

FOOD *in* CANADA

Canada's food & beverage processing magazine

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FOOD in CANADA

Canada's food & beverage processing magazine



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Coming up in the June issue

Catering to Kids

Successful food and beverage producers know that hitting the mark with kids and parents means more than offering just fun and convenience. This month we look at the market for products aimed at children, and how to reach this important demographic.

SPECIAL REPORT: The labour market

Finding and retaining skilled labour continues to be a key priority for food and beverage manufacturers, regardless of their sector of the industry. Part 2 of our series on the labour market will focus on raising awareness about the food processing industry and engaging the next generation.

Supplement: PETfood in Canada

Food in Canada's PETfood in Canada supplement appears twice a year, focusing on the expanding pet food market in North America. In this edition we look at the food market for smaller animals, as well as a profile of Aurora, Ont.-based Buddy's Kitchen.

Supplement: Research Chefs in Canada

Our quarterly supplement *Research Chefs in Canada* focuses on food trends and news in the culinary world, and features the columns *A Culinary Odyssey* and *Recipe to Retail*.

Product Showcase

Pre-show coverage of IFT 2017, taking place June 25 to 28 in Las Vegas.



- Packaging
- Market Trends
- Focus on Food Safety
- Rethinking Innovation
- Food Law
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FOOD_{in}**CANADA**



A smash hit

One of my favourite new products of 2016 was Georgian Bay Spirit Co.'s Gin Smash. The ready-to-drink (RTD) cocktail, according to Georgian Bay's website, offers a "tart and refreshing blend of lemon, lime and tangerine with a clean, mint finish." Made with all-natural ingredients, and only slightly sweet, the crisp, lightly carbonated gin beverage is a delicious, convenient and unique new addition to the RTD section of the LCBO — a decidedly mature cocktail among a surplus of sweet and sticky coolers.

When Gin Smash launched last spring it was an immediate hit. LCBO outlets couldn't keep it in stock, and even the company's owners were surprised by its runaway success. "It began selling like gangbusters right out of the gate," says Georgian Bay Spirit Co. co-founder Tim Keenleyside. "Our forecast was for 15,000 cases (with 24 cans per case), but we ended up selling 65,000 cases in 2016."

Keenleyside and business partner Denzil Wadds began the company in 2013, and by spring 2016 were already celebrating the success of their award-winning Georgian Bay Vodka and Georgian Bay Gin, the latter of which features wild Georgian Bay juniper. Calling Gin Smash a "craft cocktail in a can," Keenleyside says the entrepreneurs saw an opportunity in the RTD alcohol space that was "dominated by cheap

alcohol, and products that were highly sweetened and contained artificial flavours." By contrast, Gin Smash is "fun, unique and a little more complex in flavour," he says. "The packaging stands out on the shelf, it's clean and elegant, and there is a local component to it, which has very positive connotations."

Keeping up with demand forced the company to re-think how it orders ingredients and manages production, so that Keenleyside says it is now "very well stocked to meet demand." It also took on a partner, former Canadian Football League commissioner Mark Cohon, who Keenleyside says, "has a lot of experience helping great Canadian brands grow," and who will help the company expand strategically, "to make sure we do this methodically and at a manageable pace."

Last month Georgian Bay launched a second RTD cocktail, Vodka Smash, and reports Keenleyside, "we're hearing great things from our social media followers, and initial sales are very strong." Currently only available in Ontario, the company hopes to expand its smashingly good beverages across Canada in 2018.

For more stories about inspiring Canadian entrepreneurs, read *The Top 10*, starting on pg. 29.

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Salad-making robot

Redwood City, Calif.-based Chowbotics Inc. has created what media are calling the newest celebrity chef. Her name is Sally and she's a robot who can put together various salads in about 60 seconds. According to Bloomberg.com, Sally is about the size of a dorm room refrigerator and uses 21 different ingredients from which she can craft more than 1,000 types of salads. She weighs about 350 lbs and costs US\$30,000.



News > file



The Caisse creates fund for Quebec's agri-food sector

La Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec (Caisse) has created a \$125-million fund called Fonds agroalimentaire CDPQ to help support projects in Quebec's agri-food sector. The fund will be used to make direct investments (between \$1 million and \$30 million) in every segment — from farmers to small- and medium-size enterprises (SMEs). The aim is to help companies that are seeking to accelerate growth and farmers who operate family businesses, and their successors.

The Caisse is a long-term institutional investor that manages funds primarily for public and parapublic pension and insurance plans. As of Dec. 31, 2016 it

held \$270.7 billion in net assets. The Fonds agroalimentaire CDPQ is part of Caisse's strategy for Quebec's agri-food sector. In a statement, the Caisse says the sector offers strong potential for growth in Quebec. "For the Caisse, it's important that both today's farmers and their successors, as well as companies in the processing, distribution and marketing segments, be well positioned to compete and face the challenges in this sector," says Christian Dubé, executive vice-president, Québec, at the Caisse.

The Caisse says agri-food generates substantial economic activity in Quebec and adds close to \$22 billion to the province's GDP. The sector provides 500,000 jobs and exports more than \$7.5 billion of its production. The sector's value chain in Quebec consists of three main segments: agricultural production, food processing, and food distribution and marketing. Quebec also offers a network of dynamic food processing entrepreneurs in every region, representing some 2,200 businesses, 90 per cent of which are SMEs.

The fund will offer investment amounts for each segment in the value chain but those amounts will vary depending on specific criteria. The Caisse says investments in the agri-food sector will also be made through funds in partnership with those active in the industry and other experts in targeted markets (between \$5 million and \$30 million).

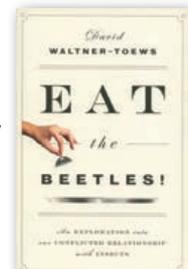
Filing your Accessibility Compliance Report

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)* was passed in 2005, with the goal of making Ontario accessible by 2025.

Businesses with one or more employees need to be compliant with Ontario's



David Waltner-Toews wants to help us warm up to the idea of eating insects. In his new book, *Eat the Beetles! An Exploration into our Conflicted Relationship with Insects*, Waltner-Toews seeks to overcome our cultural aversion to entomophagy — eating insects — and offers a compelling argument for why this practice could ensure a sustainable and secure food supply. While many of us see insects as pests and health threats, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization considers eating them a viable solution to world hunger, especially considering there are more than 1,000 varieties of edible insects.



accessibility laws. Additionally, a critical deadline is approaching for businesses with 20 or more employees. If your business has 20 or more employees you are legally required to file a 2017 accessibility compliance report by Dec. 31, 2017.

The compliance report is a series of yes or no questions. You are asked to download a quick and easy accessibility compliance reporting form at ontario.ca/AccessibilityReport. Organizations across Ontario are already filing their 2017 accessibility compliance reports.

Accessibility simply means giving people of all abilities opportunities to participate in everyday life. One in seven people in Ontario has a disability. That's 1.65 million Ontarians. By 2036 that number will rise to one in five as Ontario's population ages. Businesses that are accessible will be able to better reach this massive segment of Ontario's consumers. Being inclusive benefits our society, businesses and economy.

There are additional resources to assist organizations in meeting Ontario's accessibility laws. For a complete list of your requirements, tools, resources and templates, visit ontario.ca/accessibility. Organizations can find help by phone or email, or login to a series of online Q&A sessions.

Italian style!

Aurora Importing & Distributing is the national presenting food sponsor for Italian Heritage Month. Throughout June the company will work with Strategic Objectives to ramp up awareness through television, radio, social media and in supermarkets across Canada. According to Aurora president Tony Morello, the company will be active in sponsorships and events such as street festivals, charitable events and picnics.



To mark the occasion Aurora's chefs have created new recipes that the company will make available through in-store promotions and media channels. The company will also launch Tomar-chio Beverages and Cutrera Sicilia Olive Oils. Aurora is one of Canada's largest Italian food importers. Some of its global heritage brands include Basso Oil, Loacker, Perugina/Baci, and most recently, Edoko fine foods.

Connecting to co-packers



Food and Beverage Ontario (FBO) has introduced its online FBO Co-Packer Portal at foodandbeverageontario.ca/copack. FBO says there is no comparable resource in Ontario for food manufacturers looking for a co-packer.

Although the tool is still early in its launch, it has already been connecting processors with production capacity with other processors or start-up businesses that need capacity. The portal uses six drop-down questions to help provide the best match from an extensive database of co-packers in Ontario, in a range of sectors, including bakery, beverage, condiments, confectionery, dairy, fruit and veg, grains, meals and meal components, meat, sauces, seasonings, snacks and soups. FBO says the portal has already proven to be an excellent B2B tool and it expects to see an overall increase in Ontario food and beverage production as a result. ➔



WAS IT A SALAD MASTERMIND? A JUICER?

Police in Hamilton, Ont. will lettuce know when they find those behind the theft of \$45,000 worth of salad greens in March. The suspects stole a commercial truck and trailer and eventually left the truck

behind. The refrigerated trailer, however, is still missing. So for now, say the police, we should all romaine calm. This is the second theft of a large amount of food. In February, suspects made off with \$100,000 worth of blueberries and other fruits. And again, the truck was abandoned with the trailer still missing. But Hamilton police, despite their sense of humour, are taking the cases seriously and looking to crunch ahead on both, leaving nothing to chance. They're also hoping more evidence will turnip. It's a pickle. (Thanks to Hamilton Police Twitter feed for some of these puns.)

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Easter bunnies are busy

Research firm Mintel reports that seasonal launches accounted for one-quarter of global chocolate new product launches in 2016. Some 28 per cent of seasonal launches globally were positioned for Easter — so consumers have not lost their love of chocolate bunnies, eggs and other popular chocolate treats. The countries accounting for the most chocolate innovation include Brazil, France and South Africa.

Food banks focusing more on nutrition



A recent survey has found that all food banks are taking nutrition into consideration when serving their clients. The survey, conducted on behalf of Catelli Foods, found that 47 per cent of food banks

cite it as very important, while 53 per cent view it as extremely important. Ninety-three per cent of food banks reported increasing their focus on nutrition over the last five years.

Respondents also indicated that nutritional education is important for food donors as well as clients. For example, while all food banks surveyed ranked snack foods as one of

their least preferred donation items, 58 per cent of them found snack foods to be either their most donated or second-most donated item.

To boost educational efforts, 15 Canadian chefs and dietitians created a cookbook with budget-friendly recipes called *Out of the Box: Healthy Family Pasta Meals on a Budget*. And throughout the month of May Catelli Foods donated a serving of pasta to food banks across the country for every box of Catelli pasta purchased.

SUPPLIER NEWS

> **Berg Chilling Systems** has acquired **Industrial Refrigeration Systems Limited** (IRSL). The two Toronto companies together now offer a comprehensive service range of industrial refrigeration services that includes ammonia- and HFC-based solutions.

> **AgriClear**, a provider of online transaction and payment platforms for cattle buyers and sellers, has entered into a collaborative marketing agreement with **Verified Beef Production Plus** (VBP+), a national, industry-led program providing verification of Canadian beef production practices at the farm, ranch and feedlot.

> **Edlong Dairy Technologies** president and CEO **Laurette Rondenet** has been named the 2017 Woman Business Owner of the Year by NAWBO Chicago,

the Chicago Area Chapter of the National Association of Woman Business Owners. ➔

> The Ontario Student Nutrition Program has announced that **DuPont Pioneer** donated \$7,500 as part of its Full Belly! Full Mind! Initiative supporting nutrition and breakfast programs across Canada. The grant will be used to support meal and snack programs at 15 rural schools.



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TALKING SOCIAL MEDIA

Getting started with social media

In my April column, I discussed why social media is important even if it doesn't directly impact your sales. Now that we're all in agreement (right?) that social media can benefit you and your company, next up is tackling some best practices on getting started.

If you aren't on social media yet, I would reiterate what I said last month — start with one account, probably Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, and grow it by giving it your undivided attention.

Whichever one you choose, here are four ways to get started and manage expectations.

1. Decide what interests you

If you love to take photos and feel you can commit to that on a daily basis, I would suggest using Instagram. If you have a brick and mortar store and/or are open to the public, Facebook might be for you. If you read a lot about your industry and want to be seen as a go-to authority, maybe Twitter is for you where you can tweet out what you've read and share your thoughts.

2. Own your logo and brand

Whatever you choose, there will always be a spot to upload and display your logo as well as a brief description about your company and what you offer. Without a logo, you run the risk of looking like a spammy account. And if you have a brick and mortar shop, include your address and hours. You'd be amazed at how many places don't do this.

Once you have multiple social media platforms, be consistent with the same logo and messaging



so your consumers/followers know it's you right away.

3. Do your research

Chances are some of your industry partners are on social media and doing it well. Research what they're doing and how they make it work for them, and use that as a launching off point to give it your own unique spin.

4. Slow and steady

Unless you're a movie star, you're probably not going to be an overnight social media sensation. So in that case, it's really important to set some reasonable and attainable growth goals. Commit yourself to manageable goals like posting daily to Facebook, tweeting three times a day or posting an image to Instagram every day.

