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(L-R) Phil Greenhalgh, general manager and partner
and Brett Clarke, financial manager and partner

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15 Small Communities with Big Togetherness

Tru Value Foods celebrates 30 years of being both a neighbourhood grocer and part of the neighbourhood.

Cover Photography: Tru Value Foods

publisher's perspective



Re-Inventing the Shopping Experience



As online shopping surges forward in the wake of COVID-19, retailers may have to work a lot harder to engage consumers as they begin returning to their pre-pandemic shopping habits. Most analysts predict that while consumers will continue purchasing from online platforms, they will want a new in-store experience.

According to a survey conducted by PayPal, the number of Canadian online grocery shoppers jumped 58 per cent during the four weeks that followed the government's declaration of a pandemic. The numbers were generated based on a comparable survey that had been conducted just a month prior, translating to fully 30 per cent of Canadians shopping online to fulfil their food needs when the crisis first hit. In addition, recent Nielsen numbers indicate that food retail online sales in Canada represented close to 3.3 per cent of all sales in 2020, compared to 1.7 per cent in 2019.

As key industries expand their presence online, consumers believe the digital economy will become a prevalent part of daily life. Three in five Canadians (61 per cent) surveyed say they believe that cashless transactions will be part of their typical shopping experience and one in four (28 per cent) say they don't expect to use cash five years from now at all.

Canadian consumers expect retailers to be innovative in their approach to keeping up with digital demand including offering drone deliveries (29 per cent), facial recognition for payment (25 per cent), virtual reality fitting rooms (17 per cent) and holographic representation of products (11 per cent).

Nonetheless, most Canadians still want to shop in-store, but their expectations have changed.

One area that presents huge potential is around the continued development of omnichannel strategies and infrastructure which, when combined with a greater use of technology, can help to move the entire grocery experience forward. There will be an evolution from the traditional use of intuition toward more of a data-driven approach to understand what is happening in the aisles and on the shelves in stores and online. It will lead to more accurate forecasting and a greater understanding of consumer needs and behaviour for the grocer, and a better, more convenient experience for the customer. Read our article on shopper behaviour from Sue Nicholls for more insight.

The store's physical layout will also evolve to address how consumers are now shopping. This can be seen already with the heightened investment major retailers are making in their stores to continue drawing customers in. It is now easier to shop individual departments with enhanced lighting and display features to name a few.

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Lagoon Seafood Welcomes Sean Moore

Lagoon Seafood, a growing Canadian company and leader in the distribution, import, export, processing and curing of fresh and frozen fish and seafood, has appointed Sean Moore to the position of director of operations. In this newly created position, Moore will oversee the company's two plants – Lachine and Granby, Que. – as Lagoon ramps up expansion initiatives both in operations and sales.

"Sean is a great addition to our team; he has a lot of experience in Federal certified plants and has a lot to offer to the team. We're all very excited to work with him, as we continue to add experience to our team," says Michael Cheaib, business resource manager at Lagoon Seafood. "As we looked at our expansion plans, it became evident we needed someone who could lead operations and maximize outcomes in terms of production levels, efficiencies and staff development. Sean brings the right experience and we're delighted to welcome him to the team."

Before joining Lagoon Seafood, Moore gained deep and wide experience across a wide section of the food industry – including general manager at a custom meats facility, project manager, production plants and protein sourcing manager. At Lagoon, he will monitor and control plant operations to manage increased production as well as management of resources including an expanding work force.



Sean Moore

Percentage of Single-Use Food Packaging Litter Nearly Doubled During COVID-19

COVID-19 has changed so much in our lives, including how we litter. The proportion of single-use food packaging litter found on Canadian shorelines nearly doubled last year, according to Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup's annual "Dirty Dozen" report.

"We were startled to see that single-use food and beverage litter increased from 15.3 per cent of all litter in 2019 to 26.6 per cent in 2020," says Julia Wakeling, outreach specialist for Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup, a conservation partnership of Ocean Wise and World Wildlife Fund Canada. "We suspect the change may be one of the many implications of COVID-19, including more people ordering restaurant takeaway and consuming more individually packaged foods."



Also of note: for the first time in Shoreline Cleanup's 27-year history, volunteers reported finding masks and other personal protective equipment (PPE) on their cleanups. "We didn't have a category on our data cards last year to formally track the amount of PPE-related litter volunteers were finding, but we have added one for 2021," adds Wakeling. "This year's results will be very interesting."

With cleanups suspended for four months, and then limited to solo and single-household events, Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup saw a 70 per cent drop in participation in 2020. Some 15,000 people removed over 41,000 kgs of litter from Canadian shorelines in 2020 compared to 83,815 volunteers and 163,505 kilograms in 2019. Armed with COVID-safe cleanup guidelines, Shoreline Cleanup hopes to make up for lost numbers in 2021 and encourages all Canadians to organize or participate in a physically distanced cleanup.

"Pollution, especially plastic pollution, is one of the greatest threats facing our ocean, but it is a threat we can tackle together. We all have a part to play" adds Lasse Gustavsson, president and CEO of Ocean Wise. "Plastic has become omnipresent in our daily lives and yet each decision we make at work, at home, at school or out and about, has the potential to have a positive impact."

Save-On-Foods and Western Canadians Come Together to Share it Forward

For the 4th year in a row, amidst the hardships many families face due to the unprecedented disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Save-On-Foods and Western Family teamed up with Western Canadians to help them Share It Forward to support those most vulnerable.

The annual Share It Forward event ran from June 17-23, 2021, where 50 per cent of net proceeds from all Western Family products sold at any Save-On-Foods, PriceSmart Foods and Urban Fare were donated directly to local food banks. All funds raised locally will stay local. The goal in this year's event was to raise \$300,000 and bring the total of four years of Share It Forward to more than \$1 million.

"It's more important than ever that we, as Canadians, come together to support our neighbours during this crisis," said Save-On-Foods President Darrell Jones. "Local food banks play a critical role in our communities, and with the Share It Forward campaign, it's easier than ever to support the great work they do every day."

Since the company got its start in New Westminster, B.C. more than 100 years ago, Save-On-Foods team members have been committed to going the extra mile for their customers, communities, and one another – and that tradition continues today. Every year, the company donates food and consumer goods worth more than \$3 million to local food banks, along with hundreds of thousands of dollars in cash raised through community and store fundraisers.



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"There's no greater time to utilize top-tier artificial intelligence technology to gain an edge in this industry. Our customer base is huge, and it's important to understand their needs and preferences to maximize basket size, loyalty and wallet share."

- Sunflora President of Franchise Systems, Jay Bengé



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Great Little Box Company / Ideon Packaging Named one of Canada's Best Managed Companies for 2021

Great Little Box Company Ltd/ Ideon Packaging (GLBC) have been recognized for overall business performance and sustained growth with the prestigious Canada's Best Managed Companies designation for the 17th consecutive year.

"We are proud to receive platinum status for the 10th consecutive year and continue to believe our success is a direct testament to our incredible team," said Brad Tindall, president of Great Little Box Company/ Ideon Packaging.



Headquartered in Richmond, B.C., GLBC has established itself as a local source for innovative and custom packaging and label solutions. Founded 39 years ago, the company is now comprises a diverse workforce of 425 employees and growing. Their six packaging divisions enable an innovative and consultative approach to customers' packaging challenges that ensures brand equity across all packaging mediums. GLBC's unique approach to supporting and valuing their employees includes everything from wellness programs and birthdays off to a companywide goal that when reached takes all employees on a "BOX GOAL" trip.

Alberta Food Processors Association Rolls Out Training Programs

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Prairie Harvest Canada Ltd Donates Organic Ketchup to Food Banks in Western Canada!

Prairie Harvest, home of Canada's award-winning pastas, kicks off the launch of their new Organic Ketchup by donating to local food banks. Their first donation consisted of 19,800 bottles to food banks across BC and Alberta. This last year has been very difficult for many families CEO Carlo Facchin stated, and Prairie Harvest believes in giving back to the communities it serves. In addition to this Organic Ketchup donation, Prairie Harvest has also proudly donated over 20,000 lbs of pasta, more than 100,000 pasta servings to various food banks over the last three years.

Claire Bara Appointed President of A. Lassonde Inc.

Lassonde announces the appointment of Claire Bara as president of its Canadian subsidiary, namely A. Lassonde Inc. Bara previously held the position of executive vice-president and general manager, marketing, trade and product development at A. Lassonde Inc. In her new role, Bara will lead the commercial activities of this subsidiary which develops, manufactures and markets ready-to-drink juices and drinks and fruit-based snacks for the Canadian market. Her experience, vision and management skills will be leveraged to meet the challenges of these highly competitive segments.



Claire Bara

Execulytics Consulting Identifies Key Findings Related to Post-Covid Shopper Preferences and Habits

Execulytics Consulting, a leading consulting firm for the fresh produce industry, has completed an in-depth report that highlights Canadian shopper preferences in a post-covid world. The study analyzes responses from 2,000 shoppers (1,000 vaccinated and 1,000 unvaccinated) to provide a broad scope of how the pandemic has shaped buying habits and purchasing preferences.

"Fifty-five per cent of those surveyed, reported an increased likelihood to purchase local produce compared to before the pandemic," said Mike Mauti, managing partner of Execulytics Consulting. "We also found vaccinated Canadians are 12 per cent more likely to purchase local produce compared to unvaccinated."

The study also found that the top positive attribute consumers identified when buying local produce was that the purchase is "good for farmers." Interestingly, the research indicates that the correlation with this attribute became stronger with older generations. Canadians aged 65 and older made this selection at a 56 per cent higher rate than Canadians aged 18-34 years old.

Regarding organics, Execulytics Consulting found that outside of the highest income bracket of those surveyed, vaccinated Canadians said they are between 23 per cent-43 per cent more likely to pay a premium for organics (of 25 per cent or more versus conventional) compared to their unvaccinated counterparts. The firm also discovered that generally, less than half of the respondents said they are willing to pay any kind of premium for organic produce.

To complement the national study, the Ontario Produce Marketing Association (OPMA) requested a custom analysis of the data from Execulytics Consulting, "This research tells us so much about our produce consumer," said Michelle Broom, president of OPMA. "It is particularly interesting to see the lasting effects of the pandemic on shopping habits and how Ontario consumers differ from Canadians. Overall, this has been a great investment in our consumer research."



Mike Mauti

ANUGA 2021 GOES HYBRID WITH INTRODUCTION OF ANUGA @HOME

Transform is the leading theme of this year's Anuga. Whereby not only themes related to the transformation within the food and beverage industry will be addressed, but also the new concepts of the leading global trade fair itself, which is being staged in a hybrid format for the first time. Accordingly, the usual physical trade fair with product presentations on-site in Cologne will be additionally enhanced by the digital element "Anuga @home."

The hybrid format has the advantage that industry participants all over the globe – exhibitors, trade visitors and the trade press – can exchange ideas live in Cologne or digitally via the newly developed platform and inform themselves about important industry topics. As a result of the analogue trade fair being enhanced by the digital platform, a new, hybrid trade fair experience will be created, wherever the key players, decision-makers and other relevant target groups happen to be.

The digital event Anuga @home offers exhibitors various presentation options. The platform is accessed via the virtual lobby. Here, there is an overview of all features as well as initial recommendations for relevant contacts, exhibitors, and imminent items on the trade fair agenda.

The platform also offers additional components such as the Main Stages, where the program curated by Anuga takes place. For example, top speakers will present industry themes live on-site from Cologne or per stream from everywhere in the world via the Congress Stages. The exhibitors' new products and highlights will be presented on the Product Stages. Here there will also be further target group-specific stages, for instance, the Anuga Trade Shows Stage, the Anuga Start-up Stage, the Anuga taste Innovation Stage and the Anuga Food Trends Stage.

In the Exhibitors and Products section, the Showfloor serves as the counterpart to the exhibition hall. From here access to the different stands of the exhibitors, the so-called Showroom, will be possible. Exhibitors can provide relevant information about their companies, products and services in the Showroom. Visitors, other exhibitors, top decision-makers, buyers, industry experts and media representatives can be contacted via the Communication Centre per audio, video or chat in the form of a one-to-one communication. The visual Discovery Graph makes identifying relevant contacts and companies incredibly easy and interactive, either via the networks, personal contacts or using the Match feature based on the interests entered.

Visitors will be able to access the live program of Anuga @home from October 11-13, 2021. After this date, the contents can be called up on-demand. Access to the networking options is also possible after the actual trade fair has closed.

The FreshCo Rollout in Western Canada Continues

FreshCo is on track to Open three locations in Alberta in Winter 2021/2022:

- FreshCo Downtown Fort McMurray, Fort McMurray, AB

Opening in Alberta in Spring 2022:

- FreshCo Jasper Gates, Edmonton, AB
- FreshCo Lewis Estates, Edmonton, AB

Two of the locations are currently Safeway stores and one is a Sobeys store. Downtown Fort McMurray will close for renovations and construction in Summer 2021 and re-open as FreshCo in Winter 2021/2022. In Edmonton, Jasper Gates and Lewis Estates will close for renovations and construction in Fall 2021, and re-open as FreshCo in Spring 2022.

The pharmacy locations will remain open during the renovations. Throughout construction, Safeway and Sobeys pharmacy teams will continue to serve customers in temporary pharmacy locations that will be conveniently located at or nearby the current locations.



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SWEETS & SNACKS EXPO RELEASES TOP TRENDS FOR 2021

The Sweets & Snacks Expo released the top trends for the 2021 confectionery and snack categories.

Here are some of the trends from this year's Sweets & Snacks Expo:

Smaller pack sizes: More companies continue to develop smaller pack sizes containing 200 calories or less. This trend empowers the consumer to make informed choices when they are ready to treat themselves to their favourite snack or candy.

Tropical flavours: So many consumers are dreaming of a day at the beach and enjoying all that summer has to offer. This year, tropical flavours are taking centre stage with a focus on pineapple and coconut. Sit back, relax, and enjoy a tropical treat... cue the sound of ocean waves!

Mix and match: Can't decide which flavour to enjoy? Candy and snack manufacturers are bringing consumers the best of both worlds. Whether they are looking for sweet, salty, fruity, or tart, shoppers can't go wrong when mixing up their favourite combinations.

Spice it up: Think you can handle the heat? At the Sweets & Snacks Expo, the hottest (and we mean hottest!) new spicy snacks featuring flavours like chili, sriracha, jalapeño and habanero will be on full display.



Vumami Foods Marks First Year in Business and 100th Retail Location



Vumami Foods is celebrating two major business milestones: its first anniversary and its 100th retail location. The Sidney, BC-based company produces Umami Bomb, its signature product available in four varieties: Medium, Hot, Garlic and Extra Hot. The vegan shiitake mushroom-based chili oil adds bold, savoury, spicy flavour to any dish making it instantly craveable and delicious.

The fast-growing company, Vumami Foods, was launched only a year ago and has already become a staple in the kitchens of home cooks throughout Canada. "Vumami Foods was launched during the COVID-19 pandemic and that certainly came with unique challenges," said Vumami Foods Founder Nicholas Baingo.

"As a new company with such a unique product, we were very fortunate that our retailers love Umami Bomb as much as we do and took a chance on us."

For more information: www.vumamifoods.com.

Save-On-Foods Tops B.C.'S Most Loved Brands List for Second Straight Year

Save-On-Foods has topped the list of 70 B.C.-based businesses for the second straight year and is officially B.C.'s Most Loved Brand for 2021.

In its annual brand love survey, BC Business Magazine and research firm Ipsos team up to survey more than 1,420 British Columbians about businesses based in B.C. on 47 different attributes. The 2021 survey also included new questions about businesses' responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.



"It's such an honour to be named B.C.'s Most Loved Brand for 2021 by our customers," said Save-On-Foods President Darrell Jones. "This company has a long history of going the extra mile for its customers and communities, and we have had more opportunities than ever to do that in the last year. I am so proud of the Save-On-Foods team and I can't thank them enough for their outstanding commitment to the people who are counting on them. Congratulations to all the other excellent companies on the list of B.C.'s Most Loved Brands."

Cascades Launches its Fourth Sustainability Action Plan "Driving Positive Change"

Cascades, the 17th most sustainable company in the world according to Global 100, has launched its fourth Sustainability Action Plan, the most ambitious in its history: "Driving Positive Change".

"Sustainable development is part of our DNA. Nearly 60 years ago, long before environmental principles and social impacts were taken into account in business practices, our company became a pioneer in the circular economy by making products from recycled materials. This new sustainability plan, in addition to being aligned with the priorities of our clients and partners, reaffirms our leadership amidst the growing challenges facing our society and our planet," said Mario Plourde, president and chief executive officer of Cascades.

The plan, which includes 15 defined targets for 2025 and 2030, is based on four main pillars: Respectful of the Planet, Solutions Driven, Community Minded, and People Focused. It is also aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations and with the recommendations of the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi) in terms of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.



FIELD AGENT SURVEYS DIGITAL CONSUMER

As the country emerges from the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic, every industry is facing questions. Questions like: what is the new normal – and what does the future hold?

