# MENU

CANADA'S FOODSERVICE MAGAZINE



## IF WE'RE "IN THIS TOGETHER" WHY DO WE FEEL SO ALONE?

RESTAURANTS CANADA PRESIDENT AND CEO ON HOW ON-AGAIN/OFF-AGAIN POLICIES ARE STRANGLING CANADA'S EMBATTLED RESTAURANT SECTOR

**REIMAGINE & REBUILD**

Top Takeaways from RC Show ONLINE LIVE 2021

*Special Guest Column from*

The Honourable Mary Ng,

Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion & International Trade

**INSIDE:**

2021 Canadian Beer & Wine Report

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Restaurants Canada

The voice of foodservice | La voix des services alimentaires

*In many parts of the country where we're heading into our third wave and with indoor dining and Ontario patios being shut down (once again), we are disheartened to say the very least. This abrupt move to shut down all restaurant dining so soon after easing restrictions has cost Ontario's restaurant industry more than $100 million in reopening and closing costs alone and, across the country, cost restaurants an average of $10,000 they cannot recoup.*

I urge you to flip to the open letter to the industry from the Restaurants Canada CEO & President Todd Barclay to read more about how our organization is facing these challenges and advocating on our behalf.

In these times, it can be hard to celebrate the wins and to recognize opportunity, but I believe it is important to do so as we look ahead to a brighter, better future. One recent win is the RC Show 2021 ONLINE LIVE.

This year's virtual format presented our industry with the opportunity to rebuild, reinvent and reconnect like never before. We welcomed foodservice leaders from across the world to share their expertise in sessions; 3D exhibitor booths permitted attendees to engage with brands like never before; eight CEO panels across the quick-service, full-service, bar and beverage, and coffee sectors granted us insight into the future, and one-on-one intimate chats with leaders like Chef Michael Smith, Ritch Allison, and Chef Massimo Bottura let us delve into the heart of the matter to learn and explore.

This is the first time that all content from RC Show is available post-Show for all to access at their fingertips with RC Show ON DEMAND. Read more about what you expect from RC Show ON DEMAND in our wrap-up section which highlights some of the top takeaways.

This wealth of information couldn't come at a better time as we head into the spring season and COVID guidelines once again have been adjusted for many. As we look forward to the warmer summer months, many of us are still on guard and unsure of what to expect going forward. Unfortunately, we do not have a crystal ball—but we do have experience and knowledge to arm ourselves with in order to make informed decisions for the spring and summer seasons.

In order to help you do so, head over to our first Canadian Beer and Wine Report, where we have laid out data and stats on the current state of the bar and beverage industry, beer and wine sales across Canada, and consumer behaviour which we have paired with expert insights. Flip over to our piece on how operators have found unique ways to repurpose their physical spaces in order to create additional revenue.

We invite you to explore the pages of this issue and leverage the incredible acumen throughout as you make strategic decisions for your operations. It's time to reconnect in order to rebuild this industry and reinvent old systems for a brighter future.

Lastly, my tenure as Chair of Restaurants Canada has come to an end and I want to take this opportunity to let you know that it has been an honour to serve the restaurant industry in one of the most challenging years on record. For over 77 years and more recently, this past year navigating through this pandemic, no other association has been more effective or has had a greater impact on advocating exclusively for the foodservice industry than Restaurants Canada. I want to welcome our new Chair, Cindy Simpson, as we continue to navigate this crucial time in our industry's recovery efforts.