And of course, don't forget to be social. Set aside some time each day to respond to questions, comments and follow people using your product or in your industry. 🍎

Ethan Adeland is the co-founder and managing director of Partnerships for Food Bloggers of Canada. Contact him at Ethan@foodbloggersofcanada.com, or @EthanAdeland, or visit foodbloggersofcanada.com



IN BRIEF

> Cobourg, Ont.-based **Brandneu Foods Canada Inc.** received \$100,000 from the province to help the company add a new automatic packaging system. The company manufactures Ultimate Kale Chips and Kaley's Kale Chips. The company exports its products across North America, and has orders for its products from Iceland, Dubai and Japan.

> Richmond, B.C.-based **Ocean Brands** announced in April that its Gold Seal salmon and Oceans Pole & Line tuna are



now certified sustainable by the Marine Stewardship Council. The label demonstrates that the products are from a sustainably managed fishery.

> **Chris Brothers**, owned by Dieppe, N.B.-based **Bonté Foods**, has donated \$50,000 to the Ray of Hope Soup Kitchen in Moncton.

> Richmond, B.C.-based **Premium Brands Holdings Corporation** has acquired Dartmouth, N.S.-based **Interprovincial Meat Sales Ltd.**, a meat trader and distributor of beef, poultry and pork.

> **füdi**, a Brampton, Ont.-based gourmet frozen dinner entrée line featuring a sous-vide cooking method, is now available in fine-food chain Pusateri's. The all-natural, preservative-free füdi line includes meats from **Beretta Farms**.

> This month **Flow Water Inc.** officially opened a 21,000-sq.-ft., state-of-the-art Tetra Pak plant in Aurora, Ont. Flow Water is a Canadian company



> According to the **United Potato Growers of Canada**, potato growers in Canada have had a third straight year of record-breaking potato yields. Its figures show potato production for 2016 was 105,172 cwt, a 0.5-per-cent increase from 104,624 cwt in 2015, and almost 4.5 per cent higher than the 100,654 cwt in 2014.



> Corby Spirit and Wine Ltd. received six awards at the World Whiskies Awards, which took place in London, England in March. Corby's whiskies took home awards

for Best Canadian Rye, World's Best Flavoured Whisky and Best Canadian Flavoured Whisky, World's Best Blended Limited Release & Best Canadian Blended Limited Release, and World's Best Canadian Blended Whisky.

with an eco-first business model which uses a family-owned artesian spring in Bruce County as its water source. The new facility will be home to the Tetra Pak A3/Flex machine. Listed at more than 4,500 retailers, Flow Water is also available by milkman-style delivery in an eco-friendly vehicle through its Direct Service in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal.

> **The Copper Bottom Brewing Company** is opening a brewery in Montague, P.E.I. this summer.

> Lachine, Que.-based artisanal baker **Boulart** won three awards at the 2017 National Restaurant Association's FABI Awards. The three winning breads, all non-GMO project verified and vegan, were Individually Wrapped Ciabatta Bites, Original Flat Sandwich Bun, and Olive Oil and Fine Herb Focaccia.

> **Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers (OGVG)**

is celebrating its 50th anniversary. According to Statistics Canada, farmgate value of Ontario greenhouse commodities represented by OGVG has grown from \$6.7 million in 1967 to more than \$820 million in 2015. OGVG is responsible for licensing all growers, packers and marketers of Ontario greenhouse tomatoes, cucumbers and peppers. ➔



FRENCH'S KETCHUP LINE OPENS

Select Food Products Ltd.

unveiled its manufacturing line for

French's Ketchup production at its facility in Toronto. Select Food will be responsible for producing all bottles of French's Ketchup sold in Canada. Local farmers are supplying the tomatoes. The new line has enabled Select Food to hire 10 more production and management staff and will increase opportunities for Select Food to grow its business and hire more employees in the future. The project was supported with a \$75,000 investment from the Greenbelt Fund in partnership with the government of Ontario.



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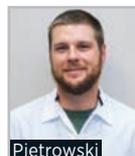
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> **Propeller Brewing Company** in Halifax is calling on brewers and home brewers across the country to mark Canada's 150th anniversary through The Great Canadian Lager Challenge. Propeller is challenging every brewery in the country to make its best lager and release it on July 1. The company will issue awards to the most patriotic lager and the best use of local ingredients/icons/story. Visit drinkpropeller.ca for more information.

> The province of **New Brunswick** is investing \$415,000 to help promote the sale of local food and beverages. The province says the money will go toward implementing the province's Local Food and Beverages Strategy throughout 2017 and 2018.

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE



Pietrowski



Williams

> **Jason Pietrowski** is now Production supervisor at First Choice Ingredients of Wisconsin. The company has also hired **Laura Williams** as its new Applications specialist.

> The Canadian Grain Commission has appointed **Jocelyn Beaudette** as its new COO, and **Gino Castonguay** as chief grain inspector for Canada.

> **Daryl Rex** is the new research agronomist at The National Sunflower Association of Canada Inc.



Martel

> **Louis Martel** is now president and CEO of Montreal-based The CSL Group, a global shipping company.

> During its annual general meeting in April the Garlic Growers Association of Ontario elected **Joann Chechalk** as its new president.

> The Chicken Farmers of Canada has announced the election of its 2017 executive committee: **Benoît Fontaine**, chair; **Derek Janzen**, first vice-chair; **Nick de Graaf**, second vice-chair; and **Tim Klompmaker**, executive member.



Buckingham

> The Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute has named Dr. **Donald Buckingham** as its CEO.

> Cermaq Canada, a salmon farming company based in Campbell River, B.C., has appointed **David Kiemele** as its new managing director.



Pittas

> **Jim Pittas** is now president and CEO of The Association for Packaging and Processing Technologies. PMMI owns and produces the PACK Expo portfolio of trade shows.

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Funding for Canada's maple syrup sector to help develop new markets



Canada's maple syrup industry received a boost of \$1.5 million from the federal government in April.

Jean-Claude Poissant, member of parliament for La Prairie, Que. and Parliamentary secretary to the minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, and Denis Paradis, member of Parliament for Brome-Missisquoi, Que. made the announcement in late April on behalf of Lawrence MacAulay, the minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

In a statement, the federal government says the funding is to help the industry develop new markets and increase consumer demand for maple products.

"Canada is a world leader in maple production and exports. New market development is key to the sector's competitiveness and profitability," says Paradis. "The government of Canada proudly supports the maple syrup industry in its efforts to open up new markets and expand existing ones to drive economic growth, job creation, and prosperity for maple producers and their families."

The Federation of Quebec Maple Syrup Producers was created in 1966 and today represents 13,500 maple syrup producers who operate 7,300 maple syrup businesses. The federation has established maple products as a distinctive and high-quality alternative to traditional sweeteners in several key markets, such as Japan and the U.S. And in 2016, Canada exported approximately \$380 million in maple products.

"Maple syrup is an iconic Canadian food, and we are proud that Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada is working with Quebec maple syrup producers to make it better known and appreciated abroad," says Serge Beaulieu, president of the Federation of Quebec Maple Syrup Producers. "By working together, we can develop new markets for our amber gold."

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Report calls on feds to boost focus on agri-food



A group of Canadian agri-food leaders wants the federal government to do more to help the sector grow.

The message came from a report released last month by the Public Policy Forum (PPF) and the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute (CAPI). The report, *Canada as an Agri-Food Powerhouse*, is a summary of roundtable discussions held this March with more than 150 agri-food stakeholders from across Canada. To read more about the report visit ppforum.ca.

In a statement, David McInnes, special advisor to the board and former CEO of CAPI, says stakeholders want the agri-food sector to become a national economic priority. “Establishing an Agri-Food Growth Council that reports to the centre of government and includes leaders from across the broader food system has the potential to drive this growth agenda, triage and resolve issues,

Trust is growing

Canadian consumers feel good about our food retail sector. In fact, food retailers are the fourth most trusted industry in Canada after hospitals, post-secondary institutions and retail pharmacies. That’s just one of the findings from the 2017 *EnviroNics Communications CanTrust Index*. EnviroNics says that while in some nations recent events point to waning consumer trust and rejection of elites, trust among Canadians is holding steady in most areas and in some cases trust is growing.



and galvanize this diverse sector around a common vision,” says McInnes.

The report also calls for the creation of an inter-departmental agri-food task force to improve alignment within the government and resolve priority regulatory obstacles. Some of the more common comments from stakeholders during the discussions were:

- » The aspirational vision, to be the trusted global food leader, should be the lens through which all relevant policies and strategies are assessed.
- » The responsiveness of our regulatory system should be made a comparative advantage that ensures both consumer protection and a nimbler, modernized regulatory environment. This would help encourage investment, innovation and competitiveness.
- » While export growth must be prioritized, there are also opportunities to drive significant growth domestically, particularly among small and medium enterprises. This requires swift action on internal trade barriers.

» Delivering co-benefits — enhancing health and natural capital — is crucial to building public trust and strengthening our global food brand.

Edward Greenspon, president and CEO of PPF, says Canada has the tools to provide food for the world’s growing middle class. “Our trusted food brand, leading-edge technology and responsiveness to changing consumer trends put Canada in a strong position to satisfy the appetite of the world’s growing middle class for high-quality food,” says Greenspon. “The agri-food sector can unleash significant economic growth and deliver broad societal benefits for decades to come.”

Cross-border festival

Craft brewers from Ontario and New York State are teaming up to launch a new annual beer festival scheduled for April 7, 2018.

The Can-Am Craft Beer Festival, the first of its kind, was announced late last month at a special event in which brewers from Southern Ontario and Western New York were paired up and challenged to create draft brews that will be unveiled at the festival.

According to the Buffalo Niagara Brewers Association, the pairings were decided via a draft process where dignitaries and tourism officials pulled logos of the participating breweries from oak barrels. The breweries were then matched up on a draft board.

For a complete list of participating brewers visit buffaloniagarabrewersassociation.org



NB NOW WORLD’S THIRD-LARGEST MAPLE SYRUP PRODUCER

The province of New Brunswick has identified the maple syrup sector as a key component of the province’s economic growth plan. The province has experienced stable growth in the sector for the past two decades and has emerged as the world’s third-largest producer of maple syrup.

Approximately two million kg of maple syrup is produced each year and exported to 60 countries. The sector employs 2,300 seasonal and part-time workers. The province recently allotted an additional 4,400 hectares of land for maple sugar production, bringing the total Crown land allocation to 13,500 hectares.



MARKET COMMENTARY: Trump unfairly targets Canadian dairy

U.S. President Trump recently took up the American dairy industry’s drum roll of protest against Canadian dairy policy in a typical Trumpian outburst, blaming Canada for reduced dairy farmer incomes in the U.S. upper Midwest. No one, especially not Trump, has been specific about what Canada is supposed to have done that’s illegal under any international trade law. Canada’s new Class 7 pricing system has been blamed for something, but it’s not clear what.

Canada’s ambassador to the U.S. released a statement denying that anything illegal has been done. More to the point, a report by Al Mussell and Douglas Hedley, two of the handful of people who actually understand Canadian dairy policy, carefully examines recent trade in dairy products between Canada and the U.S. It shows that Canada has not increased milk product exports to the U.S., and U.S. exports

to Canada have not fallen. The American claim that the pricing policy has affected U.S. exports of milk isolates is a little strange since they are products on which Canada has no tariff or quantitative restrictions.

The Class 7 pricing program does bring Canadian prices for some products down toward world price levels, and reduces blended milk prices to farmers. But those blended prices remain well above world price levels and give Canadian producers better access to the domestic market for butterfat. But they certainly don’t constitute dumping or an unfair subsidy. U.S. prices are mainly a function of U.S. supply and demand. This bluster looks like an attempt to put pressure on Canada in NAFTA negotiations. ●

Market Trends is prepared by Dr. Larry Martin, who offers a course on managing risk with futures and options in Guelph, Ont. through agrifoodtraining.com. Contact him at DLM@explornet.com or (519) 841-1698.

MARKET HIGHLIGHTS

After some sideways action, markets are retreating in mid-April as supplies mount up and speculators increase their short positions.

> Grains: While rain slowed harvest progress in Brazil and Argentina, estimates of their crops continue to rise, putting more pressure on North American prices. Speculators have abandoned their bullish positions and joined the bears, rather dramatically. Their net positions went from 147,000 contracts net long for soybeans in mid-February to 55,000 net short on April 11. For corn it was 81,000 net long to 153,000 net short. Specs’ wheat positions went from 47,000 net short to 158,000 net short. As futures prices approach significant support planes, these numbers bear watching because large speculator positions often fuel the reverse trend as the funds start losing money and run for cover. This is part of the reason for the recent slide in prices; as the long specs lost money, they sold off their positions driving prices lower. The opposite will also occur at some point. As the huge South American crop gets into export position, U.S. exports are declining.

The most recent week’s soy sales were the second lowest of the year, while corn and wheat were under forecast.

> Corn: July futures have traded between \$3.95 and \$3.40 since June, and are currently at \$3.63. We would use bottoming around \$3.40 to signal timing of protection, and/or protect against a breakout above \$3.95.

> Wheat: July Chicago wheat lost another \$0.20 in the past month with new lows and closes below the long-term support of \$4.25. Good planting/growing conditions in the U.S. and Black Sea area threaten to add to already burdensome inventories.

> Soy oil: July soy oil dropped below \$0.315 before a little rally moved it to \$0.3225 with rising supplies of both soy and palm. We would consider pricing at major support of \$0.31 or protecting against \$0.34.

> Sugar: July sugar fell to and levelled out in the \$0.162- to \$0.17-range, currently \$0.165. With a 12-per-cent increase in Thai supplies, expected normal monsoon in India, and ample supply in Brazil, prices are near long-term support. We would price here or protect against \$0.175.

