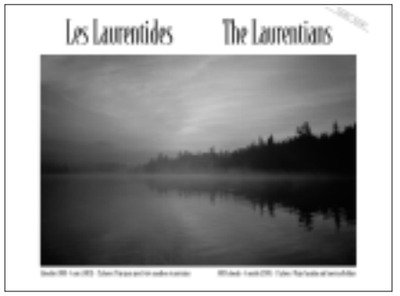
Durcan is a good writer and manages to evoke with equal vividness a place I know extremely well (part of the novel is set a block from where I grew up) and a place I have never been.

However, nothing about the novel feels original, other than the concept. I knew immediately that the story would weave between the past and the present (novelists can't seem to help themselves from doing that these days). I knew that there would be a girl from his past lurking somewhere. I knew that the explanation offered for his mentor's behaviour would shift as the story unfolded.

Finally, I found the defence's legal theory in this case to be implausible and legally unrealistic. It is worth reading, though, particularly for those who enjoy good and original descriptive passages.

Catherine McKenzie is a Montreal lawyer.

Soon in stores



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Toxin-free products are available

continued from page 1

as scented lotions contain toxins. Babies and children are more susceptible to chemicals and toxins than adults because their immune systems are still developing.

Jennifer A. Casey, a former make-up artist, was also concerned. After the birth of her baby in 2001 she began cooking up homemade baby products from natural household items found in her kitchen cupboards. Her products, **Dimpleskins Naturals**, are available online. She also has a book titled *Homemade Baby: The Guide to Making your Own Baby Care Essentials... the Natural Way!*. For more information go to www.jenniferacasey.ca.

If you are looking for an organic, chemical-free sunscreen, **Lavera SPF 15** is available in a spray bottle for babies, children and adults at À Votre Santé, 5126 Sherbrooke St. West. For more information call 514.482.8233.

Working mummies

Are you a mother who owns her own business and doesn't have time to network? MIB to the rescue! No, I am not referring to Men in Black, but to **Moms in Business**.

MIB was developed by two mothers, Sheba Remer and Shari Reinhart to:

- unite women committed to growing their business in a spirit of cooperation and support;
- develop business goals while helping others develop theirs;
- acknowledge that everyone has something valuable to contribute; and
- heighten word-of-mouth awareness through non-competitive connections.

Members benefit from monthly meetings, trade shows, networking lunches, and an annual cocktail party, as well as the Happy Hour Speed Meeting mixer.

The next Happy Hour Speed Meeting is on Tuesday, June 12, from 5:30 to 7:30 pm at a location to be announced. Have some wine and cheese, meet the speakers and mingle with potential clients at this social event. If you are interested in registering for the event, or in becoming a member of MIB, call Shari at 514.684.9081 or Sheba at 514.624.8590, or send an e-mail to mibnetwork@hotmail.com.

Play dates

Enfants du Quartier is offering free play until Labour Day! If you need to visit the loo, change a diaper or just get out of the heat for a moment, the café welcomes parents and children free of charge. Cold fruit smoothies are available (for a charge).

Lunchtime Funtime is a combination of singing and dancing, arts and crafts and a snack. Sessions are held on Wednesdays at 10:20 am for toddlers ages 18 months to 3 and on Thursdays at 10:30 am for ages 3 to 6. Sessions last one hour and cost $4.50.

The café is used for birthday parties on weekends and is closed on Saturdays and Sundays at 3 pm. If you are interested in having the exclusive use of the café for a party, as well as a helping hand to set up and clean up afterwards, the cost is $235.

Enfants du Quartier, 5588A Sherbrooke St. West. For more information call 514.904.2382 or go to www.enfantsduquartier.com.

Family farm for sale

For 25 years, Elwood (a fifth-generation farmer) and Marie Quinn have owned and operated **Quinn Farm**. When they bought the farm, the land had been abandoned. The couple developed the land by planting trees and raspberry bushes while Elwood was on staff at Macdonald College.

From cut-your-own Christmas trees to apple picking, Quinn Farm has been offering fun activities for Montreal families for 25 years. The Quinns have decided to retire and are looking for a new family to adopt the farm. Quinn Farm may be your new calling. If you think that you are up to the challenge of adopting the farm, then give the Quinns a call!

Strawberry picking at Quinn Farm begins at the end of June. The cost is $1 per person. A tractor takes you and your family to the strawberry fields to pick berries. A full basket costs about $8. Quinn Farm is open seven days a week from 8 am to 4 pm. It's a good idea to call ahead if weather conditions are questionable. Quinn Farm, 2495 Perrot Blvd., Île Perrot. For more information call 514.453.1510 or go to www.quinnfarm.qc.ca.