**Guy Laframboise**
Chair of the Board



Spring 2021
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The voice of foodservice | La voix des services alimentaires

*Do you have comments or a story for us? If so, please email menueditor@restaurantscanada.org.*

# 6.2

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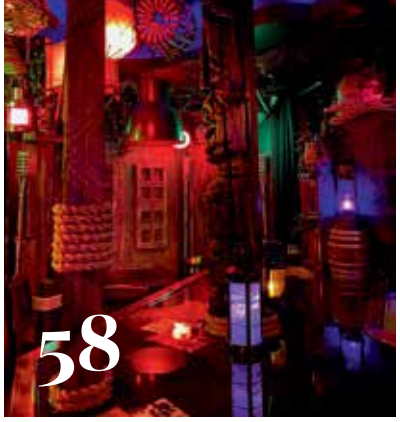
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**Bocuse d'Or Canada's** dedication to the Canadian culinary industry and to promoting Canadian ingredients and products has driven the team to refocus and launch under **CHEFS CANADA**. The new organization continues to be devoted to inspiring Canadian culinary excellence and to creating a sustainable, profitable culinary scene that will positively impact national food tourism. In addition to managing Bocuse d'Or Team Canada, CHEFS CANADA will also support national culinary athletes at some of the world's most prestigious competitions including the World Pastry Cup and the Pâté Croûte Championship. The Canadian foodservice industry will now have a trustworthy resource to turn to in CHEFS CANADA as they unite, share and transmit knowledge and expertise to promote Canadian gastronomy here at home and on the global stage.

**Visit www.chefscanada.com for more information**.

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## Earn Your Sustainable Foodservice Professional (SFP) Certificate

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The Sustainable Foodservice Professional (SFP) certificate program provides e-learning in future-proof principles and practices across all aspects of foodservice and hospitality operations and management. Optimized for mobile learning, the SFP Level 1 course offers professional and student editions featuring leading industry experts, inspiring videos, challenging quizzes and practical resources in bite-sized lessons.

**Download the course syllabus, try a sample lesson or contact the team at www.sfpcertificate.ca.**




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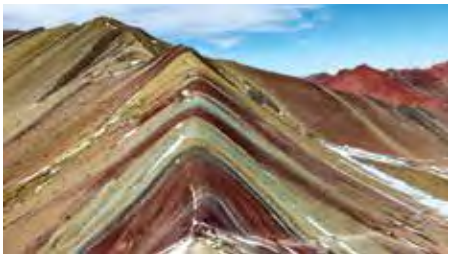
**The Restaurant and Bar Support Fund** is a registered not-for-profit group raising funds to support as many Ontario food and beverage establishments and jobs as possible with one-time grants given to establishments across the province. The Fund's goal is to raise $5 million to assist a minimum of 1,000 food and beverage establishments in 2021. The Fund is for eligible Ontario restaurants, bars, cafés, pool halls, pubs, sports bars, aims to support as many Ontario food and beverage establishments as possible and to raise greater awareness of the value of these small businesses to their local economy and social scene.




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**Restaurants Canada sends congratulations to the Republic of Peru** and the Peruvian community for the upcoming commemoration of the 200 years of their National Independence; an emblematic date to highlight its millennial culture and its strength of identity. This date solidifies Peru as a nation with great biodiversity and multicultural gastronomy. While steeped in history, Peru has established itself as an open, innovative nation and retains the title as the heart of "Cultural Heritage of the Americas."

**For more information visit www.bicentenario.gob.pe.**



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**Restaurants Canada and Uber Eats distributed $1 Million in grants** to 400 independently-owned restaurants across Canada. This program is part of a partnership announced in February to support restaurants that have had to keep their dine-in service closed or restricted with capacity limits. It is part of the "Eat Local Relief Effort", a Canadian Uber Eats initiative to provide support to restaurants when they need it most.

**Learn more at www.eatlocalreliefgrants.ca**

Uber Eats

***HaliHub is a locally owned and operated food delivery company that creates a sustainable and cost-efficient takeaway model for local restaurants.***

Bill Pratt, a local restaurateur and entrepreneur, and Brian MacDonald, a former foodservice executive, joined forces to take on the big national and international food delivery companies to offer their local restaurant community a less expensive model.

Total commission on takeaway orders are 9% for delivery, plus a weekly platform subscription of $29 per week no matter how many deliveries you have. Gratuities are shared between the restaurant and delivery drivers, 50/50. Gratuities for pickup orders go 100% to the restaurant and not the order platforms.