> Natural gas: July natural gas rallied almost to \$3.50 before falling back to the current \$3.28 on light demand. Speculative funds have an almost record net long position, so that and demand may be harbingers of a pull back. Major support remains at \$2.80 and resistance at \$3.65. We would price more on another

pullback to \$2.80, take profits on existing paper above \$3.50, and protect against \$3.65.

> Crude oil: July Brent crude traded in a broad range between \$60 and \$47.75 since last August. The past month brought a rally from \$50.25 to \$57 before the current drop back to \$52, spurred mainly by new U.S. drilling and ample inventories. While OPEC is recommending an extension of current production restraints, it is becoming increasingly obvious that they are not totally effective. There is potential support at \$47.75 and \$50.29. We continue to suggest locking prices near support and protecting against \$60. Take profits on paper above \$58.50.

> Canadian dollar: The June loonie spent most of the past month near US\$0.7525 before falling to the \$0.74 area on declining oil prices and disappointing consumer spending data. Uncertainty looms because Trump seems unable to get his stimulus plan past the U.S. Congress, and the outlook for interest rates and oil prices are cloudier than a few months ago when all of these factors pointed to a lower Canadian dollar. Despite these factors, or maybe because of them, we continue to suggest that commodity buyers should protect the downside with Puts on the loonie. Hold the \$0.755 or \$0.75 June Puts recommended some time ago and/or buy \$0.74s or \$0.735.





Measuring the success of the Safe Food for Canadians Regulations

Ron Wasik

Every business assesses its performance against well-defined business goals on a weekly, monthly or quarterly frequency to ensure that the company is on track to meeting those goals and ultimately achieving success. Although the comment period for *Canada Gazette Part 1* (CG1) closed on April 21, it is not too late to have a discussion on how to measure the success of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and the *Safe Food for Canadians Regulations* (SFCR). So what is to be expected?

Current success metrics

Under the title of “Performance measurement and evaluation,” which appears just prior to the details of the SFCR, CG1 states that it is expected that the regulations will “improve the ability of the CFIA and regulated parties” to achieve the following:

- » Prevent and manage food safety risks.
- » Better protect consumers.
- » Maintain and expand market access for Canada.

The text goes on to say that “The CFIA is developing a food program performance framework to measure how well its activities, processes and services contribute to these outcomes...to monitor and assess whether the Regulations are achieving the goal of increasing food safety in Canada.” These are reasonable outcomes. The performance metrics for the CFIA, proposed in CG1, are stated as:

- » Increase in number of CFIA-licensed food manufacturers that have a system in place to promote food safety.
- » Increase in number of CFIA-licensed



food importers that have a system in place to promote food safety.

In today’s competitive business environment, would any CEO accept such ambiguous performance objectives? The answer is not just “no!” but “hell no!”

Following are some goals that I think are better suited to reflect good performance. Let’s start with what CG1 says should be expected out of the SFCRs:

1. “Prevent and manage food safety risks.” These are “motherhood and apple pie” goals. They need to be quantified by setting benchmarks, such as reducing a wide array of significant food safety risks like recalls of all classifications, against the number of recalls in the previous year and against a five-year moving average.

2. “Better protect consumers.” The question is, better protecting consumers from what? Aside from food safety risks already addressed, this could include reducing the number of complaints arising from fraudulent claims of all types. The benchmark could be the claims in the previous year as well as a five-year moving average.

3. “Maintain and expand market access for Canada.” The question is what national trade metrics should be used to determine if Canada is exporting more goods abroad? Some might

advocate using a total aggregate measure, while commodity sectors would prefer a commodity-based metric. I recommend a commodity approach as a single aggregate measure will mask problems. Again, year-over-year and five-year moving average benchmarks for each commodity are recommended to measure success.

Measuring performance

It’s difficult for me to clearly distinguish the differences between the “activities, processes and service performance” of the CFIA as stated in CG1. If the Agency is to be measured against these terms, then each term will need to be clearly defined in a way that will permit setting quantifiable goals that are consistent with the desired outcomes of the SFCR, consumers and industry. Getting agreement on the metrics will take at least two years. It will then take another three to five years to fine-tune the metrics. This assumes that the Agency has performance programs of some kind in place today which can adapt to whatever metrics are agreed upon.

I strongly encourage readers to submit CFIA performance criteria directly to the CFIA and through your trade association if you have one. If you can, suggest specific goals for the criteria you recommend. If you decide not to do so, be satisfied with whatever convenient metrics the CFIA decides to use. The choice is yours. 🍎

Dr. R.J. (Ron) Wasik, PhD, MBA, CFS, is president of RJW Consulting Canada Ltd. Contact him at rwasik@rjwconsultingcanada.com



Happy birthday **CFIA**

Ron Doering

The 20th anniversary of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) seems to have gone by unnoticed, even by the CFIA. Has it lived up to the original vision? Has it achieved its promise from 20 years ago?

Of course I'm not an unbiased observer. In April 1995 I was given the lead responsibility to carry out the consultation on how Canada should reorganize its food inspection and related activities. I put together the team to carry out the review. We called ourselves the Office of Food Inspection Systems (OFIS). When we completed the consultation, we recommended the most ambitious of the options reviewed — that the government should create a new independent legislated agency with the full regulatory authority for the whole food chain. Our minister, Ralph Goodale, went to Cabinet in the late fall of 1995 and the Chrétien government adopted our recommendation. OFIS was also given the lead to set it up, and we got the historic legislation through in time to open the doors on April 1, 1997. Later I served as its president until I retired from the public service.

Looking back on the original OFIS documents, the CFIA was created to meet five broad objectives. How well have these been met?

1. Enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of federal food inspection and related services. The CFIA clearly met this goal, saving \$44 million. Overlap and duplication was reduced. Sixteen programs that had formerly been delivered by four different departments were brought

under one roof. Consumers and industry now have one point of contact.

2. Provide integrated governance of food safety, plant health and animal health. This was fully achieved. We are still the only jurisdiction in the world that brings the whole food chain together under one agency: feed, seeds, fertilizer, all food including fish, as well as animal and plant health. The value of this integration has been widely recognized. For example, Canada managed the challenge of BSE better than most countries because senior officials in charge of animal health were also in charge of food safety. This integration also accounts for our fully integrated investigation and recall system led by the widely respected Office of Food Safety and Recall (OFSR). Canadians now take this single point of contact for granted. Remember, for example, that in the U.S. it is still the case that a vegetarian pizza is the responsibility of FDA, but a pepperoni pizza falls under the jurisdiction of the USDA.

3. Enhance international market access. The CFIA has harmonized technical trade areas, negotiated many international equivalency agreements, challenged misuse of technical measures, and played a major role in influencing international standards. Former OFIS member and later CFIA vice-president Peter Brackenridge has noted that “with the changing international trade environment, a single organization like the CFIA is well placed to manage the challenge of protectionism by the misuse of technical standards.”

4. Enhance provincial and federal regulatory harmonization. Former OFIS

member and later CFIA vice-president Cam Prince notes that this is one area where progress has not met our original expectations. This issue may take on increased impetus in light of the recently announced Canadian Free Trade Agreement, but there continues to be major international trade law barriers to full intergovernmental harmonization.

5. Modernize Canadian Food Law. In 1999 the CFIA introduced First Reading of Bill C-80, which would have provided a truly modernized legal basis for the regulation of food and related activities, but which did not proceed for political reasons. With the current *Safe Food for Canadians Act* (and *Regulations*) now being completed, finally we will have a more modern legal foundation for the future, though not as integrated as the former Bill would have provided.

With an annual budget of over \$700 million and more than 6,000 staff, the CFIA is, by far, Canada's largest science-based regulatory agency, respected within the federal system and by the provinces, and admired around the world as a model.

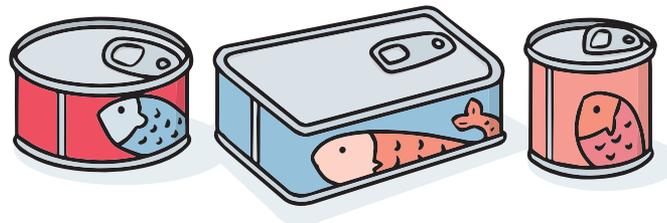
The CFIA has met most of our original expectations. While there have been bumps along the road, Canadians should be proud of the Agency's many achievements. Its anniversary should be celebrated. ●

Ronald L. Doering, BA, LL.B. MA, LL.D., is a past president of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. He is counsel in the Ottawa offices of Gowling WLG. Contact him at Ronald.doering@gowlings.com



Fishy food labelling

Gary Gnirss



Seafood labelling in Canada was a recent focus of SeaChoice.org, an environmental group operated by the David Suzuki Foundation, Ecology Action Centre, and Living Oceans. Their March 2017 report, *Canadians Eating in the Dark: A Report Card of International Seafood Labelling Requirements*, gives an F to Canadian seafood labelling. This compares to a D given to the U.S. and an A to the EU. The EU got an A because it requires seafood labels to include six basic features: common name; scientific name; production method, whether farmed or wild caught; harvest method for wild caught seafood; geographic origin; and country of origin in which the last major transformation takes place. By contrast, the U.S. requires the common name, production method and country of origin, while Canada requires only common name and country of origin.

Seafood labels, like all pre-packaged food labels, require a common name. This includes any name prescribed by federal legislation, such as the *Food and Drug Regulations* (FDR) and the *Fish Inspection Regulations* (FIR). The Canadian Food Inspection Agency's (CFIA) Fish List is a repository of common market names for seafood in English and French based on the Canadian vernacular. It also includes the genus and species names (a.k.a. scientific names). The SeaChoice report categorizes Canadian common names as misleading. This, of course, is "sensationalized" based on the absence of requirements to include the scientific name, and the fact that a

common market name may be used for more than one species. However, the use of a common market name for several closely related species is practical, not misleading. It is not unlike the EU or the U.S. With the vast diversity of seafood now being harvested, the challenge is in maintaining an up-to-date fish list, something that requires dedicated stewardship.

In addition to a common market name, the EU requires a scientific name. Would it be beneficial to know your grouper is *Epinephelus hexagonatus* or *Epinephelus merra*? Chances not. If the species of interest involves environmental concerns, then perhaps this is best served by a unique market name. In the EU, a scientific name might be more practical for consistency, as the various member states draft their own acceptable commercial market names, including local and regional names. The SeaChoice report asserts that including a scientific name would help reduce fraud related to substitution. But if a regulated common market name alone can't achieve this neither would a scientific name. Fraud is an ongoing concern in the seafood sector, and enhanced traceability and genetic testing by industry and CFIA would help significantly. As CFIA transitions to its new role under the *Safe Food for Canadians Act*, it is vital that it keep food fraud as a principal focus, with enhanced traceability and preventative controls requirements for industry.

Canadian seafood labelling currently doesn't require a statement related to production method, such as wild caught or farmed, but it is likely time that

legislation prescribe it. Specific public consultations on harvest method, including on the equipment used for wild caught seafood, have not been part of the broader food labelling modernization dialogue. However, the issue may fall under the CFIA's risk-based approach to food labelling claims.

Country-of-origin labelling is required for seafood under the FIR where the products are not entirely made in Canada. Under CFIA's food labelling modernization efforts, country-of-origin labelling requirements will be consolidated. Wild seafood is wholly or partially processed on the vessels they are caught by, and they become the country of origin of the flagged vessel unless further transformed elsewhere. If imported seafood is processed in Canada to an extent that the finished product is substantially transformed, its label need not bear a country of origin. It would also be practical to include the geographic origin of wild seafood, in addition to country of origin.