Maternally Yours updates

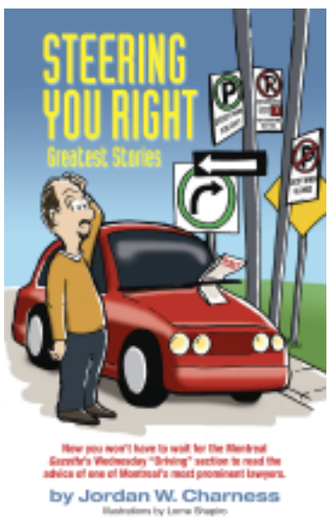
All aboard for **Thomas the Train**! Thomas and friends will be live on stage on Sunday, June 10 at 11 am and 2 pm at Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier. The show is titled *Thomas Saves the Day*. Tickets are $21 to $40. Place des Arts, 175 St. Catherine St. West. For more information call 514.842.2112 or go to www.thomasandfriends.com.

The best part about summer in Montreal is playing outdoors in warm weather after a long winter of hibernation. We are fortunate to have so many wonderful parks to enjoy.

On that note, this is a reminder that while the warm weather is inviting to children and families, it is also inviting to predators. Child-snatchers, pedophiles and other dangerous undesirables frequent parks and playgrounds and tend to lurk where there are hiding places, such as bushes or large trees. Remember to be extra vigilant with your child.

Enjoy June in Montreal with the kids and don't forget the hats and sunscreen!

Annika Melanson is the author of The Montreal Pocket Parent *and* Le Bottin des Bambins *and co-author of* Yummy in my Tummy in Montreal.



Now you won't have to wait for the Montreal *Gazette*'s Wednesday 'Driving' section to read the advice of one of Montreal's most prominent lawyers.

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COOKING

Fresh herbs enliven summer recipes

BY ANTHEA DAWSON

One of the great things about summer in Montreal is the abundance of fresh herbs, which add freshness to summertime recipes and not a single calorie.

Fresh herbs are available at the open-air markets that dot the city, and they are easy to grow in your backyard. Whether starting from seeds or already sprouted seedlings, herbs are a very easy addition to any city garden and a great investment. Instead of spending money on a fresh bag of basil every week, just step outside and snip off a few stems for your tomato salad. Herbs are a dummy-proof way to start up a little veggie garden in the city and will bring you a lot of enjoyment.

Planting an herb garden

Some herbs are much heartier than others, so it is a good idea to figure out which herbs grow well together before planting your garden. It is also important to give each herb enough space to grow. If you're concerned that your garden is getting a little crowded, use a barrel filled with earth to start your herbs (this is also a good idea for apartment-dwellers with a balcony or rooftop access).

Herbs do not need particularly fertile soil, but good drainage is important to prevent the roots from getting soaked and rotting in the rain. Some herbs, like mint and sage, need to be contained or they will overtake a garden. Plant them in a tin can or bucket, punch a bunch of holes just above the bottom rim to allow drainage, and sink these into the ground; this should confine the plants for several years.

Basil is good for cold & flu symptoms

Healthful benefits

Not only do fresh herbs add flavour and freshness to your cooking, but they also bring with them an ample supply of nutrients and antioxidants. Many scientists believe that fresh herbs contain more antioxidants and cancer-fighting nutrients than most fruits or vegetables.

Herbs are also a source of many natural remedies: mint relieves indigestion; rosemary is high in antioxidants and is known to relieve depression, stress and headaches; fresh basil is great for treating cold and flu symptoms, as well as exhaustion; and parsley is rich in iron and contains more vitamin C than most citrus fruits (it's also a great breath-freshener!).

Without fresh herbs, summer cooking would be missing the punch that is essential to so many dishes. So take advantage of what Montreal's markets have to offer this summer!

Grilled Leg of Lamb With Fresh Herb Marinade and Gremolata

This is a great, easy summer recipe packed with fresh herbs. Try using local Quebec lamb if you can – it usually comes fresh and the flavour is amazing!

1 6- to 7-lb. leg of lamb, boned, butterflied and trimmed of excess fat (about 4½ lbs. boned & trimmed)
3 cloves garlic, minced
Zest of 1 lemon
¾ cup red wine
¼ cup low-sodium soy sauce
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
1½ Tbsp. chopped fresh oregano
2 Tbsp. chopped fresh mint
2 Tbsp. chopped fresh rosemary
1 Tbsp. kosher salt
2 Tbsp. freshly ground black pepper

Gremolata:

Zest of 2 lemons
½ cup finely chopped Italian (flat-leaf) parsley
4 cloves garlic, minced

Mix together garlic, lemon zest, red wine and soy sauce in a small bowl. Slowly whisk in olive oil until marinade is emulsified. Add fresh herbs, salt and pepper.