**For more information, visit www.halihub.ca**

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***Restaurants looking for alternative revenue streams should consider jumping into the world of merch.*** **Merch Tent**, a collaborative marketplace for a sustainable and independent community, is a high-traffic digital farmers market where restaurants can host existing clothing inventory, or create new eco-friendly clothing pieces.

**For more information, reach out to Adam Kreeft at kreeft@merch-tent.com**



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# A MONTH BY MONTH LOOK AT THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19

**The key to feeding Canada's economic recovery lies with those hardest hit by the pandemic. By February 2021, only 48% of jobs lost in the foodservice and accommodation sectors had been recovered, compared with 88% for all other industries. Now, with growing restrictions across Canada, the scope of further job losses is unknown, but certain.**

## 2020

**MARCH 11**
MONTHLY EMPLOYMENT AT: **1,221,300**

The World Health Organization declares COVID-19 a pandemic.

**MID MARCH**
MONTHLY EMPLOYMENT AT: **930,100**

Restaurants across Canada ordered to close indoor dining or operate under limited capacity restrictions.

**APRIL**
MONTHLY EMPLOYMENT AT: **612,600**

More than 800,000 foodservice workers lose their jobs or have their hours of work reduced to zero and on-premise orders accounted for a mere 4% of sales compared to more than 50% in 2019 as dining rooms are forced to close.

**MAY**

The unemployment rate rockets up to 13.7 per cent, the highest rate recorded since comparable data became available in 1976.

**MAY**

Restrictions begin to lift in several provinces and patios and dining rooms across Canada start to re-open but a Restaurants Canada reveals that most foodservice businesses might not have enough cash flow to successfully reopen their doors to diners.

**JUNE**

Restaurants Canada survey shows more than half (52%) of operators that were either open for takeout or delivery only, or already offering dine-in services under new restrictions, were operating at a loss. Nine in 10 restaurants reported lower sales in June 2020 compared to June 2019.

**JULY**

Even with patios open and limited dine-in capacity, the foodservice sector is still nearly 300,000 jobs short of where it was in February. Throughout the crisis, no other industry has faced this level of shortfall.

**AUGUST**

An estimated 10 per cent of foodservice establishments have already permanently closed due to the impacts of COVID-19. Restaurants Canada calls for a renewed commitment to help industry avoid further closures and job losses as colder weather approaches.

**SEPTEMBER**
MONTHLY EMPLOYMENT AT: **1,039,700**

Restaurants Canada survey shows 87% of Canadians say restaurants are doing a good job keeping their customers safe, 92% agree that restaurants are an important part of their community and 95% said that restaurants provide a vital source of employment.

**OCTOBER**

Restaurants to this point have invested over $750 million in training, sanitizer stations, masks and gloves, air purification systems, and other protective equipment, to keep their staff and customers safe.

**NOVEMBER**

As the weather gets colder, restaurants close patios and the industry sits at 253,000 jobs below pre-COVID levels.

**DECEMBER**

Restaurants Canada launches 'Picture life without restaurants' Campaign highlighting the closure of over 10,000 restaurants calling for the public to support local restaurants through dine-in (where available), takeout and delivery.

## 2021

**JANUARY**
MONTHLY EMPLOYMENT AT: **837,300**

As of January 2021 the industry was still 384,000 jobs below pre-COVID levels in February 2020.

**FEBRUARY**
MONTHLY EMPLOYMENT AT: **902,300**

According to the Statistics Canada February 2021 Labour Force Survey there are still about 319,000 fewer jobs in the Canadian foodservice sector than February 2020.




# *From the Desk of the CEO*

## The 'Voice of Foodservice': Advocating on behalf of restaurants across Canada

As our team was about to finish up this March/April issue of MENU, the news that the province of Ontario was yet again locked down under a state of emergency for the next 28 days was announced. This follows news out of British Columbia, Alberta and Quebec where dining has been impacted as well. The abrupt move so soon after easing restrictions presents our community with incredible challenges. I want to take this opportunity to address some of these challenges, and to update our members on our advocacy efforts.