The F grade assigned by SeaChoice is unfair, as too are some of the more disparaging comments. However, the points about enhanced seafood sustainability labelling have merits. Canada can do better. Food sustainability is a key component of food security (sufficient, safe and nutritious foods). It deserves our attention. 🍷

Gary Gnirss is a partner and president of Legal Suites Inc., specializing in regulatory software and services. Contact him at president@legalsuites.com

I want *candy!*

While consumers appreciate the better-for-you products offered by Canada's confectionery manufacturers, the desire for indulgent treats clearly isn't going away anytime soon

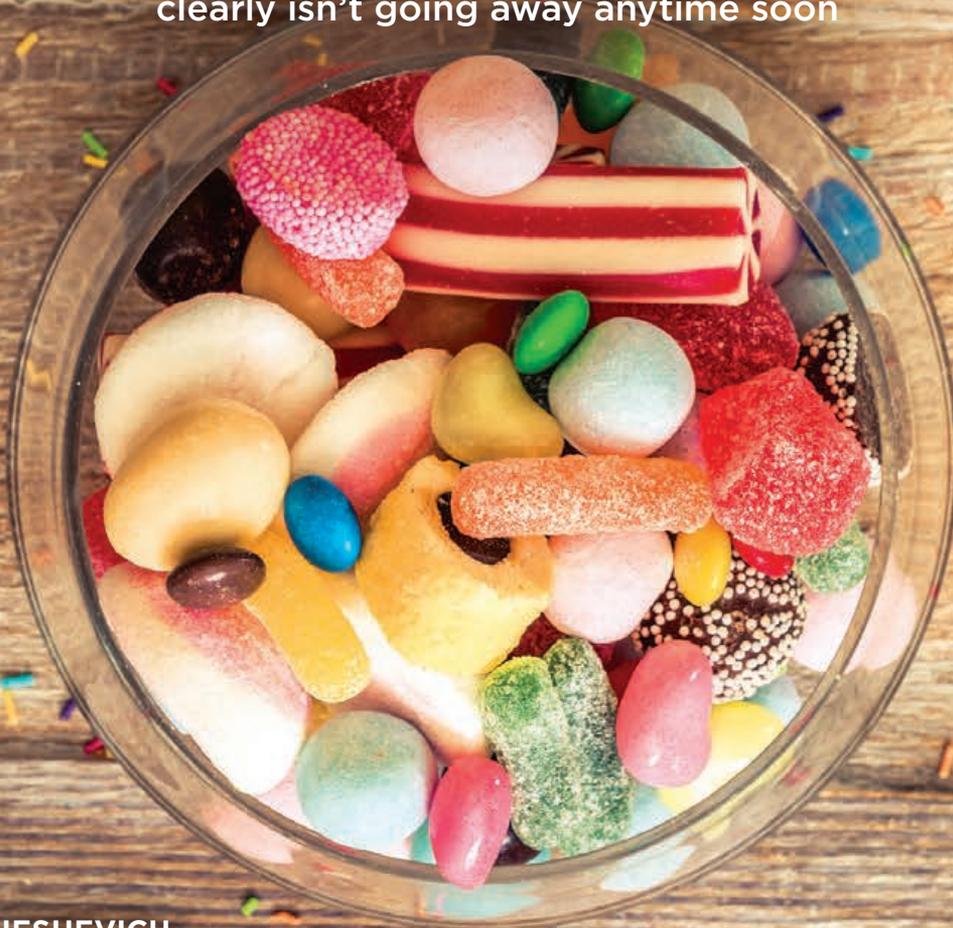


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BY CAROL NESHEVICH

It's 3 p.m. on a Friday afternoon, you're sitting at your desk and you're feeling a little hungry. Do you reach for those carrot sticks you packed this morning, or do you decide to indulge in your favourite chocolate bar to reward yourself for a hard week of work?

While most of us would like to answer "carrot sticks" every time, chances are even the most health-conscious among us occasionally go for a chocolate bar. Despite the growing trend toward healthy eating, the demand for confectionery products

— from rich chocolate bars to sweet and chewy gummy bears — isn't going to disappear anytime soon. According to Statistics Canada, the average monthly sales of candy, confectionery and snack foods at large retailers was \$318.3 million in 2015, up from \$305.3 million in 2014. That number soars even higher during months featuring candy-focused holidays. In October 2015, for example, sales jumped to \$418.8 million thanks to Halloween, and in December sales increased to \$478.5 million due to Hanukkah and Christmas. ↪



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That said, Canadian consumers are increasingly looking for confectionery treats that satisfy that sweet tooth while also offering “better-for-you” elements. These can include less sugar, a lower calorie count, more natural ingredients or fewer artificial ingredients, and better sustainability practices in the production of the treats. Essentially, they want goodies that they can feel a little less guilty about consuming.

“There are many trends impacting global consumer confectionery purchases and we see consumers looking for more permissible options — items with less calories, no artificials, etc.,” says Ryan Denys, Marketing director, Confectionery, at Nestlé Canada. “Globally, Nestlé has made a number of nutrition, health and

wellness commitments, and in Canada we’ve been on a journey of continuous improvement for some time. In 2009 we removed artificial colours from our Canadian-made Smarties, and in 2011 removed artificial flavours from our most popular Canadian-made confectionery products, including Smarties, Kit Kat, Aero and Coffee Crisp.” From a sustainability standpoint, adds Denys, “consumers have an increased interest in knowing where ingredients are sourced from, and they are pleased to know 100 per cent of chocolate produced at our Toronto factory is certified UTZ for sustainability and sourced within our Nestlé Cocoa Plan.”

To highlight all of these efforts, Nestlé is currently embarking on a new marketing campaign called “Unwrap Some Good.” The campaign will feature point-of-sale (POS) materials communicating these messages to consumers, explains Denys. “When consumers choose a bar from the Unwrap Some Good POS tools in stores, they will see messaging they can feel good about, including 100-per-cent sustainable cocoa, no artificial colours, natural flavours, and the commitment to helping build stronger communities in the Ivory Coast,” he says.

Mars Canada (manufacturers of confectionery brands such as Mars bars, Snickers, Wrigley’s Extra gum and Maltesers) is on a similar path of modifying the classics slightly to appeal to consumers looking for a better-for-you indulgence. “We are evolving our portfolio to include products with benefits, like sugar-free gum, and variable pack sizes to fit within the diet as a treat,” says Jeremy Daveau, general manager of Wrigley Canada, a division of Mars Canada. “Recently, we introduced bite-size offerings of our leading brands like Snickers and Twix, offering a more permissible and appealing way to enjoy chocolate.”

Marketing and merchandising measures such as smaller portions/package sizes and labelling modifications have been key for Canadian confectionery makers looking to continue thriving in



our current health and wellness-focused marketplace. “We portion and label our confection products in a clear and transparent way to help consumers make responsible choices to realize their individual well-being goals,” says Daveau. “We also provide our consumers with choice across a wide range of pack sizes, and we limit our confections to no more than 250 calories per serving. Multi-serving packs are labelled as ‘share packs’ to clearly indicate that they are intended as more than one serving to encourage Canadians to enjoy these products in moderation.”

One quick glance at the Dare Candy Co.’s website and you’ll notice that Dare has also shifted its marketing towards the better-for-you elements of its candies. The word “real” appears at the beginning of almost all of its candy names — RealFruit Gummies, RealJubes, RealMint Scotch Mints, RealSour Sticks, and more — with the tagline “Real candy made better.” The RealFruit Gummies boast real fruit juice as an ingredient, and the company even offers a RealFruit Gummies Superfruits option, a package that features trendy flavours like pomegranate, acai and black currant.

Dare also prominently features various nutrition-related and dietary logos on its packaging, depending on the product, including the gelatin-free and peanut-free logos. For each product on the website it lists “Made Better Facts,” which includes claims like fat free, gluten free, peanut free, made with real fruit juice, no artificial colours or flavours, and gelatin free.

A study conducted for Dare in 2016 revealed that 62 per cent of Canadians admit to having a sweet tooth — a fact that the 125-year-old Canadian company used in its press releases last summer to promote a national marketing campaign in which a mobile treats truck gave away product samples in Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver to tout the “made better” aspects of its treats. If that many Canadians have a sweet tooth, the company seemed to suggest in its campaign, why not offer those Canadians “made better” products?

While the larger confectionery manufacturers typically dominate the marketplace, smaller companies — the “disruptors” of the confectionery space — are increasingly emerging with products to satisfy the desire for better-for-you candy. For example, Vancouver-based SmartSweets offers both



A STUDY CONDUCTED FOR DARE IN 2016 REVEALED

THAT **62 PER CENT** OF **CANADIANS** ADMIT TO HAVING A SWEET TOOTH

sweet and sour varieties of gummy bears that contain no sugar, sugar alcohols or artificial sweeteners. Sweetened with stevia, the candies also contain 24 g of plant-based, GMO-free soluble fibre per bag.

As SmartSweets’ company founder Tara Bosch writes on her website: “My quest to innovate the first smart candy that kicks sugar began after forming an unhealthy relationship with food and experiencing the negative effects sugar has on our health.” Her innovative gummy bear recipe is, she explains, all about “kicking sugar, keeping candy and creating a movement on smaller, smarter choices.”

But while confectionery manufacturers large and small are working hard to make indulging in chocolates and candies a little less guilt-inducing, the category isn’t all about better-for-you elements — after all, it’s called a treat for a reason. “At Nestlé Canada we know that taste, fun and enjoyment are also important,” says Nestlé’s Denys. “Consumers come to the category to try new products, and we are helping them enjoy this category in more permissible ways.” ●

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Move over kale, **moringa** is the new super green in town

Deanna Rosolen

Another nutritious green leafy plant — more specifically a tree — has started to emerge as a potential contender for the title of top super green that kale has held for some time.

The tree in question is called *Moringa oleifera*. According to a *Johns Hopkins Magazine*, Winter 2016 article, “Is the moringa tree the next superfood?” by Greg Rienzi, the tree’s edible leaves contain protein, iron, potassium, calcium, nine essential amino acids, and vitamins A, B and C. Its seedpods, which are shaped like two-foot long pieces of asparagus, contain seeds that are rich in protein and omega-3 fatty acids.

What is it?

Moringa oleifera is native to India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. But there’s evidence that ancient Romans, Greeks and Egyptians used it. Today the tree is also found in Ethiopia, the Philippines, and Sudan, and is being grown in West, East and South Africa, tropical Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, Florida and the Pacific Islands. It’s a staple and source of nutrition in most of these parts. It’s a drought-tolerant tree that grows well in sandy soils, and it grows fast.

Because there is an abundance of information on moringa available, and many companies which sell its powder claiming a range of benefits, the tree has become a bit of a legend. That’s why it’s critical to separate the facts from the anecdotes.

Jed Fahey, a nutritional biochemist at the School of Medicine at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, has studied moringa since 1996. In “*Moringa oleifera: A Review of the Medical Evidence for its Nutritional, Therapeutic*



and Prophylactic Properties, Part 1,” a peer-reviewed December 2005 article on the *Trees for Life Journal* website that has become standard reading on the subject, Fahey explains that moringa has been hailed for its medicinal uses for centuries. It has been used to combat malnutrition, he wrote at the time, and many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) call it a natural nutrition for the tropics.

Fahey notably quoted the NGO Trees for Life’s “Oft-reproduced characterization made many years ago.... that ‘ounce-for-ounce, moringa leaves contain more vitamin A than carrots, more calcium than milk, more iron than spinach, more vitamin C than oranges, and more potassium than bananas,’ and that the protein quality of moringa leaves rivals that of milk and eggs.” In that paper Fahey also noted moringa’s antibiotic, anti-inflammatory and other medicinal benefits, but stated that many of these studies are based on animal studies and are not supported yet “by placebo controlled, randomized clinical trials, nor have they been published in high visibility journals.”

Now, according to Rienzi, Fahey’s follow-up to the famous paper will be published this spring in the International Society for Horticulture Science journal *Acta Horticulturae*. “*Moringa oleifera: A review of the medicinal potential*” will outline “the plethora of promising studies on moringa over the past decade.” During that time Fahey has worked with Mark Olson, a professor of evolutionary biology at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. Olsen operates a moringa tree farm in Nueva Agua Caliente, Mexico where he is studying different moringa varieties from around the world and how they cope under the same climate conditions. One goal will be to develop a moringa that can be cultivated easily, without losing health benefits.

How to use it

Kuli Kuli Inc. in Oakland, Calif. uses moringa in its energy bars, green energy shots and teas. The company also sells moringa powder and is working on new products using moringa. Lisa Curtis, the company’s founder and CEO, says it’s not difficult to formulate with, but it does have an earthy flavour similar to matcha. “The trick is you’re trying to strike a balance, so making it taste good but not adding too much sugar or too many other ingredients,” she explains. “We keep it really simple.”

Curtis adds that the company doesn’t try to mask the flavour but uses other flavours to complement it. “If you’re going to cook with it you want to add it towards the end of whatever it is you’re preparing,” she notes, “because you do lose the vitamin A and vitamin C if they’re exposed to too much heat.” ●

What's new in **natural?**

Natural flavours and colours continue to have huge appeal for consumers, meaning there are more opportunities to innovate

BY JULIA TEELUCK

Canadians have an increased appetite for local, sustainable and ethical products across the board, from the clothes they put on their backs to what they serve on their kitchen tables. In the world of natural flavours and colours, product developers and manufacturers continue to seek new ways to meet consumer demand for transparency, while exploring new sources such as tree roots and bark that satisfy but do not sacrifice taste. ➔



Anne Vlahos, Technical Business Development director, Natural Taste Solutions, Kerry, says that consumers are reading labels more often and sharing information on social media. “Overall, there is an increased consumer awareness of what is in their food and where it comes from. The opportunity for innovation lies within balancing the need for foods and beverages to taste great, while meeting consumer demands for simple, short labels,” says Vlahos. Kerry has seen an increased interest for authentic ingredients on the label, including sustainably sourced ingredients, and natural and organic flavours and extracts.

The Government of Canada recently made changes to food labelling regulations, and manufacturers have a five-year transition period to implement the new requirements. One such requirement is to have sugar-based ingredients specifically listed in brackets after “sugar” so that consumers are aware of the types of sugars added to a particular food. Additionally, says Joanna Barker, product manager at CCC Ingredients, “Manufacturers won’t be able to just list ‘natural colour’ on their label anymore, but will have to list out each colour individually instead.” This new requirement presents its own challenges for manufacturers.

In general, natural flavours and colours can be challenging, says Kerry’s Otis Curtis, Business Development, Taste and Nutrition

Solutions, as they are impacted by such factors as seasonality, climate, natural disasters and political unrest. This ultimately affects pricing, availability and quality. “For example, the recent weather events in Madagascar have impacted the global vanilla market,” says Curtis, referring to Tropical Cyclone Enawo, which hit the island in March. “An alternative is to build a compounded vanilla flavour with other natural flavours. This solution can provide the same vanilla taste expectation while requiring a smaller quantity of vanilla beans. The result is a greater consistency in pricing, availability and quality,” says Curtis.