Place trimmed leg of lamb in a shallow bowl or large ziplock bag and pour marinade over top. Let marinate for at least four hours.

For the gremolata, mix together lemon zest, chopped parsley and garlic in a small bowl. The gremolata can be made up to six hours in advance.

Prepare a charcoal grill. Remove lamb from its marinade and pat dry with paper towel, reserving the marinade for basting. When the coals are really hot, grill lamb for 7 to 8 minutes per side for medium-rare, basting with the left-over marinade.

Remove lamb from the grill and let it rest for a few minutes. Slice thinly, spoon a little gremolata over top and serve with oven-roasted potatoes and grilled asparagus.

Serves 6.

Caprese Salad with Buffalo Mozzarella

This renowned tomato salad from the beautiful island of Capri is one of the simplest and most extraordinary summer dishes, taking just minutes to prepare. Buffalo mozzarella is a unique cheese available at most specialty cheese shops and tastes a hundred times better than its rubbery counterpart. The Caprese salad is traditionally made with a drizzle of best-quality extra-virgin olive oil, but if you prefer an acidic punch add some balsamic vinegar just before serving.

4 to 6 large vine-ripened tomatoes (about 4 lbs.), sliced ½-inch thick
1 lb. fresh buffalo mozzarella, sliced ½-inch thick
¼ cup packed fresh basil, washed and dried
4 Tbsp. best quality extra-virgin olive oil
1 Tbsp. aged balsamic vinegar (optional)
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Arrange slices of tomato and buffalo mozzarella in an alternating manner on a large serving platter, so that the slices are slightly overlapping. Rip up the basil by hand (chopping it with a knife will cause it to bruise) and sprinkle on top of the tomatoes and cheese. Drizzle with olive oil and balsamic vinegar (optional) and sprinkle with sea salt and pepper.

Serves 4 to 6.

Anthea Dawson is the executive chef of Simply Wonderful, a catering company. She can be reached at ea_dawson@hotmail.com.

Container gardening simplifies urban gardens

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simplified hydroponics to grow vegetables in over 100 soil-filled containers: mostly Rubbermaid bins, industry-size pails and barrels, even a repurposed plastic kids' pool. When it was active, the garden supplied the kitchen of Santropol Roulant, a meals-on-wheels organization that serves 100 meals a day, five days a week.

The technology is inexpensive, lightweight and practical, and according to Rotem Ayalom, an urban planner and the garden coordinator, it has the potential of transforming the city's landscape.

"We want to spread our experience of turning unused space into productive green community space," says Ayalom. "Anyone with a balcony or rooftop access could conceivably be growing their own tomatoes."

Roots of urban agriculture

The birth of rooftop gardening occurred in the 1970s when Montreal architect Vikram Bhatt's Minimum Cost Housing Project converted a vast 1,000-square-metre rooftop in the McGill ghetto into a productive urban garden. Since then, a robust network of community gardens has developed on the island, with an estimated 10,000 gardeners making use of 98 city gardens each year.

The city gardens are so popular, in fact, that waiting lists for new plots last five or more years, a delay that was exacerbated at the beginning of the year by the closure of three city gardens that were found to have contaminated soil.

One of the advantages of container gardening, says Ayalom, is that you control what you're gardening in, since each container is a closed system. And unlike Bhatt's rooftop experiment, which required substantial modifications to the building's existing structure, one of Alternatives' lightweight containers can be plopped down pretty much anywhere there's sunlight: at 70 to 100 pounds, a typical recycling-bin-size container is a lighter load than a winter snowfall.

Ready-to-grow gardening kits

The system was developed after members of the Rooftop Garden Project found that conventional hydroponics was too costly and involved for the average gardener, requiring a controlled environment, expensive fertilizer and an electric pump.

The group began experimenting with hybrid solutions and posting its findings on its website, which are now collected in a substantial, 80-page manual that includes instructions on how to build a tube-shape planter for a spiral fire escape.

Ready-to-Grow kit

In 2005, they sold about 50 "ready-to-grow" gardening kits designed for individual use. Demand has since swelled: this year the group hopes to sell 350 kits at $40 a pop, slightly more than cost.