Nowhere are these questions more relevant than in digital grocery. The IBM Retail Index reports that the shift from brick-and-mortar retail to digital shopping increased by as much as five years over the course of the pandemic – a monumental change.

Digital grocery is increasingly a fixture in shoppers' lives, from home delivery to in-store pickup, to ordering through smart speakers. How are shoppers using these services, and what opportunities and challenges face digital grocery in 2021?



Jeff Doucette



To answer these questions and more, Field Agent surveyed 1,000 shoppers who provided insight into the role that digital grocery plays in their lives, and answered questions including:

- What are shoppers' major concerns with online grocery?
- Which online grocery retailers and third-party services are rising to the top?
- What are the permanent effects of the pandemic on shopper habits?
- What will online grocery look like five years from now?

"There is no doubt that the adoption of online grocery has been expedited by the pandemic and retailers have stepped up with new offerings as well. We have traditionally lagged well behind the US in this space, but we are closing the gap quickly," stated Jeff Doucette, general manager of Field Agent Canada. "While it may not be the drones and automated robots delivering items to our door, the future does look very bright for online grocery."

SYNQ Deploys BISPUN (Buy In-Store Pickup Now) USING CUSTOMER DEVICES ALLEVIATING IN-STORE HARDWARE NEEDS

SYNQ TECHNOLOGY, a leading provider of retail technology, announces "Order Up", a Buy In-store Pickup Now (BISPUN) self-shopping technology operating on consumer devices. Leveraging a customer's smartphone in-store and at point of purchase now eliminates the need for retailers to purchase costly hardware and infrastructure with a disruptive retail technology for brick-and-mortar retail.

In the past, retailers implementing innovative technologies would deploy in-store using touch screen tablet technologies affixed to shelving, gondola or free-standing fixture. The cost and time of installation is now completely alleviated, whereby the customer can now use their own personal device to order product for immediate purchase. Customers access the technology by texting key words in the retail environments such as "Deli" and "Bakery" or scanning QR codes to show the full endless aisle assortment. This can further broaden the assortment without the requirement of merchandising as well offer affinities and incremental product offering.

Commenting on the new deployments, SYNQ founder & CEO Nolan Wheeler said, "we have had incredible success with the Order Up platform, whereby

SYNQ Bringing the Retailer into the Digital Future 

in cases we see in excess of 12 per cent of top-line sales being transacted on through the Order Up technology. By offering the technology to retailers on a fully mobile basis, leveraging the purchasing power in the hands of consumers, we not only show faster ROI to the retailer but enable faster deployments and scale.

SYNQ Technology was also recently recognized by partner, Microsoft for success with Canadian Tire in keeping the wheels of commerce turning safely, tripling online sales with the help of Microsoft Teams. In this case, BOPIS (Buy Online Pickup In-Store) was delivered via SYNQ leveraging the power of MS Teams in the Canadian Tire Curbside Pickup execution.

SYNQ's Director of Business Development Ken Roberts added, "Our objective at SYNQ is to continue to level the playing field with online retail advantages for our brick-and-mortar customers. Developing solutions that enhance the shopping experience and reduce friction for customers has differentiated our business and ensured incredible ROI for our clients."

SYNQ has a strong presence in the retail channel, with their applications across an array of formats stores. Their platform has supported retailers in millions of ecommerce last mile deliveries, with hundreds of thousands of retail satisfaction reviews, and have deployed technologies in nearly 3,000 North American retail locations. Each SYNQ solution is fully measurable and accompanied by rich data made available in user-friendly reporting tools and presentation layer, enabling continued improvement and knowledge previously unavailable to retailers.

FOR MORE INFORMATION,
CONTACT: Nolan Wheeler, CEO,
1-778-433-SYNQ orders@synqtech.com

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Virtual Success CFG'S Pivot to a Virtual Event Rose to the Challenge



COVID-19 has taken a huge toll on many industries, but the CFG has shown that through innovation and resilience, they have been able to overcome the challenges facing businesses in the grocery industry today.

Starting with the remarkable success of GIC @HOME LIVE in November 2020, the CFG followed up this last May with GSF West Live Retailer Connect which featured A.I. powered matchmaking meetings to grow business connections and sales. In fact, GSF West Live allowed even more retailers to attend, because it bypassed the need for costly travel, expensive accommodation, and significant downtime from their stores.

Speakers kicked off with Ron Tite (The Purpose-Driven Leadership and Marketing Expert) who lectured on "Grocery Leadership Redefined." This was followed by a closer look at what's driving retail innovation, presented by Neil Stern of Good Food Holdings and Amanda Lai from McMillanDoolittle. Keynotes were followed by workshops that included an overview of key issues and concerns facing the sector and independents and why it makes good business sense to have an accessible online and in-store experience for customers with disabilities.

The following day, Joel Gregoire of Mintel spoke on the environment and the Canadian food consumer. Amber Mac then presented a keynote on the three tech trends in a state of acceleration – a result of the fast pace of change from the COVID-19 era. The day was also filled with workshops presented by Neil Stern of Good Food Holdings and Amanda Lai of McMillanDoolittle, looking at such relevant topics as "Engineering a winning customer experience", which was followed by Amber Mac's fantastic session on "Redefining the customer experience", which was a deep dive into the future of building digital-first and in-person relationships with the Gen-Z audience.

The 58th Annual Canadian Independent Grocer of the Year Awards was presented in front of a virtual audience of the country's leading grocers, suppliers, and distributors.

The NATIONAL GOLD AWARD Winners for Top Independent Grocer of the Year for 2020 are:

Longo's - Mount Pleasant, Brampton, ON (Large Surface)
Battistelli's Your Independent Grocer, Lively, ON (Medium Surface)
Vince's Market, Tottenham, ON (Small Surface)

DAVID C. PARSONS AWARD OF EXCELLENCE IN SPECIALTY FOOD RETAILING (GOLD):
Yummy Market-Maple - Maple, ON

SPECIAL AWARDS

CFG announced that Bruce Logan, Jerry Liedtke, Glenn Logan, Scott Logan, and Russell Logan of Village Food Markets, Sooke, BC, are awarded THE ARNOLD RANDS HERITAGE AWARD. The award is given to the year's best multi-generational store that is privately owned, and that has been in the same family for at least two generations, in the same community for 35 years.

CFG ALSO INDUCTED THE FOLLOWING GROCERS INTO THE HALL OF FAME:
Brooke and Linda Kynoch and Team, Safety Mart Foods, Chase, BC.

NATIONAL AWARDS - GOLD, SILVER, BRONZE in Specialty Category

Bronze Award
Jeffrey Min and Jason Park, Galleria Supermarket, Oakville, ON

Silver Award
Brad Scott, Jane Scott and Jordyn Scott, BJ'S Country Market, Delaware, ON

David C. Parsons Award
Anna and Alexei Tsvetkov, Yummy Market-Maple, Maple, ON

REGIONAL AWARDS - SMALL, MEDIUM, LARGE

REGIONAL SMALL SURFACE CATEGORY
Management and Team, Pepper's Foods, Victoria, BC

ALBERTA/SASK./MANITOBA/NWT/NUNAVUT
Don Boos and Staff, Freson Bros. Hanna, Hanna, AB

ONTARIO
Carmen Trimarchi and Giancarlo Trimarchi, Vince's Market, Tottenham, ON

QUEBEC/ATLANTIC CANADA
Rebecca Stowe and Team, Belbin's Grocery, St. John's, NL

REGIONAL MEDIUM SURFACE CATEGORY
The Management and Team of Royal Oak, Country Grocer (Royal Oak), Victoria, BC

ALBERTA/SASK./MANITOBA/NWT/NUNAVUT
Aaron Coultts and Staff, Freson Bros., Barrhead, AB

ONTARIO
Brent Battistelli and Store Team, Battistelli's Your Independent Grocer, Lively, ON

QUEBEC /ATLANTIC CANADA
Dave Powell, Adam Powell, John Pritchett, and John Mercer, Powell's Supermarket, Bay Roberts, NL

REGIONAL LARGE SURFACE CATEGORY
The Management and Team of Bowen Road, Country Grocer - Bowen Road, Nanaimo, BC

ALBERTA/SASK./MANITOBA/NWT/NUNAVUT
Save-On-Foods Prince Albert Team, Save-On-Foods, Prince Albert, SK

ONTARIO
Longo's Mount Pleasant Team, Longo's - Mount Pleasant, Brampton, ON

QUEBEC/ATLANTIC CANADA
Justin Norman and Team, Colemans Garden Market, Corner Brook, NL

NATIONAL AWARDS - GOLD, SILVER, BRONZE IN SMALL/MEDIUM/LARGE

SMALL SURFACE CATEGORY

Bronze Award
Cory Davits and Team, Pepper's Foods, Victoria, BC

Silver Award
Rebecca Stowe and Team, Belbin's Grocery St. John's, NL

Gold Award
Carmen Trimarchi and Giancarlo Trimarchi, Vince's Market, Tottenham, ON

MEDIUM SURFACE CATEGORY

Bronze Award
Dave Powell, Adam Powell, John Pritchett, and John Mercer, Powell's Supermarket, Bay Roberts, NL

Silver Award
The Management and Team of Royal Oak, Country Grocer (Royal Oak), Victoria, BC

Gold Award
Brent Battistelli and Store Team, Battistelli's Your Independent Grocer, Lively, ON

LARGE SURFACE CATEGORY

Bronze Award
The Management and Team of Bowen Road, Country Grocer - Bowen Rd., Nanaimo, BC

Silver Award
Justin Norman and Team, Colemans Gardens Market, Corner Brook, NL

Gold Award
Longo's Mount Pleasant Team, Longo's - Mount Pleasant, Brampton, ON

RETAILERS VOTED THEIR TOP 10 IN GROCERY PICKS. THE WINNERS ARE:

Kiju Organic Fruit Bites - A. Lassonde
Watkins Organic Garlic & Herb Seasoning - Acosta
BinBreeze Lavender - BinBreeze
World Taco Kit - Korean BBQ Inspired - General Mills
Candied Salmon Jerky - Hardy Buoy's
Smoked Fish Inc.
Water Kefir Strawberry Rosehip Flavour - Kindred Cultures
Compostable Produce Bags - LEAF Environmental Products Inc.
Shredded Feta - Saputo Dairy Products Canada GP.
Chocolate Chip Cookie Mix - Susgrainable Health Foods Inc.
Angostura Cocoa Bitters - Tree of Life

RETAIL COLLABORATION

By Jeff Doucette

Hard Discount - Ready For Launch?

FRESHCO EXPANSION BREATHES NEW LIFE INTO THE FORMAT

When I started my career in the CPG industry, I was based in Toronto and managing Loblaw's national procurement for one of my employers major categories. While we always were keen to jump on the plane and head to Calgary for meetings and an extended weekend in the mountains (those were the days), I must admit that it was hard to understand just how different the competitive dynamic was in the West compared to Ontario.

In Ontario, we were obsessed with the growth of No Frills and to a lesser extent Walmart and we barely had any Superstores back then. Meanwhile, my colleagues in the West were hyper-focused on Superstore. It was a bit "exotic" to stop into an Extra Foods in Airdrie or a Save On Foods on the Island and see the players that we did not have in Ontario.

In Ontario, the Hard Discount format dominates the grocery landscape with No Frills, Food Basics and Freshco all doing battle with Walmart and RCSS for the lowest priced basket. It has been many years since the Hard Discount format made up over 50 per cent of total dollar sales in Ontario.

The West on the other hand has had a different path. Superstore was predominantly the price leader with the rest of the market happier to keep its distance and playing in the proximity/full-service space with higher service and higher margins. Before it was purchased by Sobeys, Safeway seemed to flex its strategy from aggressive to passive depending on the needs of the US business when it came to

volume or profit. Save On Foods used to be this sleepy little business but in the past decade has turned on the after-burners to stretch all the way east to Winnipeg and north to Whitehorse.

Of course, the No Frills banner has been in the West for quite a while now, although it was more of a convenient cover story to consolidate the Extra Foods banner than it was a play to truly bring the Hard Discount model to the West, which would have had a significant impact on its big brother - RCSS.

Looking eastwards, we see that Ontario has 173 No Frills locations to serve a population of 14.8 million (1 store per 86,000) while the West has just 80 No Frills stores to serve a population of 12.3 million (1 store per 153,000). Additionally, many No Frills stores in the West can be found in the smaller communities that were previously served by Extra Foods, instead of the major urban centres where the yellow stores are found in Ontario.

But there is a new player in the Hard Discount space in the West which has been rather quietly building out a network of newly renovated and well-located stores, inheriting many under-performing Sobeys and Safeway locations as Sobeys looks to shore up their business in Western Canada.

There are already 28 Freshco stores in the West and many more in the pipeline. This compares to the 94 Freshco stores in Ontario, many of which were converted from the Price Chopper banner in the 2000s.

Aside from price, Hard Discount's recipe for success includes three major elements including local franchisees who know their local market extremely well, proximity to population centres and transit and serving ethnic communities in a hyper-local way, truly competing with ethnic focused retailers in a range of communities.

Freshco's "Chalo" sub-brand is a great example. These stores are designed to serve the South Asian community through assortment and location and we already have four of these store in the West and room for more in communities like Chestermere and East Calgary in Alberta and throughout the Lower Mainland in British Columbia.

How many Hard Discount stores could the West support? As a guide we can look at the 406 No Frills, Food Basics and Freshco stores in Ontario, which works out to one store for every 36,000 residents. In Quebec, there are a total of 213 Maxi & Super C stores; or one store for every 40,000 residents.

Using the mid-point of Quebec and Ontario, the Western market could support about 325 Hard Discount stores based on population, compared to the 108 stores we have today. This means that Freshco has quite a bit of runway ahead of it to grow.

Sobeys has some great real-estate across the West, thanks mainly to its Safeway purchase and this could lead to a quick explosion of green stores popping up from the Lakehead to the Coast. Just how fast they can close and convert without disrupting short term volumes and profits will be a delicate balance, but it seems like Sobeys is dedicated to making this work.

Of course, there is always the "nuclear" scenario, where one of the true Hard Discounters like Germany's Aldi or Lidl (both of whom are in the US already) decides that they want to enter our market. They grow store count and share very fast by using the hub-and-spoke model for stores and warehouses and a laser focus on private label. Supporting a made in Canada expansion of Hard Discount is the preferred option for retailers and suppliers alike by a long shot.

If Hard Discount gets bigger there will be massive challenges ahead for conventional operators who are already under pressure from RCSS, Walmart and Costco as well as their full-service competition. Full service will always be relevant, but only the strongest will survive.

It seems like Sobeys has seen the writing on the wall and is determined to be the aggressor instead of one of the banners that slowly has its market share picked away by lower cost rivals. It will be interesting to continue to watch the Freshco roll-out across the West and see how the other players react to this new competitor. ●



Jeff Doucette is the founder of "Field Agent Canada" an on-demand panel of Canadian shoppers providing a suite of innovative services to Canadian retailers and brands. He can be reached at jeff.doucette@fieldagentcanada.com



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Phil Greenhalgh, general manager and partner

Small Communities with Big Togetherness

Smaller communities often get overlooked when it comes to the basics many people take for granted — especially if those communities are on an island that requires a ferry to get to and from the area. Tru Value Foods refused to let these family-focused communities go without the support of a neighbourhood grocer, and for 30 years, they’ve been serving and supporting several neighbourhoods on islands in the strait between Vancouver Island and the BC mainland.

Wayne Verch and partner Jerry Rainer were already entrenched in the grocery industry but wanted to start something of their own. They had confidence in their vision because they, like so many other independent grocers, were fortunate to have learned their trade from Alex Campbell, founder of Thrifty Foods. With that support behind them, Tru Value Foods was born in 1991.

Tru Value Foods celebrates 30 years of being both a neighbourhood grocer and part of the neighbourhood.



(L-R) Phil Greenhalgh, general manager and partner
Darcy Manners, store manager - Heriot Bay/Quadra Island,
Brett Clarke, financial manager and partner

This appreciation of independent grocery retailers and the support they got from the visionaries who came before flowed through the business as it evolved. Now, General Manager Phil Greenhalgh, Financial Manager Brett Clarke, Partner Dean Clarke and Pender Island Manager Mike Gray are the owners championing the connection Tru Value Foods has with its communities.

“I think every retailer, regardless of whether it’s grocery or a shoe store, they need to engage with their community,” says Gray. “They need to remember they’re local even if they are a big national chain.”

Those who shop at a Tru Value location will see this community connection



immediately. Make a purchase and the cashier will ask which organization to contribute one per cent of the sale amount to. Each of the four locations (Pender Island, Mayne Island and Quathiaski Cove and Heriot Bay on Quadra Island) has a Spirit Board which lists a number of local organizations like the food bank, PACs,

“I think every retailer, regardless of whether it’s grocery or a shoe store, they need to engage with their community. They need to remember they’re local even if they are a big national chain.”