Satisfaction without sacrifice

Whether a protein bar or a scoop of ice cream, no one wants to sink their teeth into something that simply doesn’t taste good, no matter what the potential health benefits. “Flavour modulation is critical when formulating for today’s consumer,” says Lauren Williams, Marketing manager at Sensient. “They are looking to improve the health profile of what they eat, but they will not sacrifice taste and enjoyment for anything.” This can be another challenge facing product developers. Williams explains that when sugar is removed or positive nutrition like protein is added, it can create an unsatisfactory product. “Consumers may purchase it once, but if they don’t enjoy the experience they will not buy it again,” she says.

One opportunity is for product developers to use an enhancer to increase the perception of sweetness in a product. “This boosts the impact and effectiveness of a smaller amount of sugar or sweeteners,” says Williams, adding that maskers can help to smooth out changes in the profile that were once covered up with



MAPLE SYRUP ISN'T JUST FOR PANCAKES. AS ITS HEALTH BENEFITS COME TO LIGHT, PURE MAPLE SYRUP MAY BE THE NEW NATURAL SWEETENER THAT TAKES HOLD IN THE MARKETPLACE.

sweeteners or are new as a result of the change in formulation. “As an analogy, it is similar to how a sip of a strong wine can influence the flavour of the next bite of food that you take. We are seeking out the compounds that do this but target specific taste attributes. You can even layer in ingredients that add back mouthfeel and texture.” As with any product, Williams notes that there’s a balance between adding ingredients that can improve the product without making it overly complex.

This is a consumer need that won’t be going away. Sensient continues to research properties and molecules in natural botanicals such as tree roots and bark that can enhance the sweetness of sugar.

“Maple syrup is a healthy alternative that provides the same sweetness, a rich flavour, and is essentially a cocktail of minerals, vitamins and antioxidants.”

Putting maple on the map

Maple syrup isn’t just for pancakes. As its health benefits come to light, pure maple syrup may be the new natural sweetener that takes hold in the marketplace. At an April symposium in San Francisco, scientists from around the world shared their research on maple’s potential impact on several areas in the human body affected by chronic inflammation. They also looked at maple’s emerging link to a healthy gut microbiome.

Dr. Navindra Seeram, associate professor in the Department of Biomedical and Pharmaceutical Sciences at the University of Rhode Island, organized the symposium. In 2009, he collaborated with the Federation of Quebec Maple Syrup Producers to study the properties of maple. “The maple tree moves minerals from the soil, and there are quite a lot of interesting natural antioxidants similar to what you would find in green tea, red wine and berries,” says Seeram. Maple syrup contains a unique plant antioxidant named “Quebecol” (after the Canadian province), which is formed during the cooking process when sap is boiled. Early research indicates that Quebecol positively affects inflammation in the body, and could act as an anti-cancer drug.

New research presented at the symposium from the University of Rhode Island found the presence of inulin in maple syrup. Inulin acts as a prebiotic and works to encourage the growth of good bacteria in the gut. Seeram acknowledges sugar’s bad reputation and notes that any sugar should be consumed moderately. However, maple syrup is a healthy alternative that provides the same sweetness, a rich flavour, and is essentially a cocktail of

minerals, vitamins and antioxidants. And for Canadians interested in locally sourced and sustainable food ingredients, maple is a perfect choice as it’s only grown in eastern North America, with Quebec being a major producer.

Colour creation

In regard to natural colour trends, Barker says that titanium dioxide and caramel colour replacers will continue to be on customers’ minds. Savoury Systems International recently launched a product that can be used as a caramel colour replacer, but does not impact flavour. The product, #1065 Yeast Extract Dark, is a combination of yeast extract and natural flavouring, but the flavouring component imparts dark brown colour, says Kevin McDermott, COO of Savoury Systems International. “The base flavour of the yeast extract is mild and brothy. This product works great in savoury applications, and can complement a food product where there is a desire to have a darker colour, while still attributing a savoury and mild, flavour-enhancing taste,” says McDermott. ●



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Spring into candy-coated mini eggs

Daniel Scholes



photo: Thinkstock

Canadians splurge on sweets all year round, but spring is a particularly popular time to indulge the national sweet tooth. And of course the ultimate springboard for confectionery indulgences is Easter. Rituals and celebrations of spring date back to early civilizations and eggs have long held a starring role as a symbol of renewal, fertility and new life. While it's unclear who first invented the chocolate egg, they started appearing in France and Germany in the early 19th century. With significant innovations in candy-making in the early 1900s, manufacturers began producing novelty Easter candies on a massive scale.

While everyday candy sales are the main driver of the category, seasonal sales are growing and can account for close to 20 per cent of annual confectionery volume. For confectioners, the week leading up to Easter is a lucrative and competitive time. So in the spirit of spring renewal, we recently took a closer look at candy-coated mini eggs. These eggs have it all going on — a solid chocolate morsel, covered in a crunchy coating of spring-inspired pastel shades — but are they all equally good eggs?

We recruited 50 moms who had kids between the ages of 8 and 12. All were from the Greater Toronto Area and regularly purchase chocolate mini eggs at Easter. They tasted and evaluated three brands of mini eggs, and were then asked a series of detailed sensory questions about each product's appearance, flavour and texture.

Egg'cellent results

Two of the three brands of mini eggs

performed exceptionally well, perceived as very high quality and achieving high scores for overall liking and purchase intent. Although both delivered well on overall texture, one took the lead, achieving the perfect amount of crunch with its hard outer shell. The other top egg took the prize for appearance, boasting significantly higher liking scores for the darker colour palette of the eggs. They both hit the mark on flavour, delivering just the right amount of chocolate and candy coating flavours, although one was ever slightly too sweet. They also had a significant advantage over the third, less tasty rival, for perceptions of natural chocolate taste.

The egg'ception

Coming in last place in this battle of the basket was a chocolate mini egg that did not make the grade in confectionery sensory standards. Close to 40 per cent of our testers rated this product negatively on the key measures of overall liking and flavour. Purchase interest was very low, and overall these mini eggs were far from the consumer ideal. They were the smallest mini egg, and tended to have the hardest shell, but its real failings were in the flavour. The candy coating was much too strong and sweet, while the chocolate came across as very unnatural, with polarized opinions about the strength of flavour, suggesting that there was simply something off-putting about the chocolate.

What's in an egg?

While the main focus of our blind taste test was comparing the sensory profiles, our participants admitted that value and

price were their most important considerations driving purchase decisions. The exclusion of artificial colours and flavours was also an important factor for many of our moms, and in this not all mini eggs are created equal. Among even the most popular brands there were marked differences in ingredient lists, such as the inclusion of cocoa butter, or the use of synthetic dyes such as tartrazine. Perhaps it would be easier to tailor confectionery products to the less discriminating palates of kids, who will rarely complain about candy (unless it is unsweetened). But while seasonal treats are typically bought with kids in mind, the big kids of the household also share consumption of Easter treats, and if parents don't like them they are unlikely to be re-purchased.

A candy-coated chocolate egg is a marriage of two wonderfully delicious things: candy and chocolate. What could possibly go wrong with this union? To some surprise, our sensory results suggest that there is such a thing as a "bad egg." Darker, more vibrant colours are appealing, and size does in fact matter. But most critical is getting the "bite" right for the candy shell, and delivering a chocolate flavour that is recognizable, natural and tasty. Perhaps this sounds over simplified — the task to optimize sensory profiles is never an easy one — but with next Easter a long way away, it may be the perfect time to hop to it and increase your share of the candy basket. 🍫

For questions about this research, or how to leverage consumer taste buds in your business, contact Dan Scholes at info@contracttesting.com or at (905) 456-0783.



Top 10 Canadian food & beverage companies to watch in 2017

Every year *Food in Canada* shines the spotlight on 10 growing Canadian food and beverage businesses we think will be making headlines in the coming year. Following, in no particular order, are our Top 10 to watch in 2017.

1 Tomahawk Chip Company

The Tomahawk Chip Company was founded by Alfred Lea in May 2015. It is Aboriginal owned and operated with no financial assistance. The Riverton, Man.-headquartered company makes the Tomahawk Chips brand of potato chips. www.tomahawkchips.ca

Q: Where did you get the idea for the company?

Alfred Lea: Previous products I created were owned by other people who I worked for. This became my own product and company which could stand up to the Canadian environment — they were light in weight and could stand the cold and heat, with a 38-week shelf life.



Q: What challenges did you face getting started?

I had to find a way to promote our Native culture, creativity and entrepreneurship all without government assistance to demonstrate that as an Indigenous person we could become part of the global economy, despite the

naysayers. The greatest message to all youth is never give up, nothing comes easy. The greatest challenge is keeping focused, coming up with capital, and the vastness of our country.

Q: What's unique about your products?

The uniqueness is the art work, ownership and taste. Although price is the main driving force, price is everything.

Q: What has consumer response been like?

Consumers have said they're the best chips they've tasted. And they're very happy to support an Aboriginal-owned business. Some tell us how impressed they are and have expressed interest in our wholesale price. They tell us this is the way chips should taste.

Q: What are some recent highlights for the company?

The recent highlight is the American Asian Trade Association Council finding us at a trade show. They look for new and interesting products and picked us. They represent convenience stores in the U.S. I've asked for stores in Florida and Virginia to start. But we won't forget our Canadian market and family, too. My future plans would be to build a plant in Manitoba.



2

Goodmallows

Owned by Joanna McIntyre, Vancouver, B.C.-based Goodmallows was founded in 2015. The company makes gourmet marshmallows.

www.goodmallows.com

Q: Where did you get the idea for the company?

Joanna McIntyre: I grew up happily eating all the over-processed foods of the 1980s and 1990s, including marshmallows, which I loved, never questioning the ingredients. The first time I made marshmallows, I was stunned at how good they were (light, fluffy and dreamlike), but also impressed at what a solid vessel they were for different flavours. I started having fun with it, tinkering with ingredients to see which of my favourite flavours could be recreated in this squishy form. I also swapped in cleaner versions of the basic ingredients.

Q: What challenges did you face getting started?

In the beginning it was finding commercial kitchen space that wasn't extortionate. The next big challenge was educating people about Goodmallows. Conventional marshmallows are not that great, inexpensive and full of dubious ingredients. Sampling was practically mandatory to help people understand why they would want to spend more to buy our handmade Goodmallows.

Q: What's unique about your products?

They're the cleanest marshmallow out there, with organic cane



sugar, Canadian honey, kosher grass-fed bovine gelatin and flavours made exclusively with natural ingredients like organic raspberries and spices, or locally blended tea, and are free from corn, dairy, gluten, preservatives and anything artificial. Every one of those little mallows is handmade in our kitchen in Vancouver, and we use ingredients from local companies wherever possible.

Q: What has consumer response been like?

Thanks to the low bar set by conventional marshmallows, our taste-testing reactions are priceless. People approach with skepticism, take a sample, then their eyebrows will shoot up and they'll smile or say "Oh wow!" It's entirely baffling that a marshmallow can, firstly, be made by hand, and secondly, taste this good. They're usually impressed by the quality of the ingredients too, but really, none of that would matter if they weren't this tasty.

4

Baffin Fisheries

Baffin Fisheries is 100-per-cent Inuit owned by five Hunters

and Trappers Associations representing communities in the Baffin Island, or Qikiqtarjuaq region, of Nunavut. It was founded by the Nunavut government as a consortium of private companies and communities. www.baffinfisheries.ca

Q: Where did the idea for the company come from?

Chris Flanagan (Communications & Economic Development, Baffin

Fisheries): The company was created to address the need for Nunavut fishing companies to own their own vessels, and to help maximize benefits from adjacent resources for the people of Nunavut.

Q: What challenges did the business face getting started?

As a new company in a new jurisdiction, Inuit companies initially had to rely on southerners and foreigners to provide capital, skills, vessels, and markets to compete internationally. To address these issues, Baffin Fisheries co-founded a fisheries training consortium in Iqaluit, and gradually increased its



ownership of vessels and assets. Today the company's four vessels are 100-per-cent Inuit owned and the company is managed by an Inuit executive team and



Gourmet Inspirations

Gourmet Inspirations was founded in 2013 in Winnipeg, Man. by chef Peter Fehr. The company makes gourmet five-star sauces. www.gourmetinspirations.ca

Q: Where did you get the idea for the company?

Peter Fehr: A rancher in Texas was the inspiration. I worked as a chef at a five-star northern Manitoba fishing resort where a guest loved my sauce and told me I needed to “put that into a bottle and sell it.”

Q: What challenges did you face getting started?

The challenges were accessing capital and budgeting accurately for all the start-up needs, as well as achieving product/brand awareness with the public. Since the product is unique the general consumer finds it difficult to know what to do with it. Labelling and packaging was a challenge too. It takes time testing to find out what the consumer is looking for on the package, and at the same time complying with all regulatory measures.

Q: What’s unique about your products?

All my products are 100 per cent made in Canada in small batches, containing no nasty preservatives. The versatility of the product is the other unique feature. You can use the product as a glaze, marinade, salad dressing, finishing sauce, drizzle it and use it in your cooking, and more.

Q: What has consumer response been like?



Creamy Peppercorn Whiskey Steak Sauce has been the best seller. Some find it quite spicy and others find it not spicy enough. The palate is so unique to each person. My newest addition, the Salted Caramel Whiskey Dessert Sauce, has been a huge hit. Everyone loves it just on a spoon!