Unfortunately, contrary to what many government officials have indicated, "we are not all in this together". In a year when so many others have continued to receive their full pay, and some industries have thrived during the pandemic, those in the restaurant sector have never worked harder and lost so much through no fault of their own.

Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, the foodservice sector was Canada's fourth-largest employer, directly employing 1.2 million people. However in the first six weeks of the pandemic, the restaurant industry lost more jobs than the entire Canadian economy lost during the 2008-2009 recession. One out of every five jobs lost during the initial lockdown from March to April 2020 was in Canada's restaurant sector.

It is imperative to note that women make up 58 per cent of the restaurant workforce but accounted for six out of every 10 lost jobs and 31 per cent of restaurant owners, operators and staff belong to a visible minority. 50 per cent of Canadian restaurants are run by new Canadians, both groups who may have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. No other sector is still experiencing such a shortfall. All other industries have recovered at least 85 per cent or more of their pandemic job losses.

This recent lockdown alone has cost Ontario's restaurant industry more than $100 million in reopening and closing costs alone. Our members across Canada have told us they lose on average about $10,000 every time one of their establishments is suddenly ordered to shut down their dining services.

**I want to assure our industry that we continue to advocate on your behalf every day.**

We are working with government to ensure that programs are in place well past the end of this pandemic into 2022. We are also advocating for sector specific programs as we know that the current programs in place are not enough to support many operators in our industry.

In Ontario, we released an open letter to Premier Doug Ford to call for the following:

- For public health measures to be fair and effective, all industries must be impacted equally.
- Patio dining should remain available as an alternative to private gatherings, as safe options for enjoying outdoor activities are important for people's mental health.
- All restaurants should be supported financially to mitigate rising debt.

Another pivotal ask for all provincial governments across Canada is to ensure that our essential workers are prioritized to receive vaccinations. If we want to build back a stronger, more resilient Canada that continues to reflect our country's incredible diversity, our industry is the best place to start. Restaurants are key to feeding our economic and social recovery.

Going forward, we are looking for the government to help us re-energize and reinvigorate the industry post-pandemic. We are calling for significant marketing programs and other initiatives to get consumers and guests back into our restaurants. When safe to do so, we want the government to spend as much as they did on telling people to stay home, to inform them that we are indeed safe environments for guests to come and enjoy great experiences, promoting our industry in order to help build back consumer confidence.

To say that 'times are tough' is an understatement but I am confident that a brighter future is on the horizon.



**Todd Barclay**
President & CEO



**Q: What actions has Restaurants Canada has been taking to help provide relief to restaurants?**

**A: From an advocacy perspective at the federal level, there are three main pillars of focus:**

**1. Ensuring programs that are currently in place stay well beyond the end of the pandemic, into the second quarter of 2022.**
The wage subsidy is especially important here; we want to ensure that employees are brought back to work (there are still more than 319,000 fewer jobs in the Canadian foodservice sector than there were in February 2020 – no other sector is still experiencing such a shortfall) because this is so imperative to a great customer experience when our doors reopen.

**2. Creation of programs that are specific to our industry.**
The blanket programs in place now have not worked for everyone. As we know, 8 out of 10 restaurants are barely scraping by. More programs are needed for more to survive. Specifically, we are calling on the government to work with us on programs to increase the wage subsidy, eliminate rent caps and ensure no new programs are put in place that will add additional costs to our industry to operate.

**3. Lastly, we are asking the government to help us kickstart the industry post-pandemic.**
When the pandemic is over, we need support from the government in the way of marketing initiatives and programs that help spread the message of restaurant safety. Authorities have spent money throughout the pandemic telling the public to stay home, we expect that they will do the same when it is time, to let consumers know that it is safe to go out.

On a provincial level, we are asking that the support grants provided to businesses be allowed for all restaurants that have realized revenue declines and for all costs, not just property tax and utilities. Additionally, we are calling on support from key decision makers, politicians and medical officials to use their platforms to let the public know that restaurants are safe.