Lions Clubs, Scouts, Guides and more. Shoppers choose where they want their donation to go to. The program which began in 2001 costs customers nothing while enabling them to contribute to things that matter to them by doing what they



(L-R) Brett Clarke, financial manager and partner, Dean Clarke, senior partner,
Phil Greenhalgh, general manager and partner

would be doing anyway — buying groceries.

“It creates a broader tapestry and community connection for everyone there,” says Brett Clarke. “We like the niche these small communities provide. We’re always willing to look at other

similar size opportunities. We really feel we have a model that works well for those size of communities.”

Gray is a prime example of how the communities play a part in a person’s life from both a personal and work perspective.

Celebrating Tru Value Foods' 30th Anniversary

MNP

For three decades, Tru Value Foods has shown a commitment to our Island and our communities. On behalf of the team at MNP, we wish you all the best for the next 30 years!

Alana Adamschek, CPA, CA
250.338.5464 | alana.adamschek@mnp.ca

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Congratulations Tru Value Foods on 30 years!

“Life was simpler when Apple and Blackberry’s were just fruits”

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“You know most of your customers, so having staff members that are great, community-involved people just makes a huge difference inside the store. It creates a wonderful feel,”



(Left to right) Phil Greenhalgh, general manager and partner and Rob Pain, store manager - Quathiaski Cove/Quadra Island

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He and his wife moved the family to Pender Island in 1998 when the first of their three sons was six months old.

“I really, really love this community,” he says. “It’s a fantastic place to raise a family.”

While the first Tru Value store that opened in 1991 is no longer part of the group, the Pender Island location opened soon after in 1994, with a retail space of just 1,500 square feet.

“It was itty bitty and we pumped a ton of volume out of that store,” he says. “In 1998, I came over as store manager

and in 2000 we opened this store we are currently in; 6,000 square feet retail. It was an amazing change and the community really supported us and still do to this day.”

In 1996 the Mayne Island store joined the mix, then Heriot Bay came online in 2003 and Quathiaski Cove opened in 2010. We were fortunate to have Dean join the team in 2003 and his son Brett came aboard in 2010.

“What we’re trying to do, is to keep the pleasant, local family feel,” says Greenhalgh. “The idea is to bring the old

school, small town feel combined with some modern store innovations and products. It’s the island’s community store and we must ensure our customers know we care in every characteristic of how we execute our business model.”

There are now over 100 employees with Tru Value Foods and they are “everything” to him. They have to be because working in grocery in a small community is completely different from large urban stores, he explains.

“You know most of your customers, so having staff members that are great, community-involved people just makes a huge difference inside the store. It creates a wonderful feel,” he says. “What we look for when we’re hiring are good people skills. If they get along with people, and are friendly naturally then you can teach them the skills necessary to do any job. It is vital that they are comfortable in all situations when dealing with people.”

Beyond the Spirit Board, giving back to the community is also about getting involved on a personal level which happens naturally because of everyone’s close ties to the communities. These close ties were what kept everyone slightly more comfortable when COVID-19 hit. As Greenhalgh says, it was daunting and scary, so Tru Value took a very proactive approach to the situation.

“Our islands just aren’t set up to handle a serious medical situation should it have arisen,” he says. “We’re the islands’ grocery stores and it was very important to make sure we did our part to keep people safe within our stores.”



The lineups were longer and masking up happened very quickly, but fortunately, most customers understood and appreciated the efforts towards keeping everyone safe.

Now, as BC’s restrictions loosen up, the Tru Value team is looking towards celebrating 30 years of being the islands’ grocery stores. COVID-19 may prevent the level of celebration that would have happened otherwise, but there will still be plenty of fun for staff and customers alike come August.

“We’re going to have a fun week or two,” Greenhalgh notes. “We haven’t planned it all out yet, but we’ve got some wonderful giveaways and prize draws thanks to the great support from our vendors.”

The future looks bright for the independent grocery chain and as Clarke says, having a significant history certainly helps with plotting out the future.

“Having the history, once you know what works and what

Congratulations to Tru Value on your 30th Anniversary!

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The future looks bright for the independent grocery chain and as Clarke says, having a significant history certainly helps with plotting out the future.



doesn't and how to really build on the strengths and avoid any historical mistakes, that's what growing and learning is all about," he says. "We rely on the background to make the right decisions going forward."

It also helps that the communities where Tru Value are located are thriving, each still small, but growing at a positive pace that makes the grocery store an important touch stone for residents as well as visitors.

"We're really pleased with how our efforts are turning into some positive outcomes," he explains.

Renovations are planned for two of the stores, one being Quathiaski Cove.

"The renos at Q Cove will be to create more of a market style store," says Greenhalgh. "There is definitely some updating needed as well as new equipment. The end goal is creating some more room at that store for our customers to have a pleasant shopping experience."

Recently, renovations at Heriot Bay were completed to modify the bottle depot and create a new walk-in cooler for beer, cider and wine.



There will be more to come from Tru Value Foods, but it's a bit too early to pop the balloon on all the news. No matter what happens though, it will be in alignment with the same community values established by Verch and Rainer 30 years ago.

The role of the independent grocer is alive and well on the islands in BC and because the team at Tru Value sees their role as both grocer and neighbour, they are bound to continue being valued members of the communities they serve. ●



By Carly Peters

Made in Canada

Buying in Your Own Backyard

WESTERN CANADIANS ARE CLOSER TO THEIR
HOMEGROWN FOOD MORE THAN EVER

Love for local is not new. However, in the past year, consumers' eagerness to source and shop Canadian, and awareness of the importance of domestic products has only increased. Field Agent's Local Grocery Study 2021, shows 37 per cent of shoppers are buying more local foods, citing supporting the local economy, supporting the people and farmers who produce our food, and fresher, higher quality food, as the reasons why.

"The made in Canada movement was already growing but in the last year it took on more significance. The support local messaging really became a rallying cry," says Diane J. Brisebois, president and CEO of the Retail Council of Canada (RCC), adding with more people wanting to cook healthy meals at home, consumers were paying closer attention to what was in their food and where it came from.

The disruption in the supply chain also forced retailers to take stock of the products they had been importing and look at alternatives closer to home.

"It spurred grocers into looking for new closer-to-home suppliers, many of which were smaller and less known. This allowed new small business operations to gain recognition and scale," she says, adding this also benefited consumers who were seeing hyperlocal products on shelves; with grocery stores providing products that reflected their local communities.

The RCC helped to facilitate some of these Canadian producer and retail connections with a series of webinars called, "In conversations with retailer leaders." The vendor community was encouraged to log on and ask retailers how small producers could get listed in their stores, including who to contact within the chain to make it happen.

"Often one of the biggest hurdles for small Canadian producers is they don't know who to contact. With these webinars we wanted to build relationships and give domestic producers a direct line to retailers," she says.

Canadian retailers have certainly held up their end of the bargain, focusing their efforts on increasing distribution of Made in Canada and local products through a variety of programs, from dedicated shelf space to flagging products.

What follows are just a few examples of how retailers are making this happen:



*Diane J. Brisebois, president and CEO,
Retail Council of Canada*



photo courtesy shutterstock.com

BUYING ALBERTA

MORE THAN 60 YEARS AGO THE FIRST CALGARY CO-OP WAS OPENED BY LOCAL FARMERS AND RANCHERS WHO WANTED CUSTOMERS TO FEEL GOOD ABOUT WHERE THEIR FOOD CAME FROM.

That mission is unchanged. With over 2,400+ local items from 180+ local producers, the Calgary grocery chain is dedicated to working with local producers, growers, manufacturers, and suppliers to continue offering the best local products available, including fresh beef, pork, and chicken through the store's Only Alberta program.

In 2019, Calgary Co-op took localization even further, creating their own community-focused private brands — Cal & Gary's, and Founders & Farmers.

"With over 800 items in this lineup, we seek to be as local as possible in our production of these items. Cal & Gary's, and Founders & Farmers are unique to Calgary Co-op and showcase our local flavour and commitment to our community," says Ken Keelor, CEO.

Cal & Gary's is carefully curated for members, offering high-quality and unique attributes that are often not replicated in mainstream brands, while Founders & Farmers family of products give members everyday quality and value.

"Creating our own brands was about ensuring we reflect the distinctive needs of our city," says Keelor, adding they are also open to working with local suppliers, either those that are just starting out, or those who have been producing for a while and are looking to get into stores, to offer an assortment of products curated for Calgarians.

Co-op stores feature several sections called bumpouts, which spotlight local brands and products, making it easy for members to find their favourite Canadian products by highlight-

ing them on the shelf with a special Best From The West label.

"WE ARE PROUD TO WORK WITH SO MANY LOCAL PRODUCERS AND SUPPLIERS AND WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO. OUR DOORS ARE ALWAYS OPEN."



Ken Keelor, CEO, Calgary Co-op



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WHAT'S YOUR STORY

THE HEART BEHIND THE MADE IN CANADA MOVEMENT IS TRULY THE PEOPLE PRODUCING THE PRODUCTS. SOBEYS INC. HAS A TEAM DEDICATED TO LOCAL SUPPLIER DEVELOPMENT AND SOURCING.

In the West this includes three local development managers in each respective region (Keith Przada - BC, Gary Hughes - AB, Matthew Sobocan MB/SK/NW ON). The team, which is unique in the industry, works directly with small local suppliers across Canada to understand their story and get their products on to Western Sobeys, Safeway, IGA, and Thrifty Foods shelves.



Gary Hughes, local development manager - AB, Sobeys Inc.



Keith Przada, local development manager - BC, Sobeys Inc.



Matthew Sobocan, local development manager - MB/SK/NW ON, Sobeys Inc.

As champions of local suppliers, Sobeys tries to be as transparent as possible when it comes to their listing program. The company recently held a Canada-wide, local supplier, virtual Road Show where they provided over 1,000 companies with updated information about the Sobeys local program and how to navigate the listing process. They'll often also provide suppliers with one on one assistance post listing to help through any questions or issues that come up.

Once in-store, the chain is passionate about helping small suppliers grow by providing them with best practices on store interaction, merchandising, and marketing. Sobeys Inc. has developed sign packages that assist customers in finding local in each of their banner stores, including department and display signage but more importantly shelf item identifiers that calls out the provincial origin. They also go broader with signage that calls out Western Canadian items, as well as items produced in Eastern Canada (Produced in Canada).

THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT MANAGERS CITE, EVEN AFTER SEEING HUNDREDS OF PRODUCT, THEY ARE CONSTANTLY ASTONDED BY THE INNOVATION AND QUALITY THAT COMES FROM LOCAL AND CANADIAN PRODUCERS – AND THEIR CUSTOMERS ARE TOO.



LIFE ON THE ISLAND



FOR OVER THREE DECADES ON VANCOUVER ISLAND AND SALT SPRING ISLAND, FAMILY-OWNED AND -OPERATED COUNTRY GROCER HAS EARNED A REPUTATION AS A TRULY LOCAL COMPANY WITH A DEEP COMMITMENT TO THE ISLANDS' FARMERS, GROWERS, AND PRODUCERS.

Part of that commitment has been to bring in more Island Good items, a branding program developed by the Vancouver Island Economic Alliance to help shoppers easily identify local products (Vancouver Island & Gulf Islands). For retailers this includes colourful shelf markers and signage; for island companies – which ranges from potatoes to plane parts – their packages bear the Island Good logo.

Tammy Averill, marketing manager, for Country Grocer says more and more customers are putting these particular items in their carts. Recently the retailer tracked the sales of 16 Island Good products across their seven stores, which in the past four years, have increased by an average of 70 per cent.

“Customers are more aware of local products and the benefits of purchasing them. Food security and sustainability are a hot topic, especially on Vancouver Island,” explains Averill, adding Country Grocer features their own branded, local products which include natural and organic peanut butter, flour, bulk products, onions, micro-greens, and bottled water from Vancouver Island. “The pandemic made people realize how quickly food shortages can occur and the direct benefit of supporting local. Especially on an island where we must barge a lot of food over. If we can keep it on the island, we all benefit.”

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ENDLESS OPPORTUNITIES

BUY LOCAL FIRST HAS BEEN A MOTTO SAVE-ON-FOODS ADOPTED MANY YEARS AGO. CARRYING MORE THAN 2,500 LOCALLY MADE PRODUCTS FROM MORE THAN 2,000 LOCAL GROWERS AND PRODUCERS, THE CHAIN HAS BECOME KNOWN AS A PLACE CUSTOMERS CAN COME TO FOR THEIR FAVOURITE CANADIAN BRANDS.

This sentiment also applies to Save-On-Foods' private label — Western Family — which for over 50 years has been providing customers with products they love at a great price, including organic, whole food, and health-conscious options. The chain makes every effort to work with Western Canadian, or Canadian suppliers first, and proudly have over 1,000 locally made products offered within the Western Family brand.



Jim Tennant, general manager, corporate brands, Save-On Foods

“We have worked hard over the last several decades to support sales of local products in our store, which is supported by our significant marketing efforts to highlight the great work and quality local products made by our local farmers and processors,” says Dan Hansen, vice-president, centre of store for Save On Foods, pointing out each store has the autonomy to display products within their dedicated local section that are homegrown in their communities or particularly important to their market. Stores also have a wide array of Made in Canada products that have full distribution and are part of Save On Foods regular planograms and product mix.



Dan Hansen, vice-president, centre of store, Save-On Foods



CANADIAN COMPANIES HAVE BEEN INCREDIBLY INNOVATIVE IN MAKING MORE OF THESE PRODUCTS AVAILABLE FOR CUSTOMERS TO BUY, HE ADDS. BASED ON CUSTOMER DEMAND, SUPPLY CHAIN CONTINUITY, ECONOMIC PRESSURE AND PATRIOTISM, THE DEMAND FOR LOCAL WILL CONTINUE TO GROW; THE OPPORTUNITIES ARE ENDLESS.



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Q&A with CEO John Ricci



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Q: How can Digital Smart Labels™ address the issues around price updates?

A: Anyone who's ever worked in retail knows that updating traditional paper labels involves a lot of time and coordination across departments. Not only is this task menial, but it also leaves room for pricing mistakes that can take a drastic toll on sales. Switching to Digital Smart Labels™ eliminates this entirely, improving in-store efficiency and productivity, and freeing up time for employees to focus on high impact tasks. This can include customer service, increasing product knowledge, or even bringing in experts like nutritionists to offer advice to consumers.

Q: How do they integrate with an existing POS system?

A: Our software can be integrated seamlessly with any modern POS or ERP system. At a high level, we integrate into the customer's system through authorization tokens and RESTful API, and if needed, we can work with flat files like JSON or any excel format. Once we have access to the data, we can parse the data in the system and transform it into the readable format you see on the labels.

Q: Can they be customized to the individual retailer's needs?

A: Yes, Digital Smart Labels™ can display 8 colours as well as any type of image, font, QR code, or even language. Our software is engineered and designed in house to include a variety of features to implement whatever our customers are looking to do.

Q: How does the solution help with marketing and promotion?

A: Digital Smart Labels™ allow retailers to leverage big data and integrate dynamic marketing tactics into their business strategy to respond to competitor activities, activate in-store campaigns and promotions, or even stimulate interest in a specific product. For example, if it's snowing outside, you can use the label to promote salt and windshield fluid in real time to increase sales.

Q: What about consumer engagement?

A: A retail store is never just a store; it's a chance to bring your brand and products to life. Digital Smart Labels™ have changed the way customers interact with retailers at the shelf, which has long been a static point of contact for customers. For example, consumers can scan the QR code to learn more about a wine they're interested in trying, such as the vineyard where the grapes are grown, cheese pairings, or a video explaining more about its fermentation process.

Q: How secure is the software?

A: Software can be deployed either within our customer's infrastructure or under our own cloud server. If they choose the former, they are in control of security. If they chose the latter, we have full control over security and keep their data safe through secure certificates, configurable firewalls, and a disaster recovery system.



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GOING FOR GOLD

OWNED AND OPERATED IN WESTERN CANADA, FEDERATED CO-OPERATIVES LIMITED FOCUSES ON BUILDING LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS WITH LOCAL SUPPLIERS AND MANUFACTURERS, ALONG WITH DEVELOPING AN AWARD-WINNING, IN-STORE BRAND THAT HIGHLIGHTS WESTERN CANADIAN FOOD INNOVATION.

“Co-op is involved in food production in a way that other food retailers are not. In addition to being a food retailer, we also supply agricultural goods and services to producers, so we are working along side them to bring products from the farm to consumer’s fork,” explains Ron Welke, associate vice-president, food, adding all of the store’s fresh beef, pork, and poultry is Western Canadian, while produce departments have a large selection of local growth items.



Ron Welke, associate vice-president, food, Federated Co-operatives Limited



Many of Federated’s own Co-op Gold and Co-op Gold Pure products are also made right in Western Canada. The chain recently won four Grand Prix awards for new product innovation under the banner, which builds on an already extensive lineup of differentiated store brand products.

While there is only so much space in store, Welke says it’s easier than ever for local brands to get on shelf alongside theirs. In addition to publishing a Sell To Us guide that helps demystify the process, Co-op category management teams are accessible to assist local growers and producers with the listing process – continuing the commitment to bringing new Western Canadian innovation to the market.