The home kit consists of a plastic container the size of a city-issued recycling bin and holds about 60 pounds of compost and potting soil (or substrate). Interlocking panels at the bottom of the container create a reservoir, which can be filled by a PVC tube driven through the soil. Substrate packed into the four empty corners of the reservoir allows moisture to percolate throughout the container, maintaining an optimal level of humidity even if the gardener leaves the container untended for several days.

Ayalom says she grows tomatoes, cherry tomatoes, groundcherries and herbs in a single container at home, but that most kits are sold to organizations that want to establish community initiatives similar to the rooftop garden.

Growing community

The popularity of household container gardening might be limited by the fact that for many people gardening is as much about building community as growing vegetables. At least that's been the experience of Julie Richard, coordinator of the Cantaloupe Garden in NDG.

"What we do here is a mix," says Richard. "We're here to feed people but a lot more to get people together. The first reason people come back year after year is the social aspect."

When the Cantaloupe Garden was planted ten years ago behind the Hampton Ave. YMCA, it was among the first of the city's collective gardens, which unlike municipal gardens are tended by a network of volunteers who share the harvest with local food banks. It is now the largest in a network of six gardens and a handful of backyard plots in NDG that subscribe to the communal approach.

On the day I visited the garden in early May, half a dozen volunteers were dividing a 26-kilogram spring harvest of Jerusalem artichokes, a pink-skinned tuber that tastes like a cross between a radish and a potato.

The volunteers I spoke to said that they were attracted by the social aspect of the garden, since it allowed them to meet new people, share their knowledge of gardening and take off on summer holiday without worrying that the garden was being left uncared for.

One volunteer said he used to have a city plot in Rosemont, but prefers to garden with a group because he is able to learn from the techniques and experience of others. "It's a different energy being in a group," he said. "I learned more on my first day here than I ever did at the city garden."

For Matthew Trowell, a technical writer and illustrator who moved to Montreal in 2004, the garden was a way of getting involved in a community he knew very little about. He says the garden "brought (him) back to life."

"I left Toronto because it was an alienating environment," said Trowell, an apartment-dweller without a balcony or rooftop access. "It was a complete relief to come to the garden, the most welcoming welcome you could imagine."

Still, Richard maintains that the garden performs an important social role in terms of what she calls "food security": the idea that a healthy society should know how to feed itself, especially its poor and needy.

She says that some of the volunteers rely on the harvest for their sustenance and that the annual surplus – which can amount to as many as three tonnes, or one third of the total harvest – provides an essential service by supporting the NDG Food Depot.

The notion boils down to the conviction, shared universally by vegetable gardeners and social activists alike, that a tomato you've grown yourself is incomparably better than one from the grocery store – in terms of the way it tastes and the good it does for the community.

Stuart Woods is the assistant editor of Vivva Montreal.

Where to grow

To buy a ready-to-grow rooftop gardening kit stop by the Coop de la maison verte at 5785 Sherbrooke St. West. For more information call 514.489.8000 or go to www.rooftopgardens.ca.

For more information on the Cantaloupe Garden call 514.484.0223 or go to www.actioncommuniterre.qc.ca. The garden is located behind the NDG YMCA at 4335 Hampton Ave.

The Rooftop Garden Project's demonstration garden is located on the McGill campus beside the Burnside building (805 Sherbrooke St. West). For information on volunteering at the garden call 514.982.6606 ext. 2278.

Wine

The secret lives of sommeliers

by Carola Price

People are often unsure what a sommelier actually does. There are so many different types that it's worth taking a peek into the life of a sommelier. Maybe you'll find it so exciting that a career change is in order. Or maybe you'll find it so dull that you'll gladly leave the task of selecting wines to sommeliers.

Full-time wine experts

The first type of sommelier works for an establishment with a wine program. He or she orders wine and cellars it accordingly. Keeping an inventory of the wines in stock and noting when each wine should be drunk is a time-consuming process. While many restaurants and hotels have wine lists, the client has no idea how many bottles will be in the cellar at any given time. Well-known cellars such as Le Bistro à Champlain on Lac Masson has over 10,000 bottles, some dating back more than 40 years. They have more than one sommelier on staff, naturally, as maintenance, labelling and ordering in a timely fashion is the key to keeping a cellar of this magnitude.

Wine Spectator has made a sommelier's job a key role in obtaining the coveted Grand Award of Excellence. An establishment that wins the award is listed in the magazine and may also receive kudos in an article. *Wine Spectator* is *the* publication for wine-lovers and many readers seek out establishments after reading about them in the magazine.

Professional wine geeks

At this point, you may wonder why sommeliers go the extra mile when all most people want is to have some wine with dinner. It is because sommeliers are wine geeks who research and taste thousands of wines a year so that with their guidance you can choose a suitable bottle that makes for a truly pleasurable dining experience.