Q: What are some recent highlights for the company?

I had the opportunity to showcase my line of gourmet sauces at a luxury gifting suite at the Academy Awards in Hollywood. Celebrities loved the product. This opportunity has already translated into additional sales and speaking engagement opportunities.

Q: What are your future plans?

I would like to develop export opportunities in the EU and the U.S. I’m also exploring the possibilities of other products besides sauces, and licensing options with whisky brands to be able to co-brand our products for further reach.



board of directors. Baffin Fisheries put in the sea time and exploratory research to prove that northern areas can be fished sustainably and profitably.

Q: What’s unique about the company?

Baffin Fisheries is proud of its 100-per cent Inuit ownership and sustainable fishing practices. The shrimp and turbot we fish are a clean, healthy, natural product providing an excellent source of protein. And the taste of wild cold-water seafood is second to none. The fisheries are sustainably managed to ensure this valuable renewable resource is available for future generations. The unique Baffin Fisheries logo, designed in Iqaluit, represents both a stylized turbot skeleton and a classic iceberg reflected in Arctic Ocean waters.

Q: What has consumer response been like?

Turbot and shrimp are extremely popular in markets throughout Asia and Europe. Our turbot is in high demand, with major clients requesting seafood specifically caught by our vessels and crew. Arctic shrimp have a sweet delicate taste. The meat is firm, moist and crisp in texture, a unique combination among species of shrimp. Turbot is popular for sushi and sashimi. The firm, meaty white flesh is considered one of the finest gourmet fish. Boneless turbot is ideal baked, poached, grilled, sautéed or steamed. A mild olive or lemon-based spice brings out the flavour.

5 Hexa Foods

Montreal-based Hexa Foods was founded by Philippe Poirier, Paul Shenouda and Mathieu Poirier and launched its Bug-Bites brand training rewards for dogs in 2015. Now known as Wilder & Harrier, the company's main products use cricket flour. www.wilderharrier.com

Q: Where did the idea for the company come from?

Chloë Kibbe (community guru, Hexa Foods): The project started off as an idea roughly two years ago. We read the 2013 UN report on the global food crisis, which stated that many people are entomophagus – they consume bugs as a food source. It is a viable solution to the current and future food-related issues. Since Western culture has not fully embraced the idea of eating insects,



we thought about using our pets as a gateway to such practices. And we wanted to reduce our dependence on harmful agricultural practices. Eating bugs contributes to pollution reduction and is a sustainable option.

Q: What challenges did you face getting started?

Warming people up to the idea of insects as a food source is a big challenge. The current agro-food conglomerates are omni-present in the market. Start-ups have their unique set of challenges.

Q: What's unique about your products?

The concept of using innovative proteins



in food sources is ahead of the curve. We think we have a direct response to a real need. Eating bugs is the future and it's radically sustainable. We think we're helping to make a concrete move towards severing ties to nefarious agro-food sectors.

Q: What has the consumer response been like?

It has been positive. Sometimes it takes some explaining but once the parameters are set, the message sinks in. Customers appreciate the hypo-allergenic aspect of our novel protein. A lot of eco-conscious customers feel good about making a sustainable choice on behalf of their pet.

6 Luvo Inc.

Christine Day is CEO of Vancouver-based Luvo. The company produces frozen foods with the mission of making delicious and nutritious food accessible. www.luvoinc.com



Q: Where did the idea for the company come from?

We saw a gap in the industry for defining healthy food based on sound nutrition principles, beyond just “natural” or “organic.” Our chef-created meals are made with full servings of vegetables, whole grains and responsibly sourced proteins, while controlling for sodium and added sugar. We leverage the superior preserving power and convenience of frozen foods to deliver nutritious meals without any artificial preservatives that heat up in just minutes.

Q: What challenges did the business face getting started?

Our biggest challenge was learning the structure of the grocery industry, getting our products onto shelves and keeping them there. The frozen aisle is an extremely competitive space with new brands emerging frequently. The food industry as a whole is a low-margin business, so upfront funding is challenging.



Q: What's unique about your products?

We pride ourselves on our holistic approach to nutrition which we call our “three-two-none promise.” Three, we focus on providing the right balance of protein, whole grains and vegetables. Two, we take great care to be responsible with sodium and added sugar. None, we do not use artificial ingredients and our meats are raised without the use of antibiotics. Our goal is to provide true nutrition for as many people as possible, so we offer vegan, vegetarian, gluten-free and

meat-based products.

Q: What has consumer response been like?

Every day we receive Luv Notes from people who tell us their lives have been changed for the better because of the products we offer. It's great to hear stories of people who have been able to take back control of their nutrition without sacrificing their busy lives, or even manage chronic health conditions through the food and education we provide. Our grocery partner's research has shown that this positive response to our products has helped attract 25 per cent new consumers to the frozen aisle.

Las Salsas Corp.

Las Salsas was established in Winnipeg, Man. in December 2010, and is owned by Rubén Marabotto and Mercedes Cancino, and their children Fabiola, Daniel and Rodrigo. The company makes home-style Mexican salsas under the brand Delicious Kicks. www.deliciouskicks.com

Q: Where did you get the idea for the company?

Rubén Marabotto: Being Mexicans, we eat salsa at every meal. And while having some friends over they always liked the salsas I made, and kept asking for some to take home. They insisted that I sell it in stores and that's how I established Las Salsas Corp. I started selling at farmers' markets and found that people in general like our salsas, in fact the name Delicious Kicks came out of expressions we got from people: "Oh they are Delicious" and "They have a kick to them."

Q: What challenges did you face getting started?



Learning all about the food industry and all the food safety regulations. The second challenge was commercially developing the product so we could start selling to stores. We had no problem selling to specialty stores. The third challenge was trying to sell to chain stores, and learning about all the costs involved.

Q: What's unique about your products?

Delicious Kicks salsas are a premium product since they are manufactured with natural ingredients, no preservatives, no gluten and very low salt. They can be used as a dip, put on top of any food to increase its flavour, or they can be used as an ingredient or condiment for cooking. We love to do samplings at stores and farmers' markets where we get to interact with people and show them how they can use our healthy and tasty Delicious Kicks salsas.

Q: What has consumer response been like?

At least 30 per cent of people who taste our salsas during samplings buy one or two jars each. We have customers who buy them as gifts for friends or family, and they have even taken our salsas to other Canadian cities, to the U.S. and Europe.



Wise Bites Collections

Wise Bites Collections, owned by Cathline James, opened its current location in Richmond, B.C. in 2012. The company sells muffins, cookies, cookie bars and loaves under the brand Wise Bites. www.wise-bites.com



Q: Where did you get the idea for the company?

Cathline James: I started the company because I believe that what we eat impacts our health, and making small wise changes to what we eat, daily, can have amazing results on our long-term health. We are allergen free because we want to open the door for everyone to make healthier choices in their snack foods and we believe that we had to make it easier for all people to make good choices, hence the convenient "grab-and-go packaging."

Q: What challenges did you face getting started?

We didn't have a store front, we are a small manufacturing facility and no one knew we existed. It was a big push to get our first large retailer to pay attention to us. The start-up costs for all of our certifications are prohibitive as a new and small company, but we still wanted to start with full traceability and be fully certified.

Q: What's unique about your products?

We are committed to making all of our products with increased protein, fibre and minerals and reduced sugar, bad fats and sodium. Our products are mostly sweetened with dates, adding both fibre and minerals. Our products are gluten-free, vegan, Non-GMO Project verified, kosher and free of the top 11 allergens. They also taste delicious.

Q: What has consumer response been like?

We have a very positive response to our products among consumers of all ages. Our products are safe for schools, of course, but the number of athletes who love them because they aren't full of sugar has been tremendous. Our products are in 300 stores between Vancouver and Winnipeg with expansion into Eastern Canada this year.

Q: What are some recent highlights for the company?

Wise Bites was fortunate enough to win the Rising Star Award through the BC Food Processors Association this past year.

Q: What are your future plans?

Our plans are to keep expanding, both through retailers across Canada and our online store. It's our passionate intention to make healthier products for the marketplace.

9 The SoCIAL LITE Vodka company

Whitby, Ont.-based The SoCIAL LITE Vodka company was founded in 2014 by Dan Beach, Kevin Folk and Neetu Godara. The company makes unsweetened pre-mixed vodka drinks, which are only 80 calories per can. www.sociallitevodka.com

Q: Where did you get the idea for the company?

Neetu Godara: SoCIAL LITE Craft Cocktails came to us while entertaining. We started crafting cocktails in our kitchen that were made from simple ingredients and had no sugar. Our friends and family enjoyed them so much they convinced us to quit our day jobs. The cocktails are made with premium Canadian vodka, sparkling water and 100-per-cent natural flavours.

Q: What challenges did you face getting started?

In the beginning it was hard to get buy-in from retailers and convince them that there was a large enough audience for drinks without sugar. Thankfully we had a few great retailers, like Liquor Depot in Alberta, that gave us a chance early on.

Q: What's unique about your products?

We are the only pre-mixed



drink that has zero grams of sugar and no sweetener. We also display a full ingredient list and nutrition panel on our packaging.

This is not required on alcoholic drinks, which leaves consumers in the dark about how many calories, sugars and carbohydrates they are consuming. This is also a challenge for those who have allergies.

Q: What has consumer response been like?

There was clearly pent-up demand from consumers looking for a better-for-you option. It's been so rewarding to hear consumers validate what we always thought.

Q: What are some recent highlights for the company?

We're launching our new Pineapple Mango flavour and have grown across all three provinces. Last year we partnered with Porter Airlines and we'll be available at Cineplex VIP locations across the country.

10 Zak Organics Food Co.

Zak Organics Food Co.

Allen & Marilyn Zak and Daena McMurdo, founded Zak Organics Food Co. in 2015. Based in Fir Mountain, Sask., the company makes Zak Organic Crunchy Peas. www.zakorganics.com

Q: Where did you get the idea for the company?

Daena McMurdo: The Zak family farm has been operating



for more than a century. It produces wheat, peas, lentils and flax, grown under strict organic protocols. It made sense to start a company and create our own healthy snacks. Naturally low in fat and rich in fibre, protein and iron, whole green peas make the perfect base for our snacks. When roasted just the right way, green peas also have a lot of crunch and a clean nutty taste.

Q: What challenges did you face getting started?

We had a basic idea of what we wanted, but we weren't sure how to get there. We experimented at home and went to the Saskatchewan Food Centre in Saskatoon. There are a lot of added requirements that have to be met if you're producing a packaged product that is USDA and Canada Organic Certified. Today our challenge is keeping up with demand. We are currently developing our own 6,000 sq.-ft. manufacturing facility in Moose Jaw.

Q: What's unique about your product?

Other pea-based snacks are predominantly processed in China and contain artificial colours, flavours or preservatives. Our product is made with clean and simple ingredients and is currently the only USDA and Canada Organic-Certified, whole green pea snack on the market. All of our products are free from trans fat, cholesterol, MSG, dairy, gluten and nuts.

Q: What has consumer response been like?

Overwhelmingly positive. Consumers love that our product is local. We got into over 130 independent food retailers within our first few months of launching. Most recently, we have secured national distribution with major retailers Loblaws' Superstore, Shoppers Drug Mart, London Drugs, Pharmasave and Federated Co-op.





TRULY SAFE

New regulations, technologies and industry attitudes are ensuring consumers are safe and Canada's food system prospers | **By Treena Hein**

Food safety has evolved in significant ways over the last 10 years or so in Canada and other jurisdictions, and 2017 is proving to be no exception. In January the federal government issued a call for public comments (which closed on April 21) relating to planned updates to the *Safe Food for Canadians Act*, first introduced in 2012.

Proposed changes will require food businesses to put more preventive controls in place to manage food safety risks, and to reduce the time it takes to remove unsafe foods from the marketplace.

In giving the rationale for these updates, the government points to several trends affecting food safety, such as advances in science and technology, the emergence of highly integrated food supply chains, and changes in consumer preferences. In addition, it states that “the increasingly global marketplace for food commodities has created more opportunities for the introduction and spread of contaminants that may put Canadian food safety at risk. Foodborne illness continues to impose significant health and economic costs on Canadians, and recent food safety incidents in Canada have demonstrated where the current federal food regulatory framework must be strengthened.”

A recent American report, commissioned by the Investor →



Digi Honeycomb includes hardware (sensors, probe, and internet gateway) as well as management and monitoring software.

photo courtesy of: Digi Honeycomb

Responsibility Research Center Institute, identifies other trends. According to *Food Safety: In a State of Transformation*, while food safety progress has been made by many companies, “there are still critical risks and opportunities that need to be explored.” Among five major trends, the report points out that as organic, antibiotic-free, preservative-free and locally sourced food captures more market share, increased adaptation of food safety practices is required. Secondly, busier modern lifestyles mean that spending on prepackaged and ready-to-eat products is growing, but these types of foods are most often subject to recalls. “Ready-to-eat meals require complex production processes,” the authors note, “with numerous ingredients from various suppliers coming together on a ‘just in time’ basis.” A third trend is heightened consumer demand for transparency. Lastly, “rising incomes in developing markets is driving growth in demand for animal protein and dairy,” with the implication that bacteria found in these foods may potentially cause more foodborne illness at a

time when our population is aging and at increased risk due to generally weaker immune systems.