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AN APPLE A DAY

WESTERN CANADIANS ARE GETTING TO SEE B.C. APPLES IN A DIFFERENT WAY THANKS TO FARMING KARMA, A UNIQUE SPARKING FRUIT SODA FARMED, MANUFACTURED, AND PACKAGED IN THE OKANAGAN VALLEY.



Avi Gill, owner, Farming Karma

Awarded Sobeys Most Innovated Product of the Year in 2020, each can features fresh, hand-picked B.C. fruit with no added sugar or preservatives.

Avi Gill's family has been farming apples and cherries in B.C. for 30 years, but they wanted to try something new with their crops by getting into more value-added fruit products. They hit the retail market with their apple soda in 2020, just before the pandemic. Gill says this really forced the new brand to think outside the box to ensure they were able to sustain their business. Along with opening up an online store, they began making local deliveries all over the Okanagan to bring sodas right to customers' doorsteps. They also continued to develop flavours — Berry, Cherry, Peach, and Pear — stamping their six pack of soda with a Buy BC logo on it, to give them leverage in the buy local movement.

"Overall it is difficult as a small business and a new business to establish yourself in a competitive beverage market," states Gill. "However, I believe retail stores are greatly inclined to give local businesses, like ours, a shot at being in their grocery stores. In addition, retail stores have given us, and other suppliers, importance and placed our products in attractive locations. This is very much appreciated, especially in difficult times during the pandemic."

MAKING THE GRADE

OFTEN THERE'S NOT MUCH PEOPLE ACROSS THE COUNTRY CAN AGREE ON, BUT BUYING CANADIAN EGGS COMES CLOSE.

According to the Egg Farmers of Canada, 93 per cent of shoppers feel it's important that the eggs they buy come from Canada. The pandemic heightened this even further, with nearly 2/3 of people saying they are MORE inclined to purchase Canadian eggs.

Launched in late 2019, the Egg Farmers of Canada's Egg Quality Assurance™ (EQA™) certification mark provides consumers with a quick visual way to identify Made in Canada eggs that are produced according to strict food safety and animal welfare standards. Sarah Caron, director of marketing and nutrition at Egg Farmers of Canada, states more Canadians are recognizing the symbol and looking for it in their grocer's egg case.

Several grocery chains, including Federated Co-op, have adopted the mark on their private label cartons; there is no cost to license the EQA™ symbol. Caron adds the organization is working on a variety of ways to help retailers customize promotion of the quality assurance program, from in-store signage to online marketplace information.

Being that eggs are an all-season, staple item, there's always opportunities to profile Canadian eggs usage in-store. Caron points to the latest Pinterest trend — breakfast charcuterie boards which pairs meats, cheese, and fruits with pre-peeled, hard-boiled Canadian eggs.



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* Based on Nielsen Market Data, 52 weeks ending April 24th 2021



Stephanie Goyette, head of Taste Elevation Business Unit, Kraft Heinz Canada

HOW SWEET IT IS

Ferrero Canada's Canadian-made products — Tic Tac, Ferrero Rocher, and Nutella — play in important categories — whether it's providing joy within confectionery or a staple like the breakfast spreads. The comfort and trust these domestic brands bring has been bolstered even more in the past year.

"We know that Canada has one of the safest, most trusted food systems and that's important when you want the best for your family," states BJ Hamilton, vice-president of sales for Ferrero Canada, pointing to Nutella as an example. "It has seen significant increases during the past year because our consumers know it's always great-tasting, consistent, and made with the highest quality ingredients in our plant in Brantford, Ontario."

Hamilton adds a lot of ingredients like milk, sugar, wheat, and even some packaging material, are sourced domestically, and they are continually looking for ways to create a more integrated, end-to-end supply chain. For example, when Ferrero Canada launched Nutella & Go! a few years ago, the company encouraged the supplier of the breadsticks to open a factory in Brantford. "Now, in addition to the Nutella being made in Canada, so are the breadsticks," he laughs.

The company has increase the visibility of the Made in Canada messaging with Nutella in particular (some specially marked jars feature the "Nutella" inside a maple leaf). Hamilton says based on their research, they know 80 per cent of Nutella consumers see the Made in Canada call-out on labels as compelling. They are also working with retailers to ensure all their full suite of domestic products are featured in Made in Canada flyers and feature in-store signage.



BJ Hamilton, vice-president of sales Ferrero Canada

ICONICALLY CANADIAN

Kraft Heinz is a global company but their iconic brands that Canadians love, including Kraft Peanut Butter, KD, Philadelphia Cream Cheese, and, as of this summer, Heinz Ketchup, are proudly prepared in Canada.

"What we have seen over the past year is that Canadians are looking for brands they love and trust," says Stephanie Goyette, head of Taste Elevation Business Unit, Kraft Heinz Canada. "We've also seen the buy local/prepared in Canada movement increasing in importance with our retailers. We see increased call-outs of locally prepared, proudly supported products featured in their weekly flyers, including our Kraft Heinz brands."

This is underscored by the company's Proudly Prepared in Canada program, which executed roughly 40,000 POS materials in 4,200 stores across the country in the latest edition of the program.

Recently, Kraft Heinz Canada received Aliments du Québec (ADQ) certification to let Quebec consumers know many of their favourites are prepared in their home province. The company's employees at the Montreal plant have been working 24/7 since the pandemic began to ensure those products are also available to consumers nationwide.

Goyette states the company's procurement team looks to source locally where they can to make those trusted Canadian products. "In 2020 alone, for example, we used about 176 million pounds of local Leamington tomatoes to make favourites like Classico pasta sauce, Heinz Tomato juice and Heinz Beans," she says, adding well-

informed consumers who consider where a product is prepared as part of their purchasing decision will help the Made/Prepared in Canada movement continue.

QUITE THE CATCH



Lagoon Seafood's Business Resource Manager Michael Cheaib

With Canada's long coastlines and ample freshwater, it's no wonder more Canadian seafood products are in high demand internationally and at home. For Lagoon Seafood, which sources some of their fish on Canada's East Coast, this has led to a recent \$10 million investment to expand their Quebec plant in order to offer new ranges of retail products across the country.

"Major grocers, as much as local ones, have a bigger appetite for local products and strive to deliver a premium product at a reasonable price. Canadian grocers have done a great job sharpening their product specifications which makes it much easier for manufacturers to follow along with the trends," states Lagoon Seafood's Business Resource Manager Michael Cheaib, pointing to high-demand fresh products such as salmon, haddock, and scallops, and value-added items like their Blue Tide brand seasoned salmon tartare.

Cheaib states the company works alongside retailers in order to understand their consumers and build product offerings around the needs of the market. The information flows both ways, he says, with Lagoon providing retailers with information about how their Canadian seafood products, including how they are caught and produced; accurate information to drive Made in Canada product growth.

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GETTING SCOOPED UP

COVID resulted in being the best year for Betterwith Ice Cream, laughs Lori Joyce, founder and owner of the B.C.-based company. With the cold comfort food's consumption at an all time high, frozen aisles were bare of customer's favourite brands, forcing them to try Joyce's real cream, all-natural product offering.

"What they discovered organically, was a Canadian-made product that was better. This generated organic traction and growth, and the once loyal fans of Häagen Dazs emailed me thanking me for the better, Canadian-made brand," she says.

As a small brand needing to stand out in a hyper-competitive category, Joyce states being able to get information to customers always helps. "I understand the importance of building a brand that delivers not only 100% on taste, but 100% on accountability and transparency. I think today's customer is yearning for this, and I am there to support and educate the customer on why we do what we do and better."

She adds more than ever before, there are several cost-effective ways for Canadian entrepreneurs to connect with customers, share their why, engage directly with buyers, retailers and customers, and leverage this connection to drive awareness.

"I also think, like so many of my fellow Canadian founders, we were made for this. We all own and demonstrate the values that today's customers are looking to bring into their homes — reliable, safe, honest, and trusted people making 'better' Canadian products."



Lori Joyce, founder and owner, Betterwith Ice Cream

BUILT FOR CANADA

In grocery stores often the focus is on where the food has come from. But, what can be as equally as important is the origin of the equipment that keeps that food fresh, frozen, and on display.

Arneg Canada manufactures merchandising coolers and freezers to suit retailers' needs for produce, dairy, meats, prepared foods, and beverages in a self-serve or service environment. Henry Friedmann, regional manager, Western Canada, for the company says there's been a growing interest from retailers in buying their Made in Canada equipment.

"Knowing that our products are manufactured in Canada has always been of importance to Canadians and is evidenced by our designation as the largest refrigerated display case manufacturer in Canada," he states. "It shows the retailers' customers that they are supporting their Canadian economy."

Buying Canadian also offers retailers economical value, ease and flexibility of working with a valued domestic partner, and reduces their carbon footprint. He adds, more than ever Canadian businesses need to work together to support each other and their communities.

Buying Canadian also offers retailers economical value, ease and flexibility of working with a valued domestic partner, and reduces their carbon footprint. He adds, more than ever Canadian businesses need to work together to support each other and their communities.



Henry Friedmann, regional manager, Western Canada, Arneg Canada

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IF YOU'RE CRAVING IT, SOMEONE IN CANADA HAS PROBABLY PRODUCED IT. THIS IS NOT ONLY GOOD FOR THE CONSUMER, BUT GOOD FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AS WELL — ANOTHER BENEFIT TO BUYING LOCAL THE CUSTOMERS ARE BEGINNING TO UNDERSTAND.

"People are starting to realize that we don't have to leave a carbon footprint by buying things made in other countries, to get what we are looking for," says Gabi Latka of Crofters Food Ltd., an organic jam and fruit spread company based in Parry Sound, Ontario. Sourcing only organic, GMO-free fruits, like wild blueberries from Quebec, the company focuses on responsible farming and integrated sustainable processes, such as reduced water consumption from onsite membrane bioreactor technology that cleans

process water of organic carbohydrates with microorganisms and filtration and returns 97 per cent back to the plant to be reused for non-product use, reverse geothermal cooling technology and recycling 99 per cent of raw material packaging.



Gabi Latka
Crofters Food Ltd.

Their sustainability mission and Ontario-based production is something Latka says they would like to focus

on moving forward with in-store promotion. "There are still many consumers, who have either never heard of us before, or think we are an American company," she explains, adding she would love to see directories and/or websites developed, showcasing Made in Canada products and where people can buy them. "I'm sure there is way more than anyone of us would think."

BACK TO SCHOOL

By Robin Brunet

September

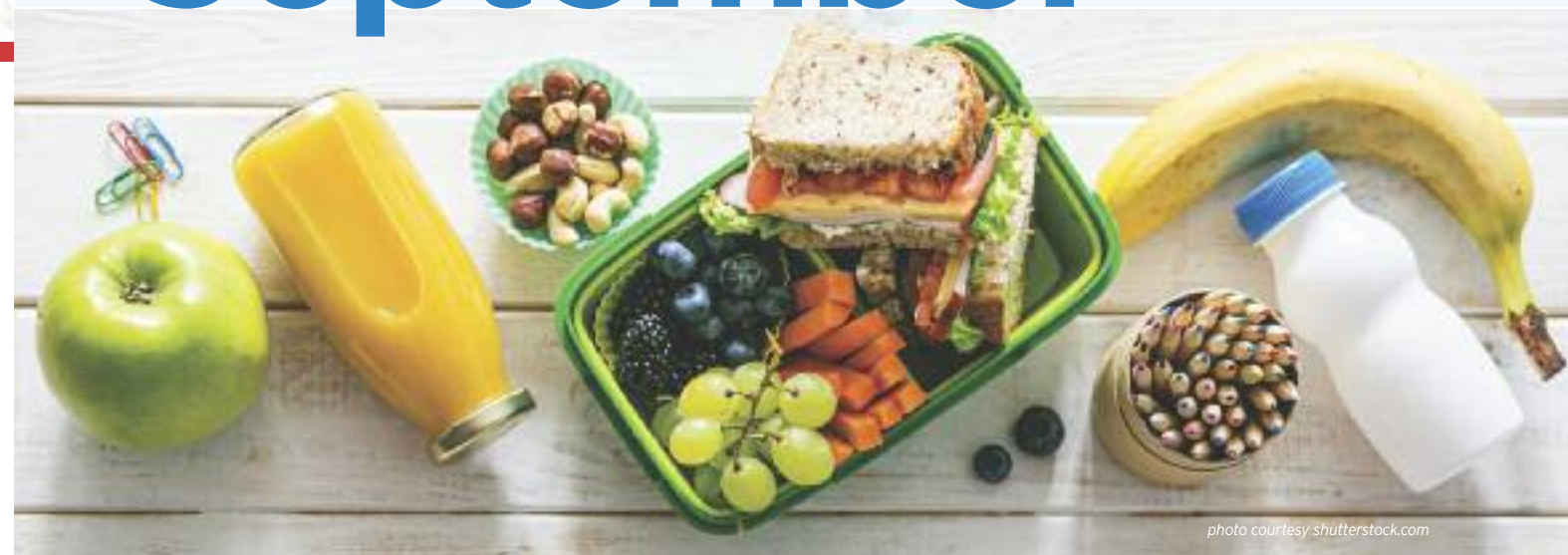


photo courtesy shutterstock.com

Traditionally, the back to school season has been a merchandising bonanza for grocers, with several weeks prior to the September date spent heavily promoting anything that can be crammed into a lunchbox.

But the dynamics of the event have changed, partly due to Covid, and also due to natural evolution, with parents last year spending less on supplies overall than in 2019: \$727 per household versus \$919, according to a Retail Council of Canada Back-to-School Shopping Survey.

Derek Dewolf, vice-president, fresh & store operations at Quality Foods says, "As an event, back to school is not as grandiose as it used to be, so we take a slightly different and far more effective

Strategies

BACK TO SCHOOL MERCHANDISING AND PRODUCTS HAVE CHANGED — FOR THE BETTER

approach to promotions."

Specifically, Quality Foods does not conduct any advance marketing, and during the actual back to school week it confines itself to flyer teasers. Then, during the second and third weeks, "We hit harder, when kids are settled in and parents are less hectic," says Dewolf. "We use large cardboard displays such as the Kraft schoolbus and cross-merchandise as many items as possible, such as Sunrype Apple Juice with fresh produce."

Rachelle Hinchey, senior associate category manager, shelf stable meals, Kraft Heinz Canada, says, "Having new innovations featured on out-of-aisle displays can spark excitement, such as Paw Patrol Kraft Dinner. Additionally, featuring meal solutions for busy parents goes a long way, such as merchandising Classico Pasta Sauce alongside pasta noodles."

Jenna Zylber, Kraft Heinz Canada's category marketing director, cheese & spreads, adds, "To drive basket size for



retailers, Kraft Heinz Canada is bringing programs to market that better connect the centre of the store with bakery and the outside perimeter through shopper-focused breakfast displays and solutions."



(Above and right) Quality Foods hits harder with back to school during the second and third weeks after kids are back.

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- DONE RENOVATIONS?
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- CELEBRATED AN ANNIVERSARY?
- REBRANDED?



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Helping this along are new products such as Kraft Hazelnut Spread, made with no palm oil and low in saturated fat and available in two varieties: 45% less sugar, and Crunchy.

Barb Grant, director of marketing at Sun-Rype Products, notes that “POS and ready to display pallets are a great way of adding impact and driving volume.” She adds that “Back to school can be celebrated throughout the store. For instance, our SunRype Snack Racks, which contain all of our snack products, are often located in or near the produce section, making it especially easy for parents to choose from an array of singles or variety packs.”

Providing a healthy diet remains the top priority for parents. Hence, according to Grant, “Fruit to Go and Fruitsource are 100 per cent fruit snacks and bars with no artificial flavors, colour and no preservatives. Also, all SunRype snacks are nut free, gluten free and vegan, so they are safe to take to any school or group setting.”

Marléne Hins, vice-president of marketing and innovation, A. Lassonde Inc., says of the juice category, “Moms

are looking for lower sugar options for their kids and there are a range of options in the Lassonde beverage portfolio, including SunRype 60% Less Sugar. Our R&D department worked hard to formulate these products so they have the taste and texture of 100 per cent juice, with less sugar and no artificial sweeteners.”

Similarly, Oasis HydraFruit contains 60 per cent less sugar and at least 50 per cent less calories than the leading regular fruit juice blends, with no added sugar, stevia or artificial sweetener, and a range of delicious flavours to choose from.

The makers of the perennial back to school snack, Sesame Snaps, have brought from Europe a new bar packed with the power of sesame seeds and grains to satisfy sweet tooth and fuel busy bodies. The new Sesame Snaps Seeds & Grains bars are super charged with highly nutritious sesame seeds and puffed grains including amaranth, millet, quinoa and buckwheat. Gluten free, they are made with natural ingredients and contain no artificial flavours, colours or preservatives — and are a good source of fibre and Omega-6.

The four New Sesame Snaps Seeds & Grains bars are joining the family of five tasty flavour combinations of Sesame Snaps – quinoa, chia, vanilla, honey or classic Sesame Snaps will be available at Whole Foods, Save on Foods as well as other retailers just in time for back to school.