We sommeliers go to a lot of trouble, from arguing with the boss for money to buy a special vintage to placing private orders with SAQ wine reps and working extremely long hours organizing wines on a wine list in a way that makes sense to the consumer. Arguments, or should I say discussions, with the chef also play a key role in how wine finds its way to your table. If it is meant to complement a chef's offering, then it is our job to deliver it to you. The long hours and low pay scale are balanced by the amazing food and wine that we get to enjoy.

Sommelier for hire

Private sommeliers teach wine courses, write wine articles and judge wine competitions. They also act as consultants and create a restaurant's wine list without being permanent staff. They are called in to tweak and train, often coming in for two or three days once or twice a year. This is ideal for medium-size restaurants that want to sell wine without all the fuss of a wine program.

Individuals can also hire a sommelier to come into their homes and figure out their wine-buying options. The sommelier arranges cellar wines by grape, region, vintage or food match, writes notes and tags each wine. The client is then able to enter his or her cellar and immediately know where to look for that special bottle.

You may know someone who has a vast wine room and a sommelier on hand, but in this day and age it is a rarity. The majority of people today have rudimentary cellars in their homes, and a sommelier arrangement may help boost the pleasure of wine drinking and increase wine knowledge.

Whether buying wine for the weekend or as an investment, you may want a sommelier on hand to make your wine-buying easier and more exciting. Sommeliers are constantly talking to producers, reps and other geeks about wine, and drinking new products daily. No matter the type of sommelier, our job is to help you find a wine for your palate that's within your budget.

Wines for the budding sommelier

Sauvignon Blanc, Niagara Peninsula, Peninsula Ridge, SAQ#10745541, $18.95

A delicious offering from an amazing producer. Look for light gooseberry and green apple flavour while moving down the throat with a certain richness and well-balanced acidity. Great to pair with fish in a light sauce, goat cheese and citrus chicken.

Zinfandel, Cline, California 2005, SAQ#00708677, $16.20

This is a fabulous wine for the BBQ. Pair the black cherry and strawberry flavour with the sweetness of BBQ sauce. Try it with grilled steak and the pepperiness of the wine really comes out. Although high in alcohol and bold in flavour, it is well suited to a warm evening by the heat of the coals.

Carola Price is a sommelier and chef. She is a member of the Canadian Association of Professional Sommeliers and the International Sommelier Guild. She can be reached at carola@ivvmontreal.com.

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Authentic Chinese exists in Montreal

continued from page 1

common with Western fast food than traditional Chinese recipes. But if you get past the deep-fried chicken balls and greasy chow meins, you'll find that fine and authentic Chinese can be had in Montreal – but it's not always had in Chinatown.

Soul food

A house specialty at **Lao Beijing** is a savoury and intense pork stew that smells strongly of cloves, cinnamon and anise. It's served in a copious casserole dish and unostentatiously ladled into china bowls at the table. The serving is massive, the broth rich and overwhelming – certainly not everyone's cup of tea, but not a dish to quibble with either. Think of it as Chinese soul food.

Where to go

Lao Beijing
5619A Côte des Neiges
514.731.8978

Village Mon Nan
1098 Clark
514.879.9680

The food at Lao Beijing is notable for its oversized portions, bold flavours and use of fresh though familiar ingredients (Chinese cabbage, eggplant, carrot and green pepper, and pork, mutton and lamb in the meat department). It's a recipe that has attracted a devoted clientele in three years of operation: the tiny restaurant of a dozen or so tables is regularly packed on weekend nights, filled by a din worthy of any chic downtown bistro. Like the stew, the cramped ambiance can be overwhelming – but it's fun, too.

"Chinese fondue"

What brought me to Lao Beijing was its reputation for elaborate Mongolian hotpot, known in French by the peculiar term *fondue chinoise*. The course bears only a passing resemblance to traditional cheese fondue, however, which is to say that it involves an open flame at the table (in this case a rather bulky butane burner) and requires actually cooking a smorgasbord of raw ingredients. Another noticeable difference with Swiss fondue, where the most important element is a bubbling cauldron of cheese, garlic and white wine, is that here a redolent broth flavours the ingredients but isn't itself consumed (in fact, it's basically tap water with a powerful spice mixture and some hot chilies: a harsh, unpalatable mixture on its own).