Lastly, I want to highlight the activities of our 'Picture life without restaurants' PR campaign. This consumer-focused campaign invites the public to imagine a world without their local cafe or diner and calls on them to support their community in this great time of need by signing a pledge. I recommend that operators visit SupportRestaurants.ca to learn more, get involved, and view our PSA.

# After a year of *"unrelenting bad news"*, hope for better days.

BY JACOB RICHLER

*The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of its author and do not necessarily reflect those of MENU magazine, Restaurants Canada or its members.*



The all-you-can-eat buffet of pandemic-policy incompetence currently on offer from Canada's three levels of government is so varied and overwhelming in its generosity that it's hard to single out any particular item as the single worst offender.

For example, from where I'm standing the flashpoint of recent idiocy belongs to our PM, when on the last day of March, he publicly praised his procurement minister, Anita Anand, for doing "an incredible job" on her vaccine file. This, at a time when Canada had committed well over $1 billion to the purchase of COVID vaccines–while our population enjoyed a vaccination rate stalled at under 2%, trailing not just every other G7 country, but also Estonia, Azerbaijan, and the pariah state of Brazil.

My friends in the Ontario restaurant industry disagree. Their vitriol is instead almost unanimously focused on Premier Doug Ford, who–ignoring all the convincing scientific modelling that showed a deadly third wave of COVID was fast overtaking us–announced in late March that restaurateurs in Toronto and other recent hotspots could open their patios for business. And then, less than two weeks later, as soon as those restaurants' fridges and cold rooms were well-stocked with expensive perishables for doing business in the impending rush, changed his mind and ordered a return to takeout and delivery only.





This was daft–and unnecessarily costly for an industry that could ill-afford it. A considerable number of chefs and restaurateurs have been very vocal–okay, shrill–in their use of social media to point that out. It's easy to understand their outrage. A year is a long time for unrelenting bad news.

All the same, despite some 10,000 pandemic-era Canadian restaurant bankruptcies, an enormous number of them remain in the game. There are all kinds of reasons for this. One is that however bad the odds might be for the contemporary restaurant, when that business is all you know it's better to soldier on than try something completely new. For another, government largesse and customer support have both been generous. While the times are irrefutably terrible for waiters and other front of house staff, it must be noted that some restaurants have found the pivot to takeout to be highly profitable (as long as rent is subsidized, and staffing lean).

More typically, chef-proprietors tell me that they are only scraping by–just–but they can see a better day ahead. In the meantime, they just want to keep their heads down, work hard, and make sure they get to that better place at the end of this vaccination tunnel with their vision, professional desire and business still intact. A few others operating at half-steam have even told me they're enjoying the unfamiliar new work-life balance of diminished hours on the job, which has allowed for more time with family, more time to reflect on and plan their next culinary move.

Whatever their particular situation, most chefs and restaurateurs I talk to know that this subsidized uncertainty cannot last too much longer. Few can handle another false start. They definitely need our continued fervent support for their takeout, grocery and delivery programs–at which so many of our top restaurants have excelled.

As I write this, my editorial team at Canada's 100 Best Restaurants is hard at work on our 2021 Spring issue and in the home stretch at last. We have been publishing this annual list edition of the magazine since 2015, each time causing something of a stir with our national ranking of the country's best restaurants, which is based on votes from a national panel of experts. But this issue is going to be a little different. There will be no ranking of the country's best restaurants; instead, we will be publishing a list of 100 things (and people) to celebrate in our restaurant industry right now.

There are good industry stories everywhere–from sensational, category-defining takeout programs to meal kits that enable inadequate home cooks to feel like they're poised and ready to join the line at Maison Boulud. There are chefs and restaurateurs turned campaigners for social justice in the industry, and others using their restaurants as grocery stores, just to keep their old suppliers in business for a happier future when business returns to something resembling normal. All these stories of industry resilience and resourcefulness are worth celebrating.

Whittling down the lists of such recommendations from our judges to a manageable catalogue for print has been pleasurable and inspiring challenge. But it's not something we ever envisioned when we launched the magazine. Any more than recounting these stories of tectonic shift and industry resilience were what I anticipated sharing when I started writing this column a little over a year ago–at the dawn of this crisis.