Cathline James, CEO and founder of Wise Bites, calls back to school “Our number one season, and our soft mini cookies that are free from the top 11 allergens are especially popular with parents seeking to optimize their children’s nutrition, or for children with specialized diets.”

Wise Bites is currently expanding its functional food options, and James says that “Two great seasonal cookie lines will be introduced in the fall.”

Back to school remains a great opportunity for retailers to maximize sales. In addition to cross merchandising, signage, and product demonstrations, they should also use their websites, social media, and direct emails to connect with parents, to offer promotions and contests — and keep them coming back to shop. ●

SALTY SNACKS

By Anne-Marie Hardie

Salty snacks are by far the most popular type of snack food in Canada, with sales reaching over two billion Canadian dollars. Within this product category, potato and corn snack products are consumers’ favourites, according to Statista.

“Salty snacks are the number one snacking item for Canadians, with 77 per cent of individuals reporting having ate them within the last month,” says Neysa Davies, senior marketing insights manager, Tree of Life.

Although salty snacks are primarily an indulgent food, consumers are looking for that permissible indulgence providing the space for healthier alternatives to enter the market. PepsiCo is one company that offers a portfolio of low sodium products. “These products give consumers the great taste they love and expect with lower sodium relative to the original offering,” says Scott Stewart, senior director region sales development, PepsiCo Foods, Canada.

The salty snack category has also expanded to include better-for-you alternatives, including functional ingredients and keto, plant-based, and gluten free products. “Snacking is very much



Functional and Flavourful

Consumers’ Demand for Innovative Offerings Transforms the Salty Snack Section



photo courtesy shutterstock.com



The diversity in this category presents an opportunity for grocers to cross merchandize salty snacks throughout the store, including delis, barbecue, produce, and even adding side racks to the wine area to highlight occasions where shoppers could use these snack foods. “Bimbo Canada has seen tremendous success in cross-merchandising vehicles containing multiple categories, creating convenient, one-stop shops, for consumers while also helping grow the basket size for retailers,” says Riona Collier, marketing director for Salty Snacks. Developing

“INNOVATION IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT, AND GROCERS SHOULD ALWAYS KEEP SPACE FOR THAT.”

strong partnerships with their food manufacturers can also provide grocers with insights on the various occasions when salty snacks are being consumed. tied to emotions, so what shoppers are looking for are items that offer that permissible indulgence and when we add functional ingredients, it just makes it a little bit to indulge and continue to snack,” says Davies. The category has expanded to include products made from healthier oils, high-protein offerings, and functional seasonings, including turmeric and ginger.

Merchandizing a Diverse Portfolio

When choosing the products to showcase, grocers should consider both the various occasions where the product may be eaten and its packaging. “The colour of packaging has a huge impact on helping grab the consumers’ attention,” says Ashley Ehmann, cofounder, Twigz Pretzels. “The trend that has expanded how people are using snacks has been really interesting for us. You can use pretzels in a ton of different ways; it’s almost as if salty snacks have become a little classier.”

strong partnerships with their food manufacturers can also provide grocers with insights on the various occasions when salty snacks are being consumed.

Quest for New Flavours

Canadians are also looking for products that pique their curiosity, including manufacturers that are delivering new flavour experiences. This year, spice and dill, continue to dominate the market,



PRODUCT SHOWCASE

Elevate your Salty Snack Section

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GO MAPLE



This summer invite your customers to add a bit of Canadiana to their snack table with the unique maple leaf shapes of Cheetos Ketchup leaves.

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Invite your customers to indulge in a Canadian fan favourite, with the classic flavour of Doritos Ketchup Tortilla chips, available for a limited time.

GET IN THE GAME



Challenge your customers to take part in Lay's Flavour Face-Off, and experience Lay's take on some of their favourite flavours including White Cheddar, All Dressed and Sweet Chilli Heat.

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with products available in a range of flavours including jalapeno, ghost pepper, cayenne, spicy cheddar and spicy dill. “In 2020, hot and spicy flavours in the flavoured tortilla chips category were three times more popular than regular flavours,” says Coller. These new taste experiences have helped expand the number of salty snack occasions, with consumers adding their favourite snacks throughout the day. New forms, flavours and textures, shares Stewart, helps to elevate their snacking experience.

However, it can't be forgotten that there is still a large proportion of consumers that want salty snacks for comfort. “Innovation is extremely important, and grocers should always keep space for that,” says Davies. “But in recent months, consumers are going back to the familiar and I suspect that this trend will continue for another year or so.” For grocers, it is about balancing the shelf space to showcase these innovative products while also ensuring that those comfort products that consumers crave are easily accessible. ●

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PRODUCT SHOWCASE

Elevate your Salty Snack Section

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KETO CRAVING



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GO LOCAL

Made from Prairie lentils and real egg whites, Todd's Protein Crisps are crafted, seasoned, and shipped in Saskatchewan.



Winners Announced for 28th Annual Canadian Grand Prix New Product Awards

2020 new product trends reflect Canadians' continued interest in plant-based food products and an increase of in-home cooking. New specialty award recognized excellence in ethnic products.

Retail Council of Canada (RCC) has revealed the winners of the 28th Annual Canadian Grand Prix New Product Awards.

Twenty-five companies took home the coveted Canadian Grand Prix New Product Award for products they introduced into the Canadian market in 2020. Among the winners were established and new retailers, suppliers, boutique, and family-owned businesses from across Canada.

Some of the winners of the 28th Canadian Grand Prix New Product Awards receiving news of their win at the virtual Gala. (CNW Group/Retail Council of Canada)

RCC's Canadian Grand Prix New Product Awards is a prestigious annual competition of the best new grocery products. Becoming a Canadian Grand Prix Award winner is often a game changer for companies because of the extensive exposure to key retailers, buyers, and new consumers.

Five recipients also received Special Awards: AB World Food's Patak's was inaugural winner of the Excellence in Ethnic Product award for their Veggie Curries, Fruit d'or's Patience Fruit & Co. won the All-Canadian trophy for their Organic Dried Cranberries, No Added Sugar, Save-On-Foods won the Overall Consumer Value award for Western Family Ultimate Cheesecake Collection, Kraft Heinz's Maxwell House won the Innovation and Originality award for their compostable coffee pods, and Victory's Kitchen was recognized for Innovative Packaging for Soup's On Plant Based Soups.

“We are seeing Canadians spend more time at home in 2020 than ever before. They are craving products to prepare at home to satisfy their need for variety. They are looking for new taste experience from dishes made with high quality ingredients that appeal to various taste preferences.” said Diane J. Brisebois, President and CEO of Retail Council of Canada. “We are always impressed with how the winning products reflect the changing interests of Canadians.”

Chef and chief jury chair Marcus Von Albrecht oversaw the judging panel. From 124 products that scored at least 70 per cent on quality and innovation, only 40 products received the prestigious recognition as Canadian Grand Prix New Product Award winners.

Multiple-category winners included: Metro Inc, Walmart Canada, Federated Cooperatives Limited, Save-on-Foods, Sobeys Inc, Victory's Kitchen, Bonduelle Canada, Fruit d'or, Reynolds Consumer Products Canada and Kraft Heinz.

To view the complete list of this year's winners, visit: rccgrandprix.ca/winners.



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28TH
CANADIAN GRAND PRIX
NEW PRODUCT AWARD
WINNERS



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28TH ANNUAL RETAIL COUNCIL OF CANADA
CANADIAN GRAND PRIX
NEW PRODUCT AWARDS

Recognizing food, non-food and private label categories, 44 winners in all from dairy to personal care.

NATIONAL BRANDS

Food
Winners

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Oroweat Organic 22 Grains & Seeds Bread
Bimbo Canada

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BEVERAGES



Maxwell House Compostable Coffee Pods
Kraft Heinz Canada

CONDIMENTS & SAUCES



Heinz Mayoracha Sauce
Kraft Heinz Canada

CONFECTIONERY & SHELF STABLE DESSERTS



Chunkies Energy Bites
Theobroma Chocolat

DAIRY (Milk, Yogurt, Cheese & Spreadables)



Gay Lea Specialty Butters
Gay Lea Foods Co-Operative Ltd.

DELI MEATS AND CHEESES



Balderson Naturel Cheese Slices
Lactalis Canada

FROZEN OR REFRIGERATED PREPARED FOODS & ENTREES



SOUP'S ON Plant-Based Soups
Victory's Kitchen

FRUIT, VEGETABLE & PRODUCE (Fresh/Refrigerated/Frozen)



Arctic Gardens' Pesticide Residue Tested Frozen Vegetables
Bonduelle Canada

SHELF STABLE PREPARED & ENTREES



Bonduelle Mini Cans
Bonduelle Canada

SNACK (Savory)



Hardbite Potato Chips Explorer Pack
Hardbite

SNACK (Sweet)



Patience Fruit & Co Organic Dried Cranberries, No Added Sugar
Fruit d'Or

NATIONAL BRANDS

Non-Food
Winners

APPLIANCE & COOKWARE



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GENERAL MERCHANDISE



Papyrus - Hello Kitty Patch Carlton Cards

HEALTH CARE - OVER THE COUNTER



Nutrameltz Orally Dissolving Supplements / Nutrameltz Inc.

PAPER, PLASTIC & FOIL



Reynolds Kitchens Unbleached Compostable Parchment Paper
Reynolds Consumer Products Canada Inc.

PERSONAL CARE



Live Clean® Body Lotion
Hain-Celestial Canada, ULC.

PET NEEDS



Purina® Pro Plan® LiveClear™
Nestle Purina

PRIVATE LABEL

Food
Winners

BAKERY FRESH (Par-Baked)



Co-op Gold Croissant Loaf
Federated Co-operatives Limited

BEVERAGES



Life Smart Organic Kombucha
Metro Inc.

CONDIMENTS & SAUCES



Life Smart Naturalia Grapefruit & Pink Pepper Dressing
Metro Inc.

CONFECTIONERY & SHELF STABLE DESSERTS



Selection Premium Fruit Jelly Box
Metro Inc.

Recognizing food, non-food and private label categories, 44 winners in all from dairy to personal care.

DAIRY (Milk, Yogurt, Cheese & Spreadables)



Delicious Kitchen Original Coconut Milk Beverage
Walmart Canada

DELI MEATS AND CHEESES



Co-op Gold PURE Cheese
Federated Co-operatives Limited

DESSERTS (Fresh, Refrigerated or Frozen)



Western Family Ultimate Cheesecake Collection
Save-On-Foods Limited Partnership

Frozen or Refrigerated PREPARED FOODS & ENTREES



Longo's Chickpea Veggie Burgers
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Refreshing Your Shopper Insights



Sue Nicholls is the founder of "Category Management Knowledge Group", an online, accredited category management training company.

Over the past 18 months we have experienced unprecedented changes in consumer and shopper behaviour — their work and home life, their needs and their shopping behaviors have all shifted. A new shopper is emerging and at this point we are uncertain which behaviors have changed permanently and are new habits and which ones they are going to revert back to their old ways. In net, a "new normal" is evolving and transformation is necessary. Many traditional brands are struggling today because they are not understanding the shopper — including both retailers and suppliers. The changing shopper, technology, data and environment have outpaced many organizations. The connection to this rapidly

changing consumer and shopper is paramount for successful organizations in the future.

How do you relate your business results (sales, profit) to shopper behaviour? There is a tendency to look at our business purely from a volumetric perspective — with share point changes, indices and growth numbers, and then we tie it to the tactics — or changes in promotion, price, assortment, shelf and shopper marketing. In shopper panel data, we can dissect sales into two very important measures — "penetration" (or % of households buying) and buying rate" (or \$/household or \$/buyer). Multiply these two numbers together to get total sales for your business. By looking at these two simple measures you can start to get a much better

perspective on how the shopper is changing their behavior, which is ultimately driving your sales results.

How have you refreshed your understanding of your shopper this year?

In 2021, we should not go back to the “old way” of looking at our shopper nor can we assume our shopper and their behaviors are the same as pre-pandemic. Not only do our category (consumer) decision trees need to be updated, market research needs to be refreshed, and we need to analyze and track our most recent shopper data to understand their new behaviors, who they are, and reflect this new shopper into decisions and recommendations that we make.

UNDERSTAND CHANGING SHOPPER BEHAVIOUR

To understand changing shopper behavior, you should drill into detailed shopper behavior data for your categories from panel data. Many consumer goods categories experienced strong numbers over the course of the pandemic — the shelves were wiped clean from pantry loading. Many categories experienced unprecedented growth or loss in penetration (or % of households buying), purchase size, purchase frequency and buying rate. And this resulted in significant gains or losses in dollar sales and profit for many organizations (remember that penetration multiplied by buying rate equals dollar sales).

These massive swings in numbers are now in our historical databases from 2020 — including the data that we track. And now that we are coming out of the pandemic, we will see (or are already seeing) some huge swings in point changes and indexes and % changes vs year ago.

We need to drill into the most important behavioural data at a more granular level to include:

- 1 **Product groupings** – drill into your category to understand most important Shopper segments or hierarchies identified from your category decision tree.
- 2 **Geographies** – compare results to total markets, regions, formats and banners.
- 3 **Time periods** – look at different time from a 12-week, 24-week and 52-week time period vs year ago and start understanding shifts from both a short- and long-term perspective. You should also be looking at monthly trends for penetration & buying rate and drilling into product groupings of particular interest.

KNOW YOUR SHOPPER

Panel data has come a long way — and there is an opportunity to know our heaviest category shoppers in a lot more detail. Who are they? What brands and subcategories have the heavy and loyal buyers? How are they shifting?

When we drill into the demographic data, we even get more juiciness out of the data. Demographic data is

important to look at from different perspectives with purpose. For example, my category or subcategory or brand may have segments that target specific generations (Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X and Boomers) — where buying behaviors are very different across these buyer groups. I can get a lot of insights into the different generations and look for demographic shifts since the pandemic, once again drilling into Geography and Product Groups for deeper insights (including competitive). Make sure you include a combination of % of households by demographic group (to understand the size of each demographic segment), an index vs all category households, and an index vs all category dollars for a true understanding of who the shopper is. If you do not look at these three measures together you are limiting your insights.

Once you complete a deep dive to understand changing shopper behavior and knowing your shoppers and how they are changing, you can start to ask more detailed questions to your shoppers through some Shopper Research. These questions should answer the “why” in the areas of your data that you cannot explain. There are some much quicker and cost-effective ways to get these insights to understand more relevant “why” types of questions related to a specific business issue or opportunity that you identify.

REMEMBER THE SHOPPER IN YOUR WORK

No matter the work that you do — whether you are in a role in category management in retail or CPG, shopper insights, trade marketing, shopper marketing or sales — you need to incorporate a deeper shopper understanding into your work and your decision-making. We cannot go back to the way we used to do things. I challenge you to think about some ways to improve your approach.