Preparing the meal requires vigilance and dexterity, since the various cooking times of the ingredients have to be balanced with your desire to eat them. On one end of the scale, flat glassy rice noodles take about ten minutes to cook and about fifteen minutes before they start to get slimy; on the other end, prosciutto-thin slices of lamb can be taken out of the melee almost as soon as they're dropped in. The assemblage is then mixed with sliced scallions, coriander and a sharp, bitter sauce of fermented soy and sesame paste.

When ordering from the bulky menu, which lists 88 individual items, a rule of thumb is to order anything with yu xiang, a fiery sweet sauce that manages the delicate balance between complex spices and tempered sweetness that is the hallmark of fine Chinese food. Chinese eggplant emphasizes the spicy/sweet tension, its appealing flesh-like texture accented by tender kernels of ground pork. The yu xiang pork, meanwhile, is less intense though flavoursome, consisting of shredded meat laced with ribbons of shiitake mushroom.

Peking duck

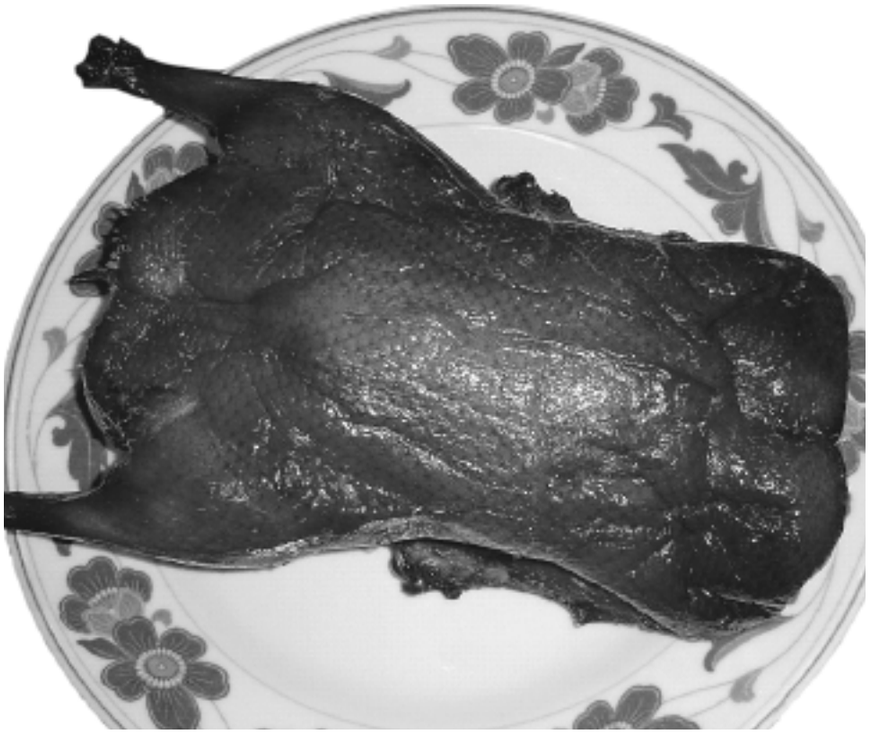
At **Village Mon Nan**, menu items are written in Cantonese on bright coloured slips of paper that are posted throughout the dining room. This haphazard arrangement doesn't bother the regulars, however, or even people like me who don't read Cantonese, because almost everybody comes to the restaurant for one thing: Peking duck served in the traditional manner as a three-course meal.

Technically, Peking duck is a plump white-plumed mallard, precisely the breed raised by Knowlton-based Brome Lake Ducks, Canada's oldest duck-breeding farm and a long-time Chinatown supplier.

The Brome Lake duck you'll find in Chinatown looks a lot different from the Brome Lake duck you'll find served in a French bistro. For one thing, the head is often still attached. For another, the bird has a reddish, almost lacquered, appearance, partly due to the manner in which it is roasted and partly because it is coated in maltose.

You can find a whole roasted duck in Chinatown for under $15, less than you will sometimes pay at a grocery store.

The first course at Village Mon Nan is a hearty ginger-spiced duck-and-noodle soup, complete with Flinstonesesque drumsticks protruding from a large communal bowl that's brought to the table. The soup is flavoursome, but it has an unappetizing grey colour similar to dirty dishwater. But as comfort food the soup hits the mark.



