

2013 Halifax Food Snapshot

Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS)



About the ISANS community

Immigrant Services Association of NS is a leading community organization that welcomes immigrants. Working in partnership, they offer services and create opportunities to help immigrants to participate fully in Canadian life. ISANS offers a variety of programs to a range of clients. This project focused on government-assisted refugees, with whom ISANS works.

“Food is connected to identity”

During their first year, government-assisted refugees are living on a limited income, but still want to find foods they are familiar with. ISANS connects people to specialty stores for familiar, culturally appropriate foods, such as spices and Halal meat. As people stay longer their relationship to food changes, their children experience peer pressure at school to have processed foods. This can create problems in the family and the children no longer eating the traditional meals.

ISANS Community Gardens

From 2009-2013 over 500 Bhutanese/Nepali people arrived in Nova Scotia as government-assisted refugees. These families come from agricultural backgrounds, with a very high-level of food skills, including growing, cooking, and traditional preserving methods. In 2012 this group had access to Glen Garden with 25+ plots, which were each split in two, accommodating 50+ families. Tragically, this garden was vandalized, destroying much of the food and the beauty of the place. For the 2013 season, ISANS staff worked hard to bring in a more diverse range of gardeners, including Canadian-born residents of Fairview, with the hopes of de-stigmatizing and protecting the garden. With the support of the Our Food Project, a second growing space, the Multicultural Garden was built to better serve the demand for growing space. This garden has 18 plots split in two, accommodating a further 36 families. The community is further diversifying with families from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Uganda, Afghanistan, Iraq, Eritrea, and Syria arriving in 2013.

About this document

This snapshot is part of the research and evaluation work of the *Our Food Project* to measure the impacts of food systems interventions. It includes information shared through 2 food mapping workshops with 15 ISANS participants, and three in-depth interviews with ISANS staff. A comparative snapshot will be conducted in 2016.

Catalogue of Primary Food Assets

These locations were mapped by food mapping participants & ISANS staff.

Retail

Lawtons Drugs	7071 Bayers Rd	
Sobeys	120 Queen St	produce, grains, bread
Sobeys	287 Lacewood Dr	
Sobeys	6990 Mumford Rd	
Superstore	3601 Joseph Howe Dr	produce, dairy
Superstore	10 Chain Lake Dr	
No Frills	118 Wyse Road, Dartmouth	
Walmart	6990 Mumford Rd	parsley, cilantro
Bulk Barn	3440 Joseph Howe Dr	spices, Teff
Costco	230 Chain Lake Dr	
Wholesale Club	7111 Chebucto Rd	grains, rice, lentils
Pete's Frootique	1515 Dresden Row	
Pete's Frootique	1595 Bedford Hwy	
Giant Tiger	3531 Dutch Village Rd	produce, bananas, sugar, tea, salt
Bluenose Mini Market	28 Titus Ave	
House Of Halal Groceries	14 Titus Ave	halal meats
"Halal from Windsor"	Windsor, NS	halal, goat meat
Indian Grocer	2585 Robie St	seafood
Tian Phat Asian Grocery	209 Bedford Hwy	
Shoppers Drug Mart	5524 Spring Garden Rd	

Food Assistance

Halifax West Ecumenical Food Bank 50 Gesner St bread

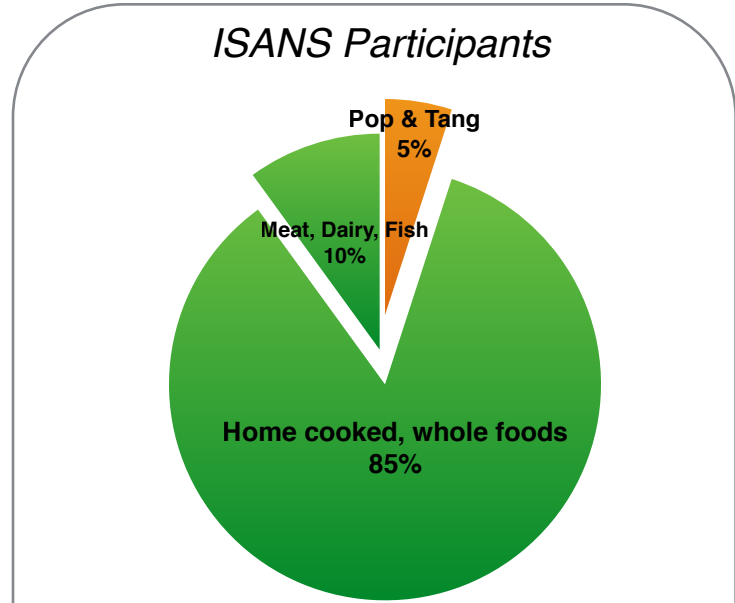
Produce Market

Seaport Farmers' Market	1209 Marginal Rd	produce
Farmer Clem's Bedford	389 Bedford Hwy	produce
Bedford highway produce stand	Bedford Hwy	
free wilted mustard greens- ferment like kimchi		
Dartmouth Farmers' Market	2 Ochterloney St	produce