Shopper insights is a common interest for retailers and suppliers as it relates to category management — and for some organizations, the primary place for collaboration and deeper understanding of shopper insights. Our work and decisions and recommendations need to reflect the shopper, from category decision making to strategy to reducing leakage and building category sales and profit to all your analytics — you need to remember the shopper! ●

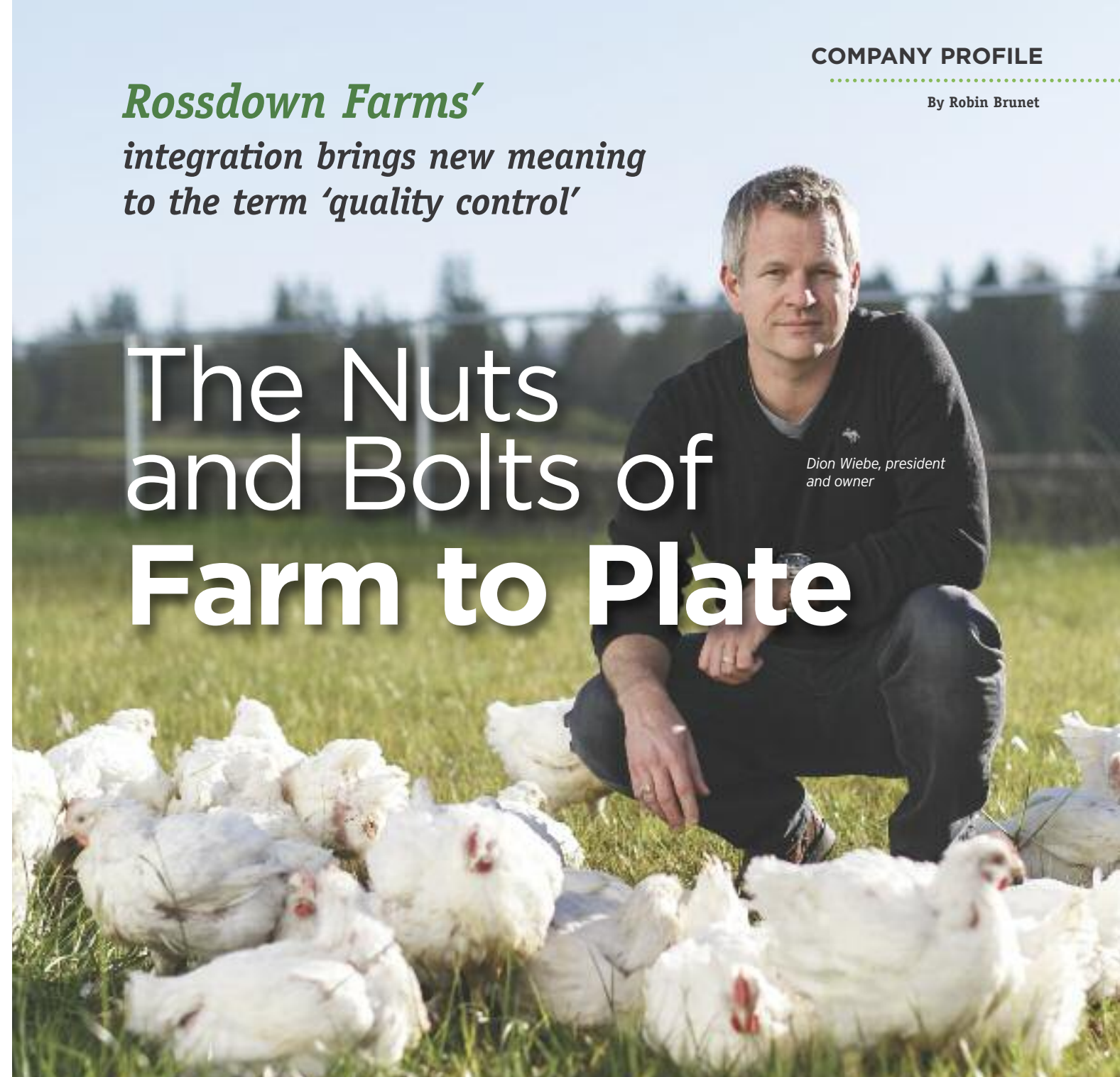
How to Move Forward with a Refreshed Shopper Approach

- 1 Complete a “Shopper Understanding” review for your business and share learnings internally.
- 2 Uncover / invest in new insights to better understand the “why” for your most important (and well articulated) Shopper segments.
- 3 Share shopper data and insights broadly across the organization. Everyone needs to understand the shopper from the same vantage points. NO SILOS!
- 4 Track shopper behavior and insights in 2021 and stay in touch with your shoppers and their changing needs as we come out of the pandemic.

Rosstown Farms’ integration brings new meaning to the term ‘quality control’

The Nuts and Bolts of Farm to Plate

Dion Wiebe, president and owner



Doing things differently in an industry as well established and heavily regulated as food processing is extremely difficult: it takes a strong vision and considerable patience, but the outcome can be extremely beneficial to retailers and consumers — and such is the case with Rosstown Farms & Natural Foods, located in B.C.’s fertile Fraser Valley.

Rosstown is one of very few companies in Canada that is fully integrated in providing consumers with a true farm-to-plate eating experience. “We’re farmers who got into processing,” explains Rosstown President and Owner Dion Wiebe. “That may sound straightforward, but we had to clear a lot of hurdles in order to achieve the degree of integration we were aiming for.”



The free range birds are allowed to wander through the barn and outdoors, and the milling division produces nutritionally balanced rations according to the growth stage and type of bird.

Rosstown provides premium quality poultry products, including broiler chickens, and turkeys. Rosstown Farms breeds the eggs, hatches the chicks, and feeds and grows the poultry. The birds are then processed by Rosstown Natural Foods and marketed for grocery stores and supply

chains — and because this is a federal plant, Rosstown ships chicken and turkey around the world.

Rosstown's ability to maintain exceptionally high quality standards at every stage is something retailers are taking increasing notice of. "We've been integrated since 2007, and while our products in general occupy space to medium retail shelf space, we have significant exposure in stores that specialize in health and all-natural, such as Whole Foods, Save-On Foods, Choices Markets, Nesters and in Alberta — Calgary Co-op, Community Natural Foods and Blush Lane," says Wiebe.



Equally impressive is that contrary to processing innovation usually being achieved by newcomers, Rosstown is a fourth generation farm — and it was Wiebe's father, Dan, who first envisioned full integration, back in the late 1980s and long before anyone could have anticipated how in-demand farm-to-plate would eventually become.

Rosstown's origins date back to a small farming operation belonging to Wiebe's grandfather, Aaron; the business evolved into a poultry farm under Dan's leadership in the late 1960s. By the late 1980s, Dan actively expressed his desire to gain more control of the product that ultimately made its way to grocery stores and restaurants. "Back then, we were a typical farm that sold eggs to the hatchery,



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TRANSFORMING FOOD PROCESSING





Equally impressive is that contrary to processing innovation usually being achieved by newcomers, Rosssdown is a fourth generation farm — and it was Wiebe's father, Dan, who first envisioned full integration.

the hatchery would give us back the chicks, we would raise the chicks then sell them to processors," recalls Wiebe. "So, integration was about controlling our own destiny in addition to controlling quality, and it was a huge undertaking. It wasn't until I finished studying agriculture and poultry at the University of the Fraser Valley that I strategized and began implementing dad's concept."

Wiebe prefers not to dwell on the bureaucratic red tape involved in becoming a processor, or on the fact that integration wasn't favoured by industry players trying to protect their own market share: "Obviously it was a challenge, but one with a positive outcome."

Expanding operations involved building a feed mill and hatchery on the Wiebe farm in Abbotsford in the early

2000s. This was followed by the building of a processing plant in 2007. And because raising turkeys became part of the integration model, Wiebe in 2016 acquired a farm in B.C.'s Similkameen Valley, which provided the ideal dry climate for raising free range turkey that is raised without antibiotics and one of the very few Certified Humane and Global Animal Partnership certified farms in Canada.

Of the latter endeavour, Wiebe says, "The seasonal market for turkey is shrinking and regular consumption continues to grow thanks to its popularity as a value-added product and a source of protein-rich lean meat that is now available fresh 52 week a year."

Wiebe also went through the steps necessary to make his integrated business halal certified by the BC Muslim

Association. "We saw a need in the marketplace back in 2007," he says. "Halal was also an extension of us providing antibiotic — GMO-free chicken and turkey to the organic market."

Unsurprisingly, Rosssdown's staff are uncompromising in their humane care of animals, and as an example its organic chickens are rated Level Three by the Global Animal Partnership (the rating means the animal's environment provide numerous enrichments and outdoor access that mimic a natural environment). The free range birds are allowed to wander through the barn and outdoors, and the milling division produces nutritionally balanced rations according to the growth stage and type of bird.

Environmental measures are respected, such as storing manure in winter and the hatchery and processing plant being close to a sewer line in order to provide long-term wastewater disposal.

All divisions within Rosssdown Farms operate according to Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) regulations and have been Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) certified. Plus, automatic sanitizing stations clean every truck that comes on the property to prevent cross-contamination. It may sound like caution taken to the extreme, but Wiebe explains, "The avian influenza outbreak of 2004 brought about much stricter bio-security standards for disease prevention and we're scrupulous about maintaining them, to the point where nobody other than staff are allowed on our farms."

The task of physically expanding Rosssdown aside, Wiebe's biggest challenge in providing a true farm-to-plate product has been marketing. "As a farmer, building brand awareness doesn't come naturally to me," he says good-naturedly.



"It's been a steep learning curve, and I rely heavily on colleagues such as my marketing manager Morgan Duke and vice-president of sales and marketing Gerry Gibbs to guide that side of the business."

Continued growth as a company is entirely feasible, since Rosssdown is no stranger to acquisition: it acquired Island Farmhouse Poultry on Vancouver Island, the regionally-based Thomas Reid Farms to develop its organic chicken offerings, as well as Maple Hill Farms Specialty Chicken from Abbotsford. Of the latter Wiebe says, "They were farmers with over 40 years of experience who raised antibiotic free chickens according to strict humane standards, plus they had their own processing plant, and we became the owners' succession plan. Today they grow poultry for us, and we handle the processing and marketing."

"I expect we'll grow due to the ongoing need for premium products and convenience, and we see this with the rising popularity of our chicken and turkey parts as well as the



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home meal kits we put together for private label brands,” says Wiebe. “These value-added components, and possibly frozen offerings for specialty retailers, may be the key in our further Eastern Canadian expansion, having already gained a foothold in the prairies.”

But regardless of how big Rosssdown becomes, its commitment to quality will remain intact, due in no small way to it being a family-run business, with the fourth generation being Wiebe’s three children: a daughter currently attending university works in the company’s accounting department during summer, and a son whose passion for animals has led him to become an assistant manager in the hatchery. “My youngest doesn’t know what exactly to do yet, but maybe he’ll find an area of interest within the business,” says Wiebe.

One thing is certain: fulfilling his father’s dream has been a source of pride for Wiebe. He concludes, “We’ve just scratched the surface as farmer/processors, and there’s lots of directions we can grow in. So in that regard we’re a new business, which is invigorating considering just how far back our roots go.” ●

Regardless of how big Rosssdown becomes, its commitment to quality will remain intact, due in no small way to it being a family-run business, with the fourth generation being Wiebe’s three children:

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Thinking Inside and Outside the Box

The New Normal in Alberta's Food Industry

In December 2020, there were 1,627 grocery stores in Alberta. Combined with beverage stores the food retail sector took 20 per cent of total retail sales, showing an increase of five percent in the last quarter of the year. During the COVID-19 pandemic, restaurants had to restrict dining-in, consumers were forced to pick up/order in meals and cook more at home, and that meant an even bigger grocery shopping list for consumers.

Alberta Food First

As the pandemic progressed, so did the demand for local products as consumers looked to the food security of local businesses. Alberta is well positioned to supply these demands with more than 180 egg farmers, 250 family-owned and -operated chicken farms, and over 6,000 growers of pulses. Contributing \$9.2 billion in GDP and employing nearly 70,000 Albertans, agriculture is a key economic driver for post-COVID-19 recovery.

The Honourable Devin Dreeshen, Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, Alberta stated, "In 2020, agriculture was a bright light in Alberta's economy, and 2021 is off to an even better start. We saw farmers seeding well ahead of previous years with good moisture levels across most of the province. Pair this with the strong projected prices for crops and livestock and 2021 is shaping up to be a great year for farmers and ranchers."

There has never been a better time for food retailers to bring Alberta products to its customers. Last year, Sobeys launched its popular Alberta Box featuring 22 products produced locally, catering to customers looking for "Made in Alberta" and bringing awareness to companies trying to break into the consumer market.



Honourable Devin Dreeshen,
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Tightening the Budget Belt

Consumers will also continue to let go of branding and build new shopping behaviour and loyalties with increasing food prices. The annual Canada's Food Price Report 2021 predicts an overall food price increase of three to five per cent across the country, mainly in meat, vegetables and baked goods; however, Alberta is one of the few provinces with a below-average expected food price increase. Even still, it's going to cost more to feed a family of four in 2021 — as much as another \$700.

Empire Company Ltd. is responding to the resulting shift to value-based products and essentials with expansion of its FreshCo discount banner, revealing in May this year that the next three FreshCo locations will be in Alberta — two in Edmonton and one in Fort McMurray, confirming a total of 12 of its planned 65 locations in Western Canada will be in the province.

Bringing it Home

“With the outbreak of COVID-19, the pandemic created a pivotal opportunity for the online grocery market in Canada,” states Statista in Online Grocer Market in Canada, February 2021. “Between February and April 2020, food and beverage stores experienced a 107 per cent increase in e-commerce sales. Over 10 per cent of Canadians ages between 18 and 54 plan to order food online more regularly even when the pandemic is over. Such developments

present an exceptional growth opportunity for the online grocery market.”

In March 2021 Empire announced it has expanded its e-commerce offering Voilà to Alberta with the launch of “Voilà by Safeway Curbside Pickup. The service is now available at three Safeway store locations in Calgary and one in Edmonton with plans to expand to multiple Safeway locations across Alberta in the coming months.

The past year has seen an unprecedented rise of home-delivery grocery businesses such as SPUD, offering local, organic, and sustainable groceries sourced and delivered to customers in Calgary and Edmonton.



Sobeys' Alberta Box features 22 locally produced products.

Or the Organic Box, delivering a variety of seasonal, organic fruits and vegetables to the Edmonton area.

The Uproot Food Collective is made up of 70 vendors — 60 from Alberta — that together have found a way to reach



Voilà by Safeway Curbside Pickup is now available at three locations in Calgary, and one in Edmonton.



consumers through their online food store. Over the past year, Albertans have become more familiar and reliant on e-commerce and delivery, and the Collective's sales have tripled.

With this development and acceptance of online ordering platforms and delivery models, farmers and food processors are increasingly moving online to sell directly to consumers, and traditional food retailers are having to up their game in the connected world.

A Stronger Supply Chain

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought into focus the importance of food security, and the Alberta agri-food industry has a key role to play as an essential service.

Since the pandemic started, the food manufacturing sector in Canada has seen the loss of 40,000 jobs due to plants closing and lack of investment. “The impact of processing plant slowdowns and shutdowns were felt across the food supply chain, and our government stepped up to develop programs to



SPUD offers local, organic and sustainable groceries sourced and delivered to customers in Calgary and Edmonton.

support producers in a number of sectors including a \$37M cattle set-aside program and a \$4M hog set-aside program”, says Alberta Agriculture & Forestry.

Minister Dreeshan adds, “Our \$1.4 billion value-added strategy is well underway, attracting nearly \$900 million in value-added investments in the first two years, resulting in the creation of more than 2,100 jobs.”

Some of this investment money is going into supporting new start-ups looking to enter the value-added industry such as the fibre and plant-based protein processing facilities in Vegreville, putting \$25 million into expanding the Agrivalve Processing Business Incubator in Leduc, and leveraging the new \$30 million lending limit of the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation.

Meanwhile the population of Alberta has continued to grow slowly — 0.6 per cent as of June 2021, and as the province is already showing strong signs of economic recovery, this growth will increase. For the food industry, this is a double-edged sword. More people means more food sales, but meeting increasing demand while negotiating the roller coaster Alberta economy, new shopper trends, and higher prices overall won't be easy. ●

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BRITISH FOODS AROUND

By Melanie Franner

The market size of the specialty food stores industry in Canada is expected to increase 5.7 per cent to reach \$3.2 billion in 2021, according to an August 2020 IBISWorld report. This follows a 0.4 per cent decline per year on average between 2016 and 2021, which is a faster decline than the overall economy.

The industry report cites the level of household disposable income as a significant factor in determining sales, with consumers feeling more inclined to purchase goods outside of their staple dietary needs when the level of disposable income is on the rise.

Specialty foods, of course, cover the gamut — across multiple ethnicities and multiple product categories. But in Canada, British foods occupy a special position because of the country's historic connection to Britain, putting this one segment of the specialty foods market high on grocery retail's radar.

Eye on the pie

"Awareness is always a big factor in selling British foods," says Matt Riddell, vice-president food sales, TFB & Associates Limited. "Getting products on the shelf is critical, but potential customers need to know the product is available. It isn't always about price. Promotion is what brings the awareness."

With awareness comes sales. And according to industry experts, opportunity abounds.

"We see significant potential for continued growth in British foods," says Chuck Corrigan, business manager, C.B. Powell. "British foods have a strong heritage and tradition. This is driving demand for new 'foreign' brands, more variety and more quality brands sourced from the U.K."



Federated Co-operatives notes that British Confectionery are top-selling items for them.

(Inset) Lorry Noble, category manager, food department, Federated Co-operatives.



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Leading U.K. brand Naked Noodle is on trend with a tantalizing range of delicious Pan Pacific flavours in a "Better for You" healthier, single-serve format. The Asian-seasoned noodle brand is available from C.B. Powell in four varieties: Thai Style Sweet Chili; Chinese Style Chow Mein; Thai Style Green Curry; and Singapore Style Curry. The product uses natural ingredients, no artificial colours or preservatives, is vegetarian, and is low in fat, salt and calories.



A BRITISH TWIST

Think James Bond and his classic dry martini — shaken, not stirred — and you'll get a feel for how some Brits think about their cocktails. TFB & Associates hopes Canadians are just as particular, and that they will gravitate to its British Fever-Tree brand of premium mixers. To help promote the brand, the importer runs periodic price reductions at shelf, supported with in-floor flyers, with its retailers. Many retailers also initiate "out of section" product displays in high-traffic and high-visible areas within the store.



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Strong roots

Federated Co-operatives Limited (FCL) supports and supplies more than 275 fppd stores operated by local co-operatives across Western Canada. FCL carries a diverse offering that includes many ethnic foods from a range of nationalities.

"Mexican and Asian foods are really popular, but imported British items also sell extremely well," says FCL Category Manager, Lorry Noble, adding that British foods were added to the mix about three years ago. "British confectionery, chocolates in particular, are top-selling items for us."

Eric McLean, owner of Nanaimo-based McLean's Specialty Foods, also caters to a distinctive customer base.