Peking duck in all its crispy glory

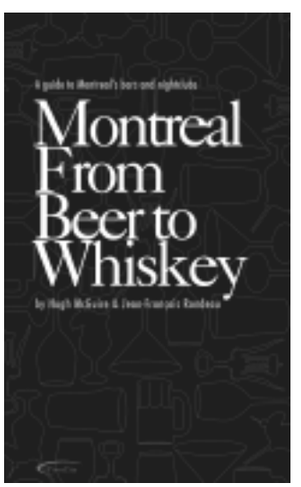
The crucial course for Peking duck is the second, since the bird's crisp skin is considered a delicacy. (It's also a gauge of authenticity: Western-style restaurants typically serve large pieces of duck meat with very little skin attached, like a slice of thanksgiving turkey.) Apparently, the desired crispness is attained by pumping air between the skin and body, so that the bird is partially inflated before it is roasted.

I can't say what was going on in the kitchen, but I can tell you that the skin was appropriately crisp, served on a platter beside sweet daikon and carrot salad, tassel-cut scallions and thin rice-flour pancakes. The fixings were wrapped in the pancake, dipped in hoisin sauce and eaten as a kind of burrito.

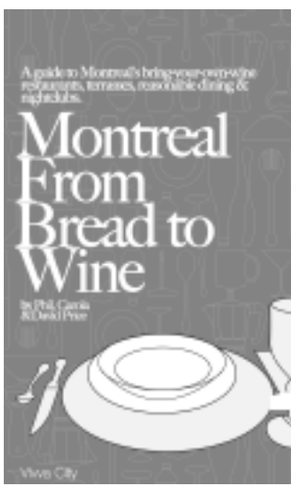
After the fanfare of Course Two, it was hard not to feel let down by Course Three, which was supposed to contain the remaining duck meat but amounted to a mound of stir-fried bean sprouts, onions and only a handful of the prized morsels.

I can't imagine what happened to the rest of the bird.

Stuart Woods is the assistant editor of Vivva Montreal.



A pair of books to guide you through Montreal's dining and bar scene.



Gardening

Mulch ado about something

by Mary Soderstrom

Say "mulch," and I'm tempted to laugh out loud.

The word begins with such a pleasing sound – that Mmmm! makes you think of good things to eat – but finishes as you half-swallow, half-cluck. The combination is not what you expect and as Aristotle used to say, "The secret to humour is surprise."

But mulch as a concept is no laughing matter. Environment Canada is forecasting below average rain this June and July for the Montreal region.

Just how much will fall, no one is predicting, but mulching your flower and vegetable beds is worth it even if we end up getting a good soaking rain or two every week.

Mulching basics

Mulch means covering bare ground with something that will cut down on evaporation of soil moisture. You can use organic matter like wood chips or inorganic matter like small pebbles (for a list of possibilities go to http://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheets/HGIC1604.htm). Mulch also hinders weeds from growing, moderates soil temperature, and cuts down on erosion. Its only downside is that when you water mulched beds you must

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The Rotary Club of Westmount, Montreal's largest Rotary Club, has a diverse membership of men and women, young professionals to seasoned retirees pooling their talents on local and international projects.

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Learn more at www.rotary.org or contact The Rotary Club of Westmount at info@rotarywestmount.org.

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make sure the water makes it through to the soil underneath.

Drip irrigation – when water runs slowly out of tiny holes in pipes or hoses laid just under or on top of the soil – is the easiest way to do this. You can get a system installed professionally, but soaker hoses – $15 to $25 at garden or hardware centres – are easy to snake back and forth across your beds.

Water only when the soil under the mulch is dry, but let the water run for a couple of hours, beginning early in the morning. Then you'll forget about mulch's comic aspects because you'll be set to laugh in the face of drought.

Mary Soderstrom is a Montreal writer who gardens on a 25-by-100-foot lot in the centre of the city. Her most recent book is Green City: People, Nature and Urban Places *(Véhicule Press). Contact her at marysoderstrom@hotmail.com.*

Mulch at work ▶

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Practical Points: Investing

Sell in May and go away

by Michael St. B. Harrison

The word on the Street is that making money in the stock market recently has been far too easy. What with private equity money and corporate takeovers rampaging through the canyons and share buy-backs abounding, the markets have shown a very strong tendency to the upside. But what about that old warning posted as a leader above? Should you as an investor be taking money out of the game and preparing for a long hot summer?

We are all aware of the commodity boom that has allowed the Canadian investor to profit from escalating prices for just about all the natural resources we produce. We are also aware that the accepted consumer of our substantial mineral wealth is China and that this country is on a parabolic path to becoming the second largest economy in the world, and it doesn't look to be slowing down. Or is it?

Money is tightening

The authorities in China are very worried about a possible bust (they have had several over the past fifteen years) and are working to raise bank lending restrictions and their central bank lending rate. These combined measures are expected to hamper the ferocious pace of expansion and slow down the economy.