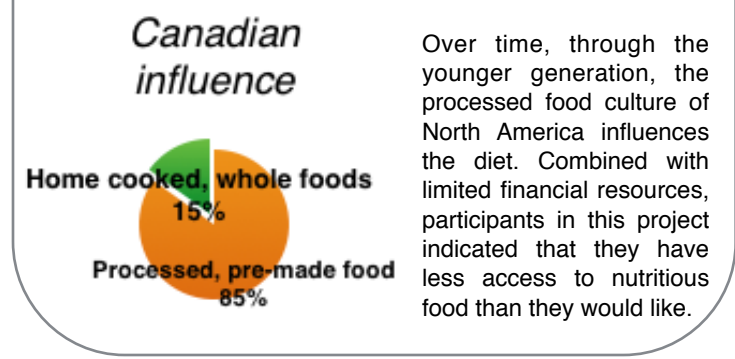
Food Skills & Growing

EAC garden, cooking, preserving programming at BWFR
 Common Roots Urban Farm Corner of Bell and Robie St
 donate fresh produce- onion, garlic, tomato, radish
 Foraging "everywhere" fiddleheads, herb like watercrest
 2 ISANS gardens

“Oh my god, I may die here. With this money I cannot buy fish and I cannot live without fish.”



The whole foods used include vegetables, fruits, grains and pulses. The produce is mostly non-organic, conventional unless grown in their gardens.



Over time, through the younger generation, the processed food culture of North America influences the diet. Combined with limited financial resources, participants in this project indicated that they have less access to nutritious food than they would like.

2013 Halifax Food Snapshot: ISANS

First Voice Responses from Workshops

SUPPORTS for healthy food access

- Social Supports:** Bhutanese/Nepali community coordinate to increase food access (e.g., seed swapping, buy goat from the valley and share). Children help elders with language and reading fliers. Teach each other how to cook and new recipes. Go with friends to see where food is cheap.
- Growing Space:** two ISANS supported gardens. Common Roots Urban Garden.
- Ethno-cultural Food Stores:** Indian, Chinese, African, these culturally specific foods that are familiar are very important. Bluenose convenience (local corner store) and Joseph Howe Superstore are adapting food supply for clientele (e.g., range of cheap spices).
- Knowledge & Skills:** Bhutanese/Nepali have a wealth of farming experience and cooking skills. How to use fliers and shop around for cheaper foods.
- Transportation:** love to walk for exercise to stores. Use taxi to get bulk food home.
- Time:** before and after school, weekends, when have a day off we can go to further places.

BARRIERS to healthy food access

- Not Enough Growing Space:** the Bhutanese/Nepali are farmers and they want a farm to grow food.
- Finances:** sometimes don't have money for food. Meat and fish can be unaffordable. Organic food and Farmers' Market is generally not affordable.
- Culture & Religion:** food banks don't provide culturally/religious appropriate food, so food that is provided goes to waste because no skills/knowledge to cook it. Food is different and different quality.
- Language & Literacy:** hard to buy food at the grocery store.
- Knowledge & Skills:** how to grow in Canadian climate, how to cook Canadian-available foods, how to preserve to have food access through the winter.
- Social Supports:** peer pressure from schools and children to eat processed foods. No childcare.
- Winter:** hard to find produce. Harder to walk and bus to grocery store.
- Transportation:** driving is expensive. Don't have a licence. Don't have access to a car.
- Time:** family is busy with school and work. Do groceries once a week because don't have other time.

OPPORTUNITIES for Positive Food Environments

- Food Infrastructure:** Would like MORE LAND! More access to growing spaces. A farm.
Season extension: cold frames, greenhouse to grow in the winter.
- Knowledge & Skills:** Wild edibles, preserving, how to grow grains here, and food and nutrition.
- Access & Transportation:** go to the valley to harvest fresh fruit and vegetables.
- Partnering:** working with the Ecology Action Centre's Our Food Project and Common Roots Urban Farm. Working with Feed NS to have more culturally appropriate foods at the food bank.