"We have a strong base of 'foodies', people who have travelled a lot and have acquired a taste for more specialized foods," explains McLean. "We also have a large British and South African market. But our number one draw is probably our cheese. We have one of the largest selections of cheese on the island."



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photo courtesy Prairie Melt



Eric McLean, owner, McLean's Specialty Foods with wife Sandy and some of their team (past and present).

McLean cites British meats (think haggis, real British bacon, black pudding and the like) as one of the store's staples, along with its selection of the store's own baked goods (think sausage rolls, steak and kidney pies, etc.).

And, of course, there is the traditional confectionery offering, like sticky toffee and chocolate.

McLean explains that the store came about by happenstance, but has since become a staple of the community. The key, he adds, is building strong, long-lasting relationships with customers.

The British way

Differentiating between selling traditional grocery items versus British skus may be one way to capture more consumer interest.

Corrigan suggests that grocers accentuate a product's authentic British origins and quality to get the most out of the category.

"Retailers also need to rely on their suppliers to provide unique character details that help distinguish the product," he adds.

Over at TFB & Associates, Riddell suggests that retailers line British products on the shelf with other competitive products to give consumers the best choices when shopping the category. But, most important, he emphasizes, is awareness.

"It is vital that retailers and importers work together to plan effective awareness campaigns to initiate trial," he says. "It's important to let consumers know that products exist."

"It's important to create a destination within your retail space to attract consumer footprint and familiarity with your imported assortment," says Brittany Picard, marketing manager, Morgan-Williams International. "Consumer trust for product availability and breadth of assortment is an important driver in ensuring repeat business. Focusing on the best-selling domestic market brands which are widely recognized is key. Developing a retail mix which reflects iconic high-demand brands while continuing to introduce new innovative products helps to generate more excitement for this category with existing consumers."

Trending British

Today's grocers offer a broad mix of product across many different categories. Whether it's to meet the demands of the "foodie" customer or of people seeking tastes of home, sales of specialty ethnic products are on the rise. And amidst this growing array of choices, British foods remain a continued staple.

British influence extends far and wide. And with it, ample opportunity for growth. ●

Dairy Alternatives Booming

Dairy alternatives are booming these days thanks to the growing cases of lactose-intolerance, ethical concerns on animal abuse in modern dairy farming methods, and the high nutritional benefits associated with alternative products.

The global dairy alternatives market is expected to reach USD 52.58 billion by 2028, according to a new report by Grand View Research, Inc. It is expected to expand at a CAGR of 12.5 per cent from 2021 to 2028. In North America, plant-based cheese sales alone increased by 95 per cent compared with the same period last year in the last week of April 2020.

This demand has encouraged more manufacturers to enter the market. One local example is Good Stock Foods of Edmonton, which began as a restaurant serving plant-based meals. The business is owned by the Robinson family where Michelle Byrt, a chef, has been the driving force behind product development. Parents Deborah Robinson and Brian Robinson, along with younger brother Alex Robinson, have all contributed to get the business off the ground.

The company's flagship product is Prairie Melt.

"I designed Prairie Melt to be a premium plant-based cheese that actually melts with superior flavour, texture and versatility," says Byrt. "This isn't your run of the mill plant-based cheese."

Made from only five whole-food ingredients, Prairie Melt is vegan, gluten free, soy free and nut free, making it a home run and staple for people with these food preferences and allergies.

With Prairie Melt's growing success in both foodservice and retail, it is now being produced in a Federally Inspected, HACCP approved facility and ready for nation-wide distribution. It is available in both foodservice (12kg) and retail (900g) formats and will stand out on store shelves and consumer's plates.

Brian Robinson says, "Retailers should consider adding more plant-based options because it will help to expand their customer base."

Prairie Melt, he says, can be substituted for dairy-based cheese when melted. "This makes it great for foods such



as burgers, pizzas or nachos. However, Prairie Melt also works great in a semi-melted form (crumbling raw and adding hot gravy) on dishes such as poutine where a cheese curd form is desirable. It can be spread, crumbled, piped or incorporated into any cheese recipe."

Prairie Melt has a nine-month shelf life unopened, and one month after opened. ●

**THIS IS
NOT FOR
YOU!**



**UNLESS YOU LOVE THE PLANET
UNLESS YOU ARE READY FOR CHANGE
UNLESS YOU WANT TO TRY OUR
PLANT-BASED RANGE
UNLESS YOU LOVE NEW GUESTS**

**MEATLESS
FARM**



photo courtesy shutterstock.com

CONVENIENT MEALS

By Carolyn Camilleri

The Evolution of Convenience



WHAT CONSUMERS WANT FROM CONVENIENT FOODS IS CHANGING, AND SUPPLIERS AND MANUFACTURERS HAVE SOME GREAT OPTIONS TO MEET THOSE EXPECTATIONS.

The trend towards convenient foods is by no means new, but it is evolving in new and interesting ways — so much so that “convenience” warrants a new definition.

“Convenience used to mean making a meal in 10 to 15 minutes instead of 30 minutes, but now we look at convenience not only in terms of prep time, but also in terms of ease of preparation and portability,” says René Puerta, brand manager of brand building and innovation (meals) for Kraft Heinz Canada. “So not only are consumers expectations for convenience becoming more demanding, but they are also living busier lives and wanting more convenience products.”

COVID-19 has played a role.

“The pandemic has shifted consumer buying trends in many ways, and one of the biggest trends has been the increased demand for convenience,” says Darcy

Peters, vice-president of sales at Meatless Farm Canada. “The introduction of e-commerce and curb-side pickup options were designed to protect consumers’ safety, and an added benefit has been the convenience that this provides; consumers no longer need to enter brick-and-mortar locations, and when they do, they are trying to get in and out of the store in the shortest amount of time possible.”

As Peters points out, this is a trend we expect to continue, and retailers that haven’t adopted these practices risk losing out to their competition.

A key part of the evolution of convenience is what people want to buy: they are looking for healthier options and alternatives, says Tony Morello, CEO of Zoglo’s Incredible Food Corp.

“Portability is the key and there are examples of great healthy snacks and convenient meals throughout

the grocery store today and in virtually every department,” says Morello.

Plant-based foods are of significant interest today, and as Morello points out, are expected to continue to garner high consumer interest due to the health and environmental benefits attached to consuming these products.

“Plant-based alternatives are here to stay, and they are extremely convenient as most require less preparation and cooking time than their traditional alternatives,” says Morello, noting that there is an even larger assortment of plant-based “Heat and Eat” and even “Grab and Go” options available now. “We would expect that as life begins to move back to a sense of normality after COVID, a very large portion of the population will find themselves time-starved and looking for convenient options.”

And research supports this shift in what people want from convenient foods.

What the Research Says

A Mintel report from May 2021 on meal planning states that health and convenience are the top areas considered when it comes to planning meals. While 71 per cent of Canadians target eating healthy foods most of the time, time-crunched consumers will naturally gravitate towards options that are easy and relatively quick. Those surveyed who indicated having less knowledge of cooking (69 per cent) prefer easy meals that are simple to make and easy to clean up, compared with 58 per cent overall.

“Those with basic cooking skills tend to skew younger (35 per cent are 18-34 versus 29 per cent overall) and thus tend to be less affluent (41 per cent of 18-34s have a household income of less than \$50,000 vs. 35 per cent overall), making lower-cost options more appealing.”¹

While health has long been important, the pandemic has intensified that focus. Mintel’s Global Food and Drink Trends for 2021 states, “As the singular focus of avoiding COVID-19 fades, people will make more serious commitments to reduce the health risks associated with unhealthy eating, become more interested in mindful and intuitive eating, and seek proof and incentives through the use of technology.”²

Combine this with another change in consumer behaviour related to the pandemic: we shop differently now. According to Mintel’s Grocery Retailing, which includes a look at the impact of COVID-19 Canada, 79 per cent of consumers say they aim to get in and out of stores as quickly as possible.

“Lost is the inclination to make spontaneous supplemental trips to the grocery store to pick something up last minute in favour of more spaced-out bigger baskets to prevent having to do the task as often (41 per cent shopped more than once a week in 2018 versus just 21 per cent in 2020).”³

In other words, shoppers are not browsing around as much, looking for ideas, which reduces the chance they will happen upon new products; however, suppliers and manufacturers have some suggestions.

Boosting Sales

Catching the attention of busy consumers, whether they are rushing through the store, shopping online, or looking at a flyer, means appealing to what matters most to them and often that’s time — or the lack of it.

“Retailers can really help themselves and their customers by promoting and educating consumers with ‘Time to Prepare’ tips such as dinner ready in 15 minutes or ‘Heat and Serve’ or ‘Ready To Eat’ options both in flyers and in store with proper signage,” says Morello, listing Zoglo’s Cutlets, Jumbo Franks, and Pub Style Tenders as quick easy plant-based meal and snacking solutions. “The great thing about convenience and portable foods for retailers is that they are usually more impulse and less price-sensitive in nature.”



Placement in the store is critical in aligning with consumer demand for convenience.

“All [Meatless Farm] products have been created to cook exactly like their meat counterparts, to ensure that consumers can easily swap out meat for a plant-based alternative in all of their favourite recipes — without compromising on taste or texture,” says Peters, adding that Meatless Farm’s products go from pan to plate in less than eight minutes from frozen. “In Canada, our products can be found merchandised in either the fresh meat case or in the



meat freezer section, depending on the size and volume of the specific store.”

Packaging plays a key role in capturing attention, and Kraft Heinz Canada invested in extensive research in delivering breakthrough packaging for the launch of their CRAVE line.

“We developed packaging that focused on selling CRAVE’s appetite appeal, highlighting the delicious plate of CRAVE at the centre of the packaging,” says Puerta. “With that said, being a frozen brand, CRAVE is mostly limited to shelving in the frozen aisles given that secondary frozen display is scarce. Our sales team has worked diligently over the past two years to help us secure a full door of CRAVE at many Canadian retailers, allowing consumers to see just how many delicious CRAVE varieties there are available for them.”



When products are this tasty, healthy, quick to prepare, and easy to find, they soon become family favourites and standards in grocery baskets. ●

BAKING INGREDIENTS

By Karen Barr



Consumers are Back in the Kitchen

With the onset of COVID-19, lockdowns forced the country to stay home, which allowed for more time in the kitchen. One of the most notable results was the incredible rise in sales of baking ingredients, rejuvenating what had been a slowly declining category.

According to the FCC Food and Beverage Report 2021, Canadian grocery sales were up 12.3 per cent overall. In comparison, sugar sales were up 20.8 per cent, whipping cream 20 per cent and nuts and snacking fruit 17.1 per cent. Baking mixes and ingredient sales combined increased by 24.7 per cent last year according to Mintel. “What will everyone do with their newfound baking skills?” asks Blake Isaac, senior category manager at Bob’s Red Mill, headquartered in Milwaukie, Oregon. “Our consumer research shows that 54 per cent expect to bake as much as they did during the height of the pandemic, and 26 per cent are looking to bake even more.”

Dietary Trends

“At Bob’s Red Mill, we certainly see gluten free as a leading claim at retail. Demand for our gluten free flours (such as Bob’s Red Mill Paleo Baking Flour), cereals and baking mixes remains strong,” says Isaac.

“While we expect demand for organic products to increase overall, we find that people are looking for whole, natural ingredients they can feel good about, whether that’s organic or conventional,” Isaac explains. “At Bob’s, that means we’ve seen growth across the board for our products, with ingredients like whole grains, oatmeal (such as Bob’s Red Extra Thick Rolled Oats), traditional and alternative flours.”

Baking at home allows consumers to control the ingredients in the goods they eat. For vegan and dairy free products bakers can replace cream in recipes, for example, with equal parts coconut milk and almond milk.

A vegan and dairy free butter replacement can be mashed avocados

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1. Meal Planning and Preparation - Canada - May 2021: Meal Planning Factors and Considerations. Source: Lightspeed/Mintel. <https://store.mintel.com/report/meal-planning-and-preparation-canada-may-2021>
2. Mintel's Global Food and Drink Trends for 2021 (January 2021). <https://www.mintel.com/global-food-and-drink-trends>
3. Grocery Retailing: Incl. Impact of COVID-19 Canada, October 2020. <https://store.mintel.com/canada-grocery-retailing-market-research-report>

or butter substitutes like Earth Balance Vegan Buttery Sticks, available through Conagra Brands, headquartered in Omaha, Nebraska. The product is made with expeller pressed soybean, palm fruit, canola, and olive oil. "Vegan Buttery Sticks should be brought to room temperature, up to five hours before baking," says a spokesperson for the company.

The Flour Story

A variety of flours are used in home baking. All purpose flour generally contains between eight to 12 per cent protein, allowing it to hold its structure. Bread flour with 12- 14 per cent protein, helps to form more gluten in bread. Cake flour has only five to nine per cent protein, providing a light crumb.

Today, flour goes way beyond wheat. Think buckwheat, chickpea, coconut, oat, rice or spelt, to name a few.

Some products contain mixes of various flours. In Ottawa, Ontario, registered holistic nutritionist Peter de Hoog created Peetz S.M.A.R.T Blend, a one-to-one cup healthy flour replacement, containing ancient grains like sorghum, millet, and brown rice. "You can bake almost anything with it," says de Hoog.

Keeping it Sweet

According to the Canadian Sugar Institute, granulated sugar is the most common form of sugar used in households. Finely ground granulated sugar becomes icing sugar or confectioner's sugar. Adding molasses to granulated sugar creates brown sugar, yellow sugar, and golden sugar.

Then, there are alternative sugars such as coconut or maple sugar. Sweeteners that have not been refined include products like maple

syrup, or honey. Another way to replace refined sugar in baking includes eliminating half of the sugar in the recipe and incorporating pureed dates, bananas, and unsweetened apple sauce. Adding vanilla extract, cinnamon or nutmeg will help the flavour to pop.

The Leaveners

Fleischmann's has the world of yeast covered for all things bread related, from savoury to sweet. Active Dry Yeast can be used to develop a richer more artisanal yeast flavour. RapidRise Yeast, as the name suggests, cuts down on rise time. Bread Machine Yeast, is a time saving yeast for all bread machines.

Baking soda and baking powder give lift to many goods. "Magic Baking Powder is an essential ingredient in baking and is used for a variety of goods like cakes, quick breads, cookies, pastries, pies and so much more," says Bindia Wijesekera, senior associate category business manager, desserts & infant, Kraft Heinz Canada.

All About Eggs

Amanda Brittain, director of communications and marketing at BC Egg, in Abbotsford, British Columbia, says when choosing eggs for baking customers should consider how dark the yolk is.

"The yolk colour changes based on what the hen eats. More corn in the diet makes a dark yellow yolk, while more wheat makes for a paler yolk. Also, if the hens go outside and eat grass and bugs, the yolks tend to be darker as well."

While the colour of a lemon curd will be enhanced with darker yolks from an organic or free-range chicken, a white angel food cake may not. "Here, you might want to bake with eggs from a free run or enriched colony hen."

PRODUCT SHOWCASE

PALEO PRIMER

Bob's Red Mill Paleo Baking Flour is a unique blend of almond flour, arrowroot starch, coconut flour and tapioca flour, combined in the perfect proportions for easy grain free baking. Think grain free pizza, flatbread, crackers, cookies, muffins, and cakes.



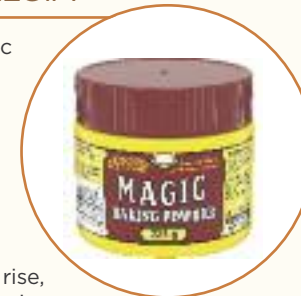
GOOD FOR YOUR FIBRE

Oats are a great source of fibre. Just a half cup of Bob's Red Extra Thick Rolled Oats contains five grams of the nutrient. Oats are a good source of both soluble fibre and insoluble fibre. A bonus for the digestive system! Add oats to muffins, cookies, and homemade baked granolas.



A PINCH OF NOSTALGIA

"Most bakers have a nostalgic and loyal relationship with Magic Baking Powder, only substituting it when they absolutely must," says Bindia Wijesekera, senior associate category business manager, desserts & infant, Kraft Heinz Canada. "Whether it's for the perfect rise, airy-ness, or fluffy-ness for their baked goods, bakers rely on Magic Baking Powder to get crowd-pleasing results."



FREE OF WHAT YOU DO NOT WANT

Peetz S.M.A.R.T Blend, a healthy alternative flour can be used as a cup per cup replacement flour in favourite recipes. It is free from wheat, gluten, corn, dairy, soy, potato, white rice, and modified starches. What it contains instead are healthy ancient grains like sorghum, millet, and brown rice.



ORGANICALLY SPEAKING

In Canada, there are five types of eggs that correspond to the five housing types for hens: conventional caged, enriched, free run, free range, and organic. There is no nutritional difference between these eggs, only how the hens are housed. "Organic eggs continue to be popular in BC," says Amanda Brittain, director of communications and marketing at BC Egg.