These central measures always seem to take ten to fifteen months to really bite into the statistical evidence, but the underlying momentum is already showing signs of abating.

Meanwhile, the world's number one economy has already cooled off, with housing leading a downturn in expected growth and the attendant lessening in demand for lumber, copper, aluminum and all manner of household goods. However, despite a modest up-tick in unemployment, the specter of inflation will keep the Federal Reserve rate at its present level and may in fact be raised to assist the US dollar recover from a long decline.

Europe has picked up a lot of the slack. The central authorities there are now raising interest rates to cool down the expected inflationary bias of this resurgence. They will not be alone in this historically successful maneuver to contain the evils of rising prices and wages. It will be the slow and steady increase in regulated interest rates that will make the markets become restive and uneasy.

The flood of money that was created during the years Mr. Greenspan was at the helm has washed around the world and created a massive supply of cheap credit that underpins most of the exuberant activity. But slowly this abundance is being drained from the pool and rocky shoals are starting to appear. The European Central Bank (joined by Mexico, New Zealand, Australia and the Scandinavian countries) has made it very clear they will be raising rates. The UK has already done so and the next step in Canada is presumed to be up, sooner rather than later.

This forced reduction of money supply will erode access to easy credit and reduce the activity of the leveraged buyout crowd and the so-called "carry trade." This is the intelligent proposition of borrowing in a cheap interest rate country and lending in a higher interest rate environment. This procedure has been assisted by the very low rates in Japan offset by burgeoning rates in Europe and, to the annoyance of exporters, Canada as well.

The risk, of course, is in the currency deviations. Some of the complacency in this comfortable trade will be removed when China moves its currency to a higher level, which will be their next step to curtail inflationary trends. This will have a ripple effect throughout Asia and cautionary steps will be taken to unwind some of the excessive manipulations.

The trend is your friend, but cash is like a warm puppy

These macro factors will prevail over time, but markets should anticipate a spot of bother and will settle back to awaiting further news. It is my belief that a more skeptical attitude toward risk is justified and a modest retreat to the sidelines will prove to be beneficial to an investment portfolio.

For well-diversified investors it has been a case of an unintentional retreat to cash, as many core holdings have been taken away and more may succumb to the huge buyouts by the private equity marauders. Inco, Ipsco, Dofasco, Four Seasons, and now BCE and Alcan may all go missing in action with no comparable alternatives. My advice is not to chase lesser quality and enjoy the comfort of cash.

Michael St. B. Harrison is a retired investment executive. He has been a broker, investment banker and trader in Montreal and Toronto, as well as active in company management and the investment industry's self-regulatory agencies.

The Urban Townshipper

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- **Bromont Horse Trials** is an international-calibre equestrian event. For more information call 450.539.5394 or go to www.internationalbromont.org. Bromont Olympic Horse Park, 450 de Gaspé Rd., Bromont. **June 7 to 10**.
- **La Clé des champs de Dunham** is a culinary festival showcasing local artisan producers. For more information call 450.295.2418 or go to www.ville.dunham.qc.ca. Dunham. **June 9 & 10**.
- **Grand Tour of Lake Megantic** is a family bike excursion that skirts Lake Megantic. For more information call 1.800.363.5515 or go to www.tourisme-megantic.com. Veterans Park, Lake Megantic. **June 10**.
- **Défi-vision** is a car race where the drivers are blind and assisted by celebrity co-pilots. For more information call 450.375.3055 or go to www.autodrome-granby.qc.ca. Granby Autoroute, Granby. **June 15**.
- **Windsor Paper Festival** features a fashion show with clothing made entirely of paper. For more information go to www.festival dupapier.qc.ca. **June 15 to 17**.
- **Summer Solstice Celebration**. Celebrate the longest day of the year with a special presentation focusing on the importance of the solstice to ancient civilizations. For more information call 1.866.888.2941 or go to www.astrolab.qc.ca. Astrolab, 189 Parc, Notre Dame des Bois. **June 23**.

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- Sunshine Theatre presents ***The Drawer Boy***, an award-winning play by Michael Healey. For tickets call 450.242.2270. Arts Knowlton, 9 Mount Echo, Knowlton. **June 1 & 2** and **9 & 10**.

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- **Ceramystic** is an exhibition and sale of work by over 30 seasoned potters. For more information call 450.248.3551 or go to www.ceramystic.com. Mystic. **June 22 to July 2**.
- **Arti-chaux** is an arts festival featuring professional visual artists and craftspeople. For more information call 819.887.6093 or go to www.tourismeculture dudswell.com. Dudswell. **June 29 to July 1**.

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