New technologies

Canadian telecommunications company TELUS, in partnership with Digi International, has introduced an interesting new technology to improve food safety. Digi Honeycomb, a cutting-edge automated system, wirelessly monitors the temperature of perishable foods in any scenario or location. Jamie Williams, vice-president and general manager of Digi Cold Chain Solutions at Digi International, says that an average of 30 minutes of labour per day can typically be saved through use of the system in a food manufacturing plant, in a warehouse or during transport. “It ultimately comes down to two factors when determining how much time a customer can save,” he notes. “How many items can we 100 per cent automate by placing sensors in the equipment, and for those scenarios where we can’t 100 per cent automate, how

much can we significantly speed up/improve the time it takes to complete these procedures using our wireless probe/tablet checklist component?” Of course, automation also provides the benefits of consistency and accuracy over human record-keeping, as long as the automated system is functioning correctly. In addition, Williams says the ability of Digi Honeycomb to provide long-term records is very important to customers, as is its capacity for information-sharing across the supply chain. To date, Digi Honeycomb is being used in more than 2,500 facilities in Canada, the U.S. and the UK.

On the inspection and testing front, P&P Optica of Waterloo, Ont. is offering a highly innovative new way to replace subjective, error-prone visual inspection and time-consuming lab tests. This real-time technology, called PPO, scans the entire width of a conveyor belt, employing analysis of chemical “signatures” to differentiate food from any foreign materials. While X-ray machines and metal detectors can find metal particles, P&P Optica says its technology is the only one that can detect plastics (as well as metal and other materials) — even white plastic on pale or white food. It can also identify factors related to food product quality. P&P Optica has two systems up and running in Canada so far, one scanning produce, the other meat.

P&P Optica began focusing on the food processing industry several years ago after recognizing that the industry faces significant problems beyond the issue of inferior food grading due to human error or existing methods — the problem of food unnecessarily being allocated as waste, and a lack of any way to detect a range of foreign objects. In addition, PPO provides the benefit of real-time analysis, allowing food processors to immediately identify and deal with the problem.



“Food is handled by multiple people and passes through various types of equipment,” notes P&P Optica CEO Olga Pawluczyk. “It’s conveyed throughout the plant with forklifts, pipes or on conveyor belts. Every time food products are handled or stored, the possibility of contamination occurs.” As an example, Pawluczyk points to an incident in late March in which Oklahoma City-based OK Foods recalled over 900,000 lbs of breaded chicken products due to possible contamination with extraneous materials. “Tyson had a similar recall late last year,” she adds, “when plastic was detected in chicken products.”

““ The expectation of providing safe food is increasing, and the implications of not meeting such requirements are becoming severe. ””

Food safety excellence

Every year, Guelph, Ont.-based NSF International hands out its Food Safety Recognition Awards to Canadian food and beverage companies and individuals that have made great contributions to food safety, whether by nurturing food safety excellence within an organization, contributing to advances in food safety science, or engaging in public education and action. The NSF Food Safety Excellence Award for 2017 went to The Original Cakerie in London, Ont. Its Quality Assurance manager, Anal Dave, explains that both food safety and food quality factors at his company were considered in vying for the award, as well as an extensive list of factors relating to workplace communication; continuous improvement; risk-based systems relating to supplier approval; food fraud analysis and food safety; the establishment of process controls; staff appreciation programs; employee engagement and more. While he does not specifically list new food safety technologies or methods recently implemented at The Original Cakerie, Dave does say a focus on continuous improvement lies at his company’s core. “We are in constant lookout for how to improve,” he says, “and for systems and technology we can implement to increase productivity as well as effectiveness.”

In Dave’s view, Canada is on the verge of a major shift in the way food safety is perceived and managed. “The expectation of providing safe food is increasing,” he says, “and the implications of not meeting such requirements are becoming severe.” In terms of the keys to successful future food safety — as well as successful prevention of food-related fraud — Dave sees a need for more rapid and accurate microbiological testing methods, as well as increased availability of genome sequencing. ●

Extending shelf life in food products through laser micro-perforated packaging

Yvonne Dick

A new packaging technology may help companies keep fresh products fresh for longer periods of time. Known as laser micro-perforated packaging, it involves a little bit of science along with the very precise placement of holes in plastic produce packaging. Via the use of precision placed holes, a plastic bag or covering becomes a means to enhance freshness in food products and extend the shelf life for consumers. While options exist to purchase rolls of perforated packing material for produce, one of the ways to ensure the highest quality of fresh goods is through custom packaging options.

Joan Rosen, Business Development North America for PerfoTec BV, says that one of the benefits of using a system such as PerfoTec is the results. “You can optimize the product quality by customizing the number and size of laser micro-perforations in the film real-time, directly on-line in the packing or processing plant,” she explains. “This allows you to change the packaging design as the product’s needs change throughout the year and you achieve a more flexible and efficient packaging system as well as optimal modified atmosphere. If you want the best results then you will need the number and size of micro-perforation holes to change depending on the types of produce and times of the year. The seasons, growing location and variety can affect the respiration rates of produce, and different fruits and vegetables also have different rates of respiration.”

To stay fresh, fruits and vegetables need oxygen in order to avoid spoilage.



A PerfoTec laser installation working with fresh strawberries.

When oxygen is insufficient, anaerobic respiration can occur and produce will quickly spoil. This is why we do not keep fresh produce in plain sealed plastic bags until it has all been consumed. Modified atmosphere packaging, such as laser micro-perforated packaging, helps prolong shelf life and reduce waste in fresh goods. By using the natural respiration rates of fruits and vegetables, optimum levels of oxygen and CO₂ prevent oxidation, the process whereby produce begins to lose taste and flavour. Using the special packaging along with calculations for the specific product create an Equilibrium Modified Atmosphere Packaging. The right sizes and amount of micro-perforation patterns in an item’s packaging allow a balanced atmosphere which keeps produce fresh.

“With the PerfoTec AMAP software, you can determine the optimal micro-perforation needs based on the rate of respiration and other factors such as package size, weight, film permeability and CO₂ and oxygen targets,” says Rosen. “There is a camera built into the PerfoTec laser micro-perforating system which takes a picture of each hole and verifies that they are the correct size. This ensures the optimum micro-perforation rate for each product. The inline PerfoTec laser system can adjust the number and size of holes which are made in the packaging.”

Fresh goods will spoil at varying rates. Nuts and dates, for instance, are slow to spoil while artichokes and brussels sprouts are very fast. Luckily, a laser micro-perforated package can enhance the shelf life of produce. In the case of brussels sprouts, you can add an extra one to three days of shelf life. Faster spoiling fruits and vegetables such as broccoli are enhanced for three to seven more days, spinach for one to three more days. Produce which once may not have been shippable outside of its grower area can now be transported further and still arrive fresh.

“The goal of laser micro-perforation is to reduce food waste and enhance the freshness of the product,” notes Rosen. “In Europe currently, the PerfoTec laser micro-perforated packaging system is being used in the floral industry to create an environment for shipping where there is no need for water or refrigeration while in transit.” ●

NOUVELLES



Quel est notre aliment national?

OpenTable, un site de réservations de restaurants en ligne, a publié sa liste des 150 perles de quartier au Canada en 2017. La liste peut être consultée à opentable.com (15 restaurants de cette sélection sont situés au Québec). OpenTable a également publié les résultats d'un sondage qui présente différentes perspectives sur la cuisine canadienne et les modèles de restauration. Par exemple, lorsqu'il est question de l'aliment national du Canada, le sirop d'érable arrive en tête avec 26 pour cent des voix, battant de peu la poutine qui obtient un score de 23 pour cent. Le boeuf de l'Alberta arrive en troisième position avec 11 pour cent.

Sirop d'érable et bonne santé

Le premier symposium mondial quant aux bienfaits potentiels sur la santé des produits de l'érable canadiens 100 pour cent purs a eu lieu en avril à San Francisco, dans le cadre de la rencontre annuelle de l'American Chemical Society (ACS).

Ce colloque ayant pour thème "La chimie et les effets biologiques des produits

EN BREF

> Dans le budget 2017 du Québec déposé en mars, des réductions d'impôt de sept milliards de dollars sur six ans ont été promises. Parmi les faits saillants, notons les 159.2 M\$ dirigés vers le **secteur agroalimentaire**, dont 14 M\$ pour réduire l'utilisation des pesticides.



> L'**épicerie Metro** de Montréal a annoncé que ses produits de poulet frais sous la marque privée Irresistibles proviendront désormais de La Ferme des Voltigeurs, l'un des plus grands producteurs/transformateurs de poulets de grain et biologiques du Québec. Offerts sous les étiquettes Irresistibles Naturalia et Irresistibles Biologique, les 10 produits sont certifiés par



Aliments du Québec, dont quatre d'entre eux sont également certifiés biologiques. Ces produits seront offerts dans toutes les épiceries Metro et Metro Plus du Québec. Ce partenariat s'inscrit dans la démarche d'approvisionnement responsable de Metro rendue publique en mars.

> En mars, le ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation du Québec (**MAPAQ**) a mis en place une mesure pour lutter contre la fraude dans l'industrie de la viande, rapporte GlobalNews.ca. La province a dû agir après qu'un rapport d'enquête ait révélé la présence de porc dans des emballages de boeuf et de veau hachés en vente dans des supermarchés du Québec. Le ministère a annoncé que tous les détaillants d'épicerie qui préparent et emballent eux-mêmes le boeuf et le veau hachés verront des inspecteurs analyser des échantillons de ces emballages, indique GlobalNews.ca.

> Le chocolatier confiseur **Chocmod** de Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu a accepté un actionnaire extérieur pour la première fois: le Fonds de solidarité FTQ, lequel fera l'acquisition d'une participation minoritaire dans la compagnie. Chocmod, une société française spécialisée dans les truffes de cacao français, a été achetée par Ghislain Lesaffre et Antoine Fortin en 2008, et un site a été ouvert au Québec.



de l'érable" a permis à des scientifiques de partout dans le monde de dévoiler les résultats de leurs recherches. Une nouvelle étude de l'Université du Rhode Island a révélé la présence d'inuline dans le sirop d'érable — un glucide complexe qui agit comme prébiotique — encourageant la croissance des bonnes bactéries dans l'intestin. Deux autres composés récemment découverts, comportant des ↗

propriétés antioxydantes et des bienfaits potentiels sur la santé, ont également été identifiés; ce qui signifie qu'il existe maintenant 65 phytonutriments connus dans les produits de l'érable.

La recherche démontre également que ces produits peuvent jouer un rôle dans la réduction de l'inflammation chronique. Une façon d'aider à lutter contre cette inflammation consiste à consommer un régime riche en aliments contenant des polyphénols — le sirop d'érable pourrait être ajouté à cette liste.

McGill reçoit des fonds pour stimuler l'économie alimentaire



La recherche en innovation agroalimentaire à l'Université McGill bénéficie d'une aide financière du gouvernement.

La province du Québec a annoncé une contribution de cinq millions de dollars au Consortium de recherche "précompétitive en transformation alimentaire du campus Macdonald de McGill. Les fonds seront attribués en cinq versements annuels de 1 M\$.

BIENS DE CONSOMMATION



> Pour les consommateurs à la recherche d'une collation légère qui satisfait leur faim, **iögo** offre maintenant le yogourt protéine iögo. Comptant 10 g de protéines dans chaque portion de 125 g, le yogourt protéine iögo est un yogourt grec à 0 %, sans gluten, gélatine, ni agent de conservation. Ce yogourt onctueux est offert en quatre saveurs — chocolat, cerise noire, lime des Keys et vanille — en paquets de quatre portions de 125 g, dans certaines grandes épicereries: à 3,99 \$ dans l'Est du Canada et 4,39 \$ dans l'Ouest du Canada. www.ioغو.ca

L'université fait valoir que le Consortium est créé pour aider à consolider des compétences concurrentielles d'entreprises œuvrant dans l'industrie de la transformation des aliments en rehaussant les aptitudes de ces dernières à déployer de nouveaux efforts en matière de recherche et de développement, et à lancer des innovations technologiques. Le Consortium fera également la promotion de partenariats entre les entreprises et les chercheurs, et il collaborera au recrutement de travailleurs qualifiés. Cet investissement soutiendra les projets de recherche et de développement à l'étape précompétitive.

Les produits non vendus dirigés vers les banques alimentaires du Québec

Banques alimentaires du Québec (BAQ) a lancé un programme de récupération d'aliments qui, selon elle, s'avère le premier du genre au Canada. Dans le cadre de ce programme, les supermarchés de la province expédient des aliments invendus toujours comestibles aux banques alimentaires, aux fins de distribution à des gens dans le besoin.

Le projet pilote — le Programme de récupération en supermarchés (PRS) — est en force dans les régions de Montréal

et de Québec depuis 2013. BAQ affirme que le programme offre une solution durable et unique au problème de gaspillage et d'insécurité alimentaires, en partenariat avec les détaillants alimentaires.

En 2016, le projet pilote s'est développé dans toute la province et il aurait permis, selon le *MontrealGazette.com*, la récupération de 2,5 millions de kilos de nourriture en provenance de 177 supermarchés participants. Cela aurait permis d'économiser près de 20 millions de dollars d'épicerie et d'éviter l'émission de plus de 2000 tonnes d'équivalent CO₂ (gaz à effet de serre). Le PRS regroupe 611 supermarchés et permet de détourner environ huit millions de kilos de nourriture par an, pour une récupération d'environ 7,000 tonnes d'équivalent CO₂.