Sales and Merchandising Tips

"We've started to see shoppers wanting natural products featured alongside conventional favorites," says Isaac. "If there is a 12-foot flour set, many people prefer to have the first four feet be natural or alternative products, followed by 8 feet of conventional products. This allows for an easier shopping experience and drives great basket size for the retailer, as 85-90 per cent of natural flour shoppers also buy conventional flour."

As for holiday displays Wijesekera adds, "Key seasonal timeframes for baking include the festive season in December, Thanksgiving, and Easter. Cross-merchandising in out-of-aisle destinations with complementary baking items like flour or baking chips can help drive seasonal sales."

The upswing of baking at home was a direct result of the pandemic. Yet, the trend continues. Savvy grocers will capitalize on opportunities, by stocking their shelves with ingredients home bakers crave, while spreading the joy of baking. ●

Enjoying 100% pure Canadian honey just got easier

In response to consumer demand, Lil' Honey's are now available in convenient 32 pack boxes allowing consumers to enjoy a teaspoon of BeeMaid's 100% pure Canadian honey on the go.

For more information or pricing, please contact your BeeMaid Sales Representative.

BeeMaid
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What are the egg choices in BC?

Your customers want to know the difference between the cartons.

Do your customers know the difference between free run, free range, organic and conventional eggs? The cartons don't always tell your customers what they want to know.

BC Egg can help by providing custom designed educational materials such as:

- shelf talkers and labels
- infographics for digital signage or for your website.
- bag stuffers
- flyer ads

All materials can be customized with your brand and can feature a local farmer.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT
Amanda Brittain, Director Communications and Marketing
amandab@bcegg.com 604 854 4498

BC egg

Caesar Squeezers is Changing the Caesar Game



Since launching in Vancouver in 2016, Caesar Squeezers has been on a mission to help Canadians make their beloved cocktail, simply. Add Caesar Squeezers to Clam Cocktail and Spirit of choice to make the best Caesar you have ever had. A perfect blend of Worcestershire, citrus, spices, horseradish, and heat in one easy to travel bottle – no more fussing with all those extra ingredients. Squeezing to taste allows everyone to have their Caesar their way. Innovative, convenient, and shareable Caesar Squeezers is Canada's first Caesar sauce making its way coast to coast.

For more information: www.caesarsqueezers.com or orders@caesarsqueezers.com

SpongeTowels UltraPRO

SpongeTowels UltraPRO delivers ultimate strength and absorbency, our strongest and most premium paper towel to tackle your toughest messes. The convenient choose-a-size format allows you to use as little or as much as you need. SpongeTowels UltraPRO is Canadian made.



For more information: moitral.ghosh@krugerproducts.ca

GOOD TO GO Launches Grain-Free Granola Across Canada

GOOD TO GO, the innovative brand behind one of Canada's favourite keto-friendly snack bars, are introducing their latest delicious addition, Grain-Free Granola. The Grain-Free Granola is available in two flavours: Chocolate and Vanilla Coconut.

"We're excited to launch into the market our highly requested Grain-free Granola," says Nima Fotovat, president and CEO of Riverside Natural Foods. "Granola is often considered a healthy breakfast option, but many people don't often realize the high sugar content found in many varieties on the shelf. Not only is GOOD TO GO Grain-Free Granola packed full of good fats with no added sugar, but it is also gluten-free and paleo-friendly. It is a delicious mix of organic nuts and super seeds, a flavour that will satisfy even the pickiest of eaters. While it has a shelf life of 10 months, we promise you it won't last 10-minutes!"

Made with premium organic nuts and super seeds like pumpkin, sunflower and cashews, this gluten-free granola also boasts an excellent source of vitamin D, all within a recyclable, resealable pouch. Vegan and keto certified by the Paleo Foundation, this low net carb, low sugar option packs up to seven grams of protein into every serving and is free from artificial colours and flavours.

For more information: Good2GoSnacks.ca



Ben & Jerry's Introduces New Canadian Inspired Summer Flavours

These new Ben & Jerry's flavours have been inspired by Canadian summer moments.

Oh Cone-ada! – possibly the most Canadian flavour yet. Made with vanilla ice cream and full of fudge covered waffle pieces and caramel swirls, you'll want to 'cone' together with your bubble of friends and family to enjoy this one!

S'more Please! – is there anything more Canadian than s'mores and saying please (and thank you)? Made with toasted marshmallow ice cream with graham cracker swirls and chocolate chip cookies, this shmallowy-rich, graham-good-'n-chocolatey concoction is the perfect addition to your Canadian summer – and a must have for National S'mores Day on August 10!

New Sesame Snaps Seeds & Grains

The makers of Canada's favourite eat-anywhere snack since the 70s are bringing from Europe a new bar packed with the power of sesame seeds and grains to satisfy sweet tooth and fuel busy bodies from coast to coast.

Introducing new Sesame Snaps Seeds & Grains. An alternative to snacks often packed with ingredients you can't pronounce; the new Seeds & Grains bars are a step towards choosing healthier options between meals. Made with honey, Sesame Snaps Seeds & Grains are super charged with highly nutritious sesame seeds and puffed grains including amaranth, millet, quinoa, and buckwheat. Gluten free, they are made with natural ingredients and contain no artificial flavours, colours, or preservatives. A good source of fibre and Omega-6, the crispy snack provides 4g of protein per bar to propel you through the day.

"Ancient grains like millet and amaranth are long forgotten superfoods that have not seen the rise in popularity of quinoa. Loaded with wholesome nutritional value, we're excited to bring Canadians a better-for-you alternative," explains Svetlana Vnučko, marketing director at Unitop – the producer of Sesame Snaps. "Merging function and flavour in one crunchy snack, our new Sesame Snaps Seeds & Grains bars are an easy way to reach for nutrient-rich foods that your body needs to function without sacrificing flavour."



Kinnikinnick Foods Celebrates 30th Birthday with New Plant-Based Lineup

Kinnikinnick Foods has crafted more new plant-based baked goods designed for everyone in the family to share, intolerant, allergic or not.

Kinnikinnick's re-brand to plant-based, free from egg and top eight allergens baked goods reflects the growth in those wishing to eat a vegan diet; approx. three per cent of Americans today compared to 0.5 per cent in 1978. There is also an increase in the rate of food allergies worldwide from around three per cent 3% of the pop-



ulation in 1960 to around seven per cent in 2018. All new products are now free from the top eight – wheat, dairy, nuts, peanuts, soy, sesame, fish, & now egg. That is a range of 42 products.

Appropriately, celebrating Kinnikinnick's 30th, the first new flavour is Birthday KinniTOOS Sandwich Crème Cookie. New Cinnabun Fun and Mint Magic flavours bring the full line up to six including Chocolate, Fudge & Vanilla.

Jerry Bigam, Kinnikinnick's CEO sums up the shift; "Since we started baking for those with celiac disease in 1991, we've responded to customers and removed allergens one after another. Our goal has always been to provide safe & scrumptious baked goods, free from risk and worry. This is the next step."

Other new products soon to be released include Artisan Dinner Rolls, Baguettes, and a Premium Wide Loaf, cementing the company's position as a leader in new bread & bun development.

There is also a stove-top Traditional Stuffing Mix which will hit shelves in time for Thanksgiving. Garlic & Herb Croutons for soups and salads will hit shelves in Spring 2022.

One of Kinnikinnick's most popular products is completely reformulated. Now called Traditional English Muffins, these are as close to the 'real thing' as it gets.

For more information: marina@kinnikinnick.com

Hefty Introduces ECOSAVE Tableware

Not all disposable tableware is created equal. Hefty ECOSAVE delivers compelling benefits that include strength and durability, being soak resistant and microwavable. In addition, its compostable and recyclable feature make ECOSAVE ideal for ease and convenience at time of celebrations and gatherings, as well as for everyday usage with family.



For more information: www.heftybrands.ca

NEW Nando's **Vegan PERinaise**

Nando's famous PERI-PERI blended mayo, now available for vegans!

For more information contact your local I-D Foods representative.

E-NEWS

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New Look, Same Tropical Flavours: Neale's Sweet N' Nice Ice Cream

Following a steady year of growth and increased consumer demand across Canada, Neale's Sweet N' Nice Ice Cream has officially unveiled its new brand design and packaging while highlighting the company's family legacy and original Trinidadian founder, Charles Alfred Neale at the forefront.

Neale's Sweet N' Nice is a family-owned business that launched in Canada in 2012, with its core products centred on ice cream recipes developed in the 1940s in Trinidad by the founders' father and grandfather who would sell ice cream to help put his 12 kids through school. The new packaging uses beautiful illustrations and vibrant colours to help give the Caribbean-inspired product a fun, tropical identity in Canada.

"Working with Le Parc Design, creative agency Juniper Park/TBWA's design arm, we wanted our new identity to speak to the natural ingredients in our ice cream without overwhelming consumers with a busy package design," said Andrew McBarnett, co-founder and CEO, Neale's Sweet N' Nice. "We also want to continue to celebrate our heritage and our origins are now more clearly defined by the illustrations of my grandfather, Charles Neale, who used to call out 'Sweet N' Nice...' when he rode his bike around South Trinidad."

Since their launch, Neale's Sweet N' Nice has grown its product offering from three to six flavours with one more on the way and has appealed to a loyal and passionate following of ice cream fans, including from the Caribbean expat community in Canada.

For more information: sweetnnice.ca.

Zoglos Innovates

Zoglos Incredible is a world-class brand with a rich history of producing plant-based foods for more than 25 years. Their innova-



tions offer the greatest breadth and depth of variety that is versatile, limitless and affordable in preparing family meals... you won't believe it's plant-based foods!

For more information: www.zoglos.com

Good Stock Foods Announces Nation-Wide Launch of Prairie Melt

Demand for quality plant-based and dairy-free cheese has fueled the growth of Good Stock Food's flagship product, Prairie Melt. "I designed Prairie Melt to be a premium plant-based cheese that actually melts with superior flavour, texture and versatility," says creator and Red Seal Chef Michelle Byrt, "This isn't your run of the mill plant-based cheese." Made from only five whole-food ingredients, Prairie Melt is vegan, gluten free, soy free and nut free, making it a home run and staple for people with these food preferences and allergies. It can be melted into any cheese recipe including pizza, nachos, burgers, pasta, sandwiches and more. With Prairie Melt's growing success in both food service and retail, it is now being produced in a Federally Inspected, HACCP approved facility and ready for nation-wide distribution. It is available in both food service (12kg) and retail (900g) formats and will stand out on store shelves and consumer's plates. Join the growing number of retailers to stock this in-demand product.



For more information: www.prairiemelt.com

Crofters Introduces New Spread

A summer surprise that will have you going BANANA! Experience the old school classic flavour combo of sweet bananas and summery strawberry with Crofter's Organic NEW Strawberry Banana Premium Spread! Your customers will enjoy more fruit and 33 per cent less sugar than standard preserves!

For more information: cdn_sales@croftersorganic.com

SimplyProtein Brand Helps Provide Canadians with Plant-Powered Fuel for All

SimplyProtein will be introducing its newly reformulated plant-based snack bars, which provide an improved taste experience and texture, and have added ingredients like whole almonds, semi-sweet chocolate chips, oats, toasted coconut, peanuts and flax seeds. The new SimplyProtein Snack Bars have 12g of protein and 2g of sugar per bar. The products remain gluten-free, are Non-GMO Project verified and rich in fibre. "Plant-based protein is a mega trend, which has resulted in the steady increase in consumer demand over the past few years. This demand, coupled with the SimplyProtein brand's unique offering, provided us with the perfect opportunity to reinvent our positioning and product line," says Michael Lines, president and CEO of Wellness Natural Inc., makers of the SimplyProtein brand.



For more information: www.SimplyProtein.ca

Opening the Door to Energy Savings

Zero Zone, a leading manufacturer of refrigerated display cases and refrigeration systems, announces the introduction of the Zero Zone Reveal Merchandiser with Doors display case product line.

Food retailers have long expressed their love of the original Reveal Merchandiser open multi-deck cases for their horizontal merchandising platform and easy access to products. They have increasingly asked for a closed-case version with glass doors for certain applications in order to help control their burgeoning energy costs. The Reveal Merchandiser with Doors gives them the best of both worlds: as much as 71 per cent energy reduction (compared to open multi-decks) and the ability to merchandise their products either in a 48-inch horizontal planogram or in a 24-inch vertical planogram.



According to Dan O'Brien, vice-president of sales & marketing for Zero Zone, "the Reveal Merchandiser with Doors complements its other Zero Zone display case counterparts, creating a sleek, consistent appearance throughout the store. Choosing Zero Zone merchandisers helps retailers pull together the look of their entire store design."

For more info: visit www.zero-zone.com/reveal-with-doors/

Dole Goes for Big Ranch Flavour with New Chopped Salad Kits



Dole Food Company is expanding its DOLE Chopped! Salad Kits, the world's most recognized chopped salad kit line, with two new skus that leverage the No. 1 consumer preference for ranch dressing. DOLE Chopped! Buffalo Ranch Salad Kit and DOLE Chopped! Peppercorn Ranch Salad Kit combine fresh chopped DOLE lettuces and vegetables with special Buffalo and Peppercorn variations of Dole's Ranch Dressing. Dole's Chopped! line is a leading brand among the chopped salads segment, which has grown 81 per cent since 2016. The two latest on-trend flavoured kits leverage ranch as the No. 1 dressing choice, with the Peppercorn Ranch Kit showcasing the No. 1 spice in black pepper.

For more information: www.dole.com

NESQUIK Proves 'It's All in The Making' With New Look, Recipe and Sustainably Sourced Ingredients

NESQUIK is relaunching its beloved line of chocolate and flavoured syrups and powders with a revamped recipe formulation featuring cleaner ingredients and 100 per cent sustainably-sourced cocoa. Additionally, new to the NESQUIK lineup is NESQUIK Vanilla Syrup. The revamped product lineup continues to provide a great-tasting and easy way to enjoy the nutritious benefits of milk and are the perfect offering for families looking to add a little feel-good-fun to their day.



"NESQUIK is such a nostalgic brand and it was important to us that we create a product that parents could feel good about sharing with their kids," says Eryn Pasut, marketing director of Nestlé Beverages. "We loved the idea of reinforcing not just the fun of making NESQUIK, but the role it plays in a kid's burgeoning independence." With the new and improved changes to the NESQUIK product line, families can enjoy the same great tasting drinks that today's parents grew up with, now with a delicious, reformulated recipe. NESQUIK syrups and powders each have new ingredients featuring no artificial flavours, colours or sweeteners.

For more information: www.nesquik.ca

Rubicon Exotic Launches Newest Premium Beverage Offering

Just in time for summer, Rubicon Exotic's new Pineapple and Coconut Juice is the perfect tropical beverage. Created with fresh hand-selected pineapples and coconuts for an authentic flavour and aroma capturing the true taste of the exotic. This juice is all natural with no preservatives, artificial flavours, or colourings.



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What Brick-and-Mortar Retailers Can Learn from Digital-First Business Models

How Fobi helps retailers transform and use their data to compete with the Online Giants

With many consumers turning to online shopping during the pandemic, brick-and-mortar retailers, especially grocers, are right to be concerned about the future of in-person shopping, but not in the way they think. Many shoppers still choose to shop in-store including younger generations with 81 per cent of Gen Z saying they still like to shop in-person. However, they are also far more likely not to make

a purchase based on a poor shopping or brand experience. Therefore now, more than ever, it is important for retailers to connect their customer data to build loyalty and personalized in-store experiences.

“80 per cent of the average retailer’s future profits will come from 20 per cent of their existing customers” (Kearney)

The main drivers for in-store shopping among younger people include “a well-curated store experience” and “exclusives and promotions including free samples, giveaways, and contests.” Brick-and-mortar retailers can learn from online models by tracking their customers’ behaviour across properties and offering them promotions catered to the products and services they like best. With location, purchasing, and demographic data available through loyalty programs, retailers can modify their in-store experience with agility to best reflect how

their customers interact with the brand right down to specific stores and products.

With so many data streams available it can be difficult for retailers to manage. From data silos restricting access to valuable customer information to poor aggregation and reporting tools making it a complex task to understand which data is important, retailers are struggling to action their data and insights into real results.

Fobi is at the forefront of the brick-and-mortar digital transformation with a solution that provides new ways to connect with customers, gain real-time insight into important customer and operational data so that retailers can increase engagement, and improve efficiencies when and where it matters.

“A nimble and successful tech organization is able to shift resources between priorities on short notice” (McKinsey).

To become truly adaptive, retailers need access to real-time data. For some retailers, online operations are entirely separate from in-store operations and in many cases are in direct competition. This doesn’t need to be the case. In-store experiences are simply becoming an extension of online shopping and with the right tools, retailers can connect their disparate or competing online and offline infrastructures. Doing this will build an end-to-end seamless customer journey that incorporates the benefits of in-person shopping such as face-to-face assistance, product sampling and inspection, immediate access, and convenience with digital drivers like contactless payments, loyalty rewards, and personalized offers.●



Ian Cameron, vice-president of marketing, Fobi



See how Fobi can help transform your data by going to www.fobi.ai/grocery

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