Government mismanagement has helped ensure that we still have a good long way still to go. But I'm still hoping for a decent vaccine rollout. Next, for policymakers with the modicum of courage required to introduce vaccine passports to win the day. And for all that to happen in time to enable a decent patio season, and a return to indoor dining and something recognisably close to normalcy come summer. Too much to wish for, likely. But there is a great restaurant meal waiting for me at the end this, sometime.

*MENU magazine would like to thank Jacob Richler for sharing his views and voice for the past year as our guest columnist. We look forward to future collaborations in support of the Canadian restaurant and foodservice sector.*




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# *Canadian restaurants were knocked down; better times are around the corner*

BY MARY NG
MINISTER OF SMALL BUSINESS, EXPORT PROMOTION AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

A full year into the COVID-19 pandemic, we know the devastating blows it has dealt the Canadian economy—and few have felt it more than our restaurants.

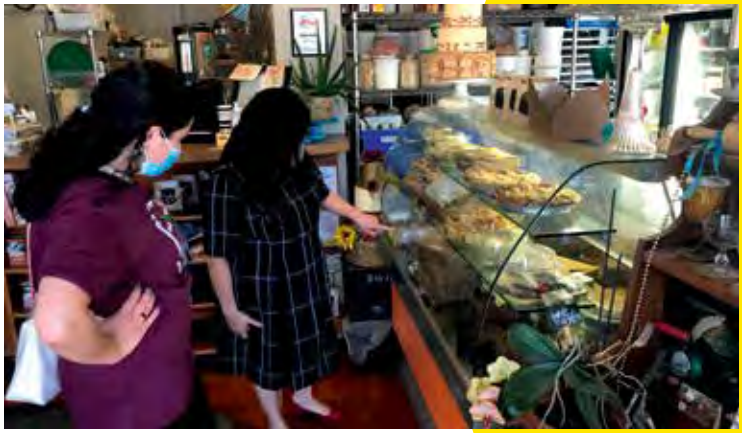
Restaurants are often the setting for activities we haven't been able to do through COVID-19—watch a game with other avid fans, meet friends and family to unwind after a long work day or celebrate a special occasion over drinks and a good meal. Without patrons, restaurateurs have had to close their doors, reduce capacity, utilize government support to stay afloat, pivot to new business models and reduce employee hours to make ends meet.

My parents opened a restaurant when they immigrated to Canada, looking to build a better future. My siblings and I worked there growing up, and it was more than a job—it was a second home where our team and our customers felt like extended family. They weren't just our livelihood but our lifeblood—friends that we got to know well over years and celebrated special occasions with, from birthdays and graduations to anniversaries and retirement.

This is why restaurants are so important.

They give our neighbourhoods character, build our community culture and are shining examples of Canada's diversity. They make our neighbourhoods feel like home.

Restaurants are also a major engine powering Canada's economy. According to data from Restaurants Canada, annual revenue from the sector was expected to top $100 billion in 2021, but the pandemic changed that, with 2020 sector revenue down by nearly 30 per cent from what it was in 2019.



Minister Ng checks out goodies at Black Honey Cafe

Recent data from Statistics Canada indicates that hospitality sector employment increased by 65,000 in February 2021, rebounding from second wave losses. But, even with this recent increase, employment in the industry is still down by more than a quarter compared to a year ago.

In the face of tremendous adversity, restaurants have stepped up, adapted and demonstrated resilience. Some leveraged an existing takeout business to grow, and others built that capacity from the ground up. But even the most agile businesses need our support.

When the pandemic arrived, our government knew we had to act quickly to support as many Canadians and businesses as possible, as rapidly as possible. We can only do this effectively if we are listening. In the last year, my team and I have connected with thousands of small business owners, including restaurant owners, industry leaders and associations like Restaurants Canada.

We invested billions through our Economic Response Plan with a comprehensive suite of emergency programs, such as the Canada Emergency Business Account, the Emergency Wage Subsidy, the Emergency Rent Subsidy and the Lockdown Support, the Highly Affected Sectors Credit Availability Program, and targeted support through the Regional Relief and Recovery Program.

