

No pork for me, thanks

There's more to life than bacon

BY ANNA MEER

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I RECENTLY saw a flyer in my workplace advertising "Bacon Appreciation Day." Having recently returned to Thunder Bay after 10 years in Southern Ontario, I was amazed to learn that so many people in the city still use swine as the primary ingredient for cooking and baking. Most dishes that have meat, it seems, contain pork, with chicken or beef as the only substitutes.

With so many refugees arriving in Thunder Bay — most of them Jews, Muslims and Orthodox Christians who don't eat swine or swine products of any kind — it is time for renewed knowledge, respect and tolerance.

This seems to be a prevalent issue in this community and therefore it seems that Thunder Bay needs some basic "bacon education." There are many variations that are available, like turkey bacon as opposed to traditional bacon.

I recently attended a wonderful event where a vegetarian guest was served salad with prosciutto, even after being told that there was no meat in the salad. The server affirmed that prosciutto isn't bacon and he didn't understand that it was not meat because it is a processed meat product.

At another event, vegetarian guests were served a plate with meat touching their vegetables, leaving



ONE CITY
MANY VOICES

Thunder Bay's Anti-Racism and Respect Advisory Committee produces this monthly column to promote greater understanding of race relations in Northwestern Ontario.

strict observers with nothing to eat. This was after the event co-ordinator had inquired about dietary restrictions.

I wonder how difficult it would have been to arrange for separate plates or even dietary labels. After all, people also have allergies to additives and preservatives and may choose not to eat processed meat. When events are catered, especially in publicly funded organizations and NGOs, dietary restrictions should be an integral part of the planning.

I am not a vegetarian but I believe that with the growing foodie culture in Thunder Bay, we need to be more aware of different preferences. I am adventurous in food and life but when I request "no bacon" on my salad, I get no questionable looks. Many people choose not to eat meat for health or environmental reasons

that have nothing to do with religion. But when my international student friend requests no meat, it's assumed to be due to nationality.

The message that I would like to relay is that organizations and the restaurant industry need to understand that the food we choose to put on our plates is reflective of many factors.

Food is an integral part of community. Tolerance is not possible without understanding. Even the word tolerance has the connotation of having to put up with something rather than learning to get along with something or someone.

I feel that in order to build a stronger community where everyone is respected, we need to start learning about each other and those aspects of our lives that make us who we are.

We should all be conscious as a society of dietary restrictions as our own may change one day. Food brings us together and dietary variations are a reflection of social change.

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