"If I had my own garden, I wouldn't have any problem at all"

"The first thing is LOVE. If you put love into what you cook, it will be good"



"Newcomers don't have reference points for all of the more processed foods of North America, such as sugar content, and food label language"

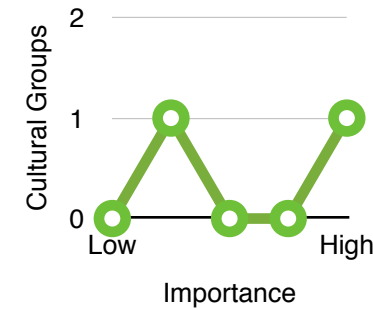
Do newcomers eat the recommended daily intake of fruits and vegetables?

"No, many clients only eat 2 meals a day."

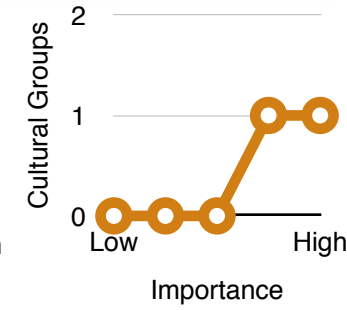


How IMPORTANT to the participants is...?

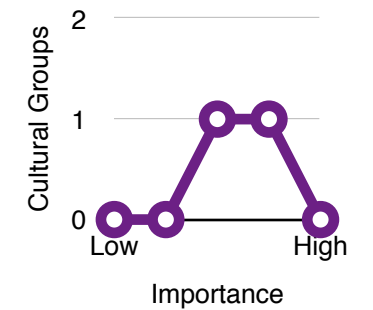
Growing food



Cooking

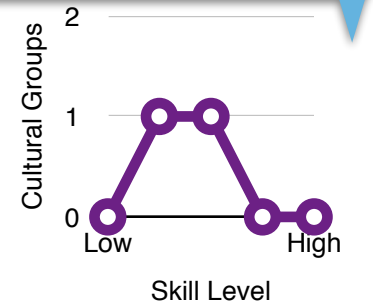
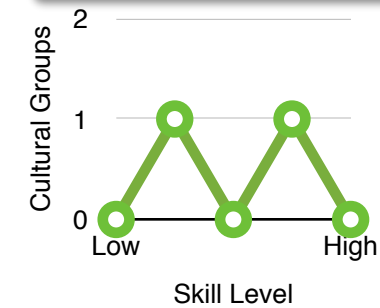


Preserving food



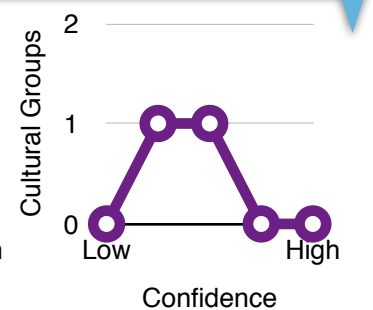
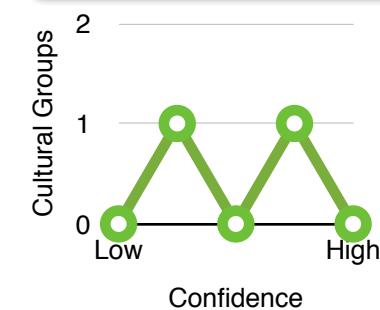
For the Bhutanese/Nepali community, growing food is of highest importance because they come from farming, as is cooking and preserving. For other newcomer groups, such as Afghani, and Congolese many come from urban environments, and so growing food is not as much a part of their experience. However, cooking with whole foods and preserving is higher, because there isn't such a culture of processed food.

What is the SKILL LEVEL of the participants... ?



The skill levels are lower than the level of importance in all categories for both the Bhutanese/Nepali and more urban-origin newcomers because of the 'Canadian learning curve'. For example, learning how to grow in a new climate, with new vegetable varieties, and with new tools. Similarly, using Canadian cooking infrastructure like fridges and stoves is new for some families. Preserving for the winter in a humid climate is different than using drying techniques for warmer climates.

How CONFIDENT are the participants... ?



Similar to the skill level, confidence in these areas is lower than the level of importance due to the 'Canadian learning curve' - new climate, culture, and different food available. Overall the level of importance for all three activities is higher than the skill level and confidence level. One thing this data tells us is that there is an appetite to learn how to grow food, cook healthy food, and preserve, among other food-related skills.