Flétan frais, fusilli
tomate pistache
et cerise à l'aide
de Catelli Grains
Anciens par
chef Cory Vitiell.

Un fabricant de pâtes franchit le cap des 150 ans

Catelli Foods se joint aux célébrations du Canada

PAR MARK CARDWELL

Le directeur du marketing de Catelli Foods Corp., Doyle Brown, reconnaît que les pâtes ne sont probablement pas les premiers aliments auxquels les gens pensent lorsqu'ils planifient des menus pour des repas traditionnels ou festifs. Néanmoins, il considère que les nouilles à base de blé se situent en tête de liste quand vient le temps de concocter un repas plus détendu ou improvisé avec la famille et les amis proches. "Les pâtes s'avèrent un aliment si simple et accessible, fait valoir M. Brown, depuis le bureau de Catelli à Toronto. Elles se marient à plusieurs excellentes recettes quand il n'est pas nécessaire de faire quelque chose de très compliqué." ➔



Spaghettis d'été aux courgettes jaunes, les asperges et les herbes fraîches par chef Cory Vitiello.



C'est cette complicité que les produits Catelli partagent au quotidien avec des millions de Canadiens depuis 150 ans et, aux dires de M. Brown, qui a inspiré l'élaboration des campagnes de marketing visant à souligner cet anniversaire de l'entreprise, qu'elle partage fièrement avec les célébrations du Canada en 2017. Fondée à Montréal en 1867 par Carlo Onorato Catelli, la compagnie se révèle le plus important fabricant et distributeur de pâtes au pays, et le deuxième plus important fabricant et distributeur de riz.

Un élément clé de la campagne de marketing a été le concours pancanadien Réunion de famille Catelli. Entre le 28 février et le 4 avril, les Canadiens ont été invités à se rendre au www.catelli150.ca pour rédiger un court texte de 200 mots ou moins décrivant

les gens qu'ils aimeraient convier à une réunion de famille cet été, comment ces gens les avaient inspirés et pourquoi leur famille avait besoin de se retrouver.

Trois gagnants (un au Québec et deux dans le reste du Canada) ont remporté un grand prix, lequel consiste à bénéficier d'un montant pouvant atteindre 10,000 \$ pour inviter jusqu'à 20 personnes à une réunion de famille autour d'un repas gastronomique à l'endroit de leur choix au Canada entre les mois de juin et août. "Nous allons nous occuper du repas pour eux, les soulageant du stress de la planification et de la mise en place," a mentionné M. Brown. La réponse du public au concours a dépassé les attentes de l'entreprise, a-t-il ajouté à la fin du mois de mars: "Nous avons déjà reçu plus de 4,000 inscriptions et il reste encore une semaine avant la clôture."

Comme autre campagne nationale de célébrations, notons la Collection de recettes Catelli 150e anniversaire. Élaborés par des chefs réputés et offerts sur le site Catelli.150.ca, une douzaine de plats ont été inspirés par les commentaires de Canadiens sur leurs mets de pâtes préférés ou les plus mémorables; par les éléments influençant leurs choix alimentaires; et par leur désir de réunir



des gens autour d'un repas. "En tant que chef, j'adore l'idée de réunions de famille, surtout lorsqu'elles impliquent la combinaison des goûts locaux et des spécialités régionales," a commenté le chef Cory Vitiello dans un communiqué de presse de Catelli. "L'élaboration de cette collection de recettes aux côtés de mes collègues et passionnés de cuisine a été une expérience remarquable, car les recettes sont littéralement inspirées par les commentaires des Canadiens."

L'information a été recueillie à partir d'un sondage en ligne que l'équipe de marketing de Catelli a conçu et réalisé avec Environics à la fin de 2016 dans le but de planifier la stratégie des célébrations de cette année. 85 pour cent des répondants, parmi les 1,700 Canadiens ayant participé au sondage, ont déclaré vouloir cuisiner avec plus d'ingrédients frais, locaux ou régionaux. Ce chiffre a même grimpé à 90 pour cent lorsque les répondants étaient des parents avec des enfants à la maison. La consommation d'aliments locaux et frais a généralement représenté entre 86 et 88 pour cent de la préférence des répondants, selon la région.

Plus de la moitié des répondants ont également déclaré qu'ils

étaient davantage motivés à célébrer avec les amis et la famille en 2017 en raison des festivités entourant le sesquicentenaire du Canada. Lors de la préparation d'un repas familial, 35 pour cent des répondants ont exprimé chercher à préparer un plat "assurément gagnant," tandis que 33 pour cent ont dit suivre des recettes "éprouvées et authentiques."

Le sondage a également révélé que dans le monde effréné d'aujourd'hui, environ 80 pour cent des personnes souhaitent créer davantage d'occasions de rencontres avec la famille et les amis. Cette tendance se révèle encore plus marquée (88 pour cent) chez les jeunes familles. Les principales raisons pour lesquelles ces rencontres sont souvent moins fréquentes que souhaité s'avèrent la distance (51 pour cent), les finances (46 pour cent), l'horaire (45 pour cent) et le manque de temps (36 pour cent).

Selon M. Brown, les principaux messages à retenir du sondage — lesquels ont mené à l'élaboration de la Collection de recettes et du concours Réunion de famille — sont le désir ardent des gens de se réunir avec leurs proches et l'importance des repas partagés lors de ces rencontres. "C'est vraiment le fil conducteur qui en est ressorti," explique-t-il, "et ces éléments sont ↪

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AIR PRODUCTS

entièrement compatibles avec notre ADN, car les familles ont toujours été au cœur de notre marque. Les gens conservent de beaux souvenirs de ces rassemblements privilégiés. Comme les pâtes s'avèrent un bon repas de tous les jours, beaucoup de ces événements impliquent des pâtes — souvent dans des recettes personnalisées par les hôtes, qui se les sont appropriées.”

M. Brown affirme que les consommateurs canadiens s'identifient facilement avec les pâtes et Catelli. “Nos produits sont un aliment de base dans les ménages canadiens depuis des générations, y compris dans ma famille,” souligne-t-il. “J'en suis un grand consommateur, de même que ma femme et mes enfants.” Il ajoute que la marque Catelli — une filiale, avec les marques Minute Rice et Healthy Harvest, d'Ebro Foods en Espagne — s'avère le deuxième producteur mondial de pâtes au monde, et qu'elle a réussi à demeurer la marque de pâtes numéro un au Canada grâce au développement et à la mise en marché de nouveaux produits.

Ces produits comprennent les pâtes Moisson santé, fabriquées à partir de blé entier à 100 pour cent; les pâtes Catelli Smart,



Catelli a été fondée à Montréal par Carlo Onorato Catelli.

blanches avec fibres ajoutées; les populaires pâtes sans gluten; et les pâtes à grains anciens. Ce dernier produit a été lancé dans l'Ouest canadien en 2015, et il se situe au sommet de ce marché. Il est actuellement lancé dans le reste du pays. D'autres produits innovateurs font leur chemin, comme les Smart légumes — qui ont été développés pour aider les parents à rendre les repas de leurs enfants plus nutritifs — et les SuperGreens: des pâtes vertes avec du chou, des épinards et d'autres légumes verts, que M. Brown présente comme populaires auprès des consommateurs plus âgés (et qui ont été choisies comme le meilleur nouveau produit dans le sondage BrandSpark International 2017).

“Vous ne pouvez pas sacrifier le goût ni la texture. Même si ça représente toujours un défi, nous avons réussi à le relever, et c'est ce qui importe,” confie M. Brown. “Nous nous employons constamment à identifier les besoins des consommateurs et à les valider en développant de nouveaux produits qui reflètent ses besoins. Nous devons être obsédés par cette façon de faire si nous voulons continuer à célébrer d'autres anniversaires déterminants comme celui-ci avec le Canada.”



Reformulating without PHOs



With Health Canada proposing a ban on partially hydrogenated oils (PHOs), many food manufacturers may be looking for a healthy oil replacement. Sunflower oil from the U.S. is a premium, non-GMO, trans fat free oil. With a longer fry and shelf life than most other oils, sunflower

oil also has a neutral taste making it ideal for a wide variety of food formulations. In a 2016 survey, 71 per cent of Canadians indicated that they consider sunflower oil healthier than other oils, and 64 per cent said they are interested in purchasing products made with sunflower oil. www.sunflowerusa.com

High-quality gelatins

Nitta Gelatin NA offers high-quality food and technical gelatins to the North American market. As part of the Nitta Gelatin, Inc. group, the company specializes in the production of bovine, porcine and fish gelatins, as well as collagen peptides for use in a variety of applications ranging from food, nutritional, pharmaceutical, cosmetic and technical. www.nitta-gelatin.com

Gluten-free benefits

Sethness Products Company, an ingredient partner and principal of McCormick Canada, provides gluten-free

Caramel Colours and Caramelized Sugar Syrups for food and beverage manufacturers addressing the demand for gluten-free products. Sethness provides safe, clean, label-friendly colour ingredients that give gluten-free products an enticing appearance.

www.mccormickflavoursolutions.ca

Long-lasting golden glaze

HT Griffin Food Ingredients has launched StaBake 214, a revolutionary ingredient that offers performance and marketability. The new bakery glaze is made from consumer friendly ingredients, is freeze-thaw stable, and is a safe alternative to egg wash. With a wide dilution ratio, the ingredient is highly cost effective and user friendly.

www.htgriffin.com



Taste & health

Kerry offers a range of solutions to help nourish and delight consumers. With an intense dairy taste its Kerry Clean Label Cheese Solution works well for dishes such as Mac & Cheese, and can be customized with non-GMO or rBST-free claims. The company also offers technologies such as ProDiem and NutriVie, which are ideal for vegan consumers, and which can be used in non-dairy milks to provide more fibre and satiety. www.kerry.com



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Colleen Dyck, owner of The Great GORP Project, with her family.

The Great GORP Project Niverville, Man.

Deanna Rosolen

Colleen Dyck has navigated her fair share of hurdles to get to where she is today — selling her energy bars in 600 stores across Canada. Her friends joke that it was a 10-year overnight success. Dyck describes it as an uphill journey. “Food is probably one of the most challenging industries,” she says. “There are a lot of big players, you’re dealing with shelf life and food safety, a lot of regulations — as there should be — it just makes the learning curve really steep. And it’s definitely hard to compete on the shelf with multinationals. But you have to carve out your niche and hopefully that’s what we’ve been doing.”

Ten years ago Dyck was a triathlete and new mom. She wasn’t from the food industry, but she was confounded by the energy bars available at the time — they all had syrups, fillers and low-quality ingredients. Dyck and her family are grain and oil seed farmers, so she knew “the best superstar ingredients on the planet,” grew in her backyard.

At first Dyck started making energy bars for herself and then for training



mates, friends and family. Demand grew so much that she eventually took her idea to the Food Development Centre in Portage La Prairie, Man., where they did all the shelf life testing in real time. After almost seven years and three formulations they hit on a recipe that worked. It took so long, explains Dyck, mainly because the recipe called for flax and hemp, ingredients with nutritious fats. “Ironically, those ingredients that are the healthiest are also the most volatile,” she says. “There can be a rancidity issue. You have to get the chemistry just perfect.”

While it was suggested to Dyck that she decrease the amount of good fats in her recipe to boost shelf life and speed the whole process along, the entrepreneur refused to compromise. She persevered and once the product hit the market it attracted some high-profile customers: the Winnipeg Jets, and more recently, the Toronto Maple Leafs. “What’s special about our bars is that you can exercise and you won’t have an upset stomach that can tend to happen with cheaper proteins,” says Dyck. “We use a sprouted brown rice protein that is hypo-allergenic, it doesn’t cause gas or bloating and it’s easy to digest.”

Another special feature about the GORP bars is the packaging. The logo on the package is a sticker, which can be used to seal the package if you just want a portion of the bar. It’s also become a fun marketing feature, with customers sending in photos of the sticker on their backpacks, skateboards and bikes. Notably, the bars are handmade by an army of local stay-at-home moms who

work on Dyck’s farm in a provincially inspected and certified facility. They can make 4,500 bars in a shift. Dyck says it makes her proud to have created a workplace flexible enough for both her growing company and the moms in her small community. ●

Q&A



Q: What advice do you have for food entrepreneurs?

A: “You don’t always have to do what the industry says. You don’t have to cut corners. Sometimes you have to stick to your guns. I think a lot of entrepreneurs get caught up trying to please the middleman, but often the middleman has nothing to do with the end customer. They’re worried about shelf life, logistics and speed. I think my choices caused me to grow slower. My shelf life is seven months, not one to two years as distributors want. I don’t want to eat something that’s been on a shelf for a year. I didn’t want that for my customers either.”

Q: What new products are you launching?

A: “This summer we’re launching an energy bar ready mix, which is an opportunity to reach more consumers. I’ve got all the hard-to-find ingredients and I’ve done all the measuring. Consumers just need to heat up the peanut butter and honey, mix it and bake it and they’ve got 25 bars for under \$1 each. I also see a huge opportunity in corporate health and wellness right now. I’ve started talking to companies about providing our bars to drivers who may not have time to stop for a healthy snack, or having the bars in lunchrooms at an affordable price.”



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