Hundreds of thousands of small businesses and restaurants have relied on these programs to keep their lights on, keep their employees on payroll and bridge through this crisis to a brighter future. We also know many continue to struggle, and we are listening and working with them to assess and improve our programs and find solutions.

We are all in this together and each of us can also do our part to support the restaurants in our communities. I encourage all Canadians to get out there and support their local establishments, by dining in safely, ordering takeout and buying gift cards.

With the support of all Canadians, our restaurants will make a comeback. As we continue our vaccine roll-out, we know brighter days are ahead, where we can once again get together and celebrate birthdays, watch our favourite sports team and enjoy our favourite meals out in public.



Minister Ng visits WuHan Noodle in pre-COVID times

**Because #RestaurantsAreFamily, we asked Minister Ng to tell us about a restaurant in her neighbourhood where she feels at home. Here's what she had to say about Wuhan Noodle 1950 in Markham, Ontario:**

**MM What's your go-to order?**

*It's so hard to pick just one so let me highlight Wuhan dry noodles and beef noodle soup.*

**MM Can you tell us more about the menu and where the restaurant sources its ingredients?**

*Wuhan Noodle serves authentic dishes, with noodles made fresh locally with Canadian ingredients.*

**MM What are some of the hardest challenges this restaurant is struggling with due to the pandemic?**

*At the start of the pandemic, Wuhan Noodle was the target of racist attacks due to its namesake. It has been heartening to see so many community members show their support since then, and I want to encourage everyone to support their local businesses, like Wuhan Noodle, when they can, especially those who have had to deal with additional challenges, like anti-Asian racism, on top of COVID-19.*

*Like many others, Wuhan Noodle has lost business as a result of the pandemic. Some of their employees also had to balance their jobs with additional responsibilities, like staying at home to take care of their kids. While they have been working hard to ensure customers and staff are safe, like many restaurants, getting customers to return has been challenging.*

**MM How has this business been adapting to survive the ongoing economic and public health crisis?**

*The team at Wuhan Noodle has worked hard to follow public health guidelines to keep customers and staff safe, and have adapted like many. They've also leaned on our government for support, including the Canada Emergency Business Account loan and the rent and wage subsidies, to keep the lights on and their staff on payroll through this challenging time.*

**MM What kind of moments are you most looking forward to being able to enjoy again at this restaurant once the pandemic is over?**

*I look forward to being able to sit down in the restaurant again with my team, friends and family, and seeing the faces of my neighbors and happy customers that have been behind masks for the last year!*







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# Celebrating Canadian Leadership, Talent & Courage

## RC AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

With such a tumultuous year, it was more important than ever to recognize Canada's foodservice and hospitality industry with the RC Awards of Excellence. This year's winners have all demonstrated incredible leadership in the face of adversity and challenge, and have all worked tirelessly to dedicate their talent to bettering their local community.

Restaurants Canada couldn't be prouder to announce the winners of the RC Awards of Excellence.



### Zita Cobb

Founder & CEO, Shorefast Group

**LEADERSHIP AWARD WINNER**

As a Fogo Island native, Zita Cobbs has dedicated her life to building cultural and economic resilience on Fogo Island. The drive to understand the global economic systems that had disadvantaged Fogo Island and numerous other small communities has led Zita's career path and life journey.

Fogo Island Inn was opened in 2013 by Zita, not to make a financial return but because "[they] were in a community that needed to put another life in our economy."

Zita founded the Shorefast Foundation which now employs a quarter of the population on Fogo Island. Their social enterprises, The Woodshop on Fogo Island, Fogo Island Fish and the Inn aim to generate 15 per cent in profits to be invested back into charitable programs.

Cobb was one of four 2020 Canadian Business Hall of Fame inductees and in 2016, Zita was awarded the Order of Canada in acknowledgment of the work of Shorefast in collaboration with the community of Fogo Island to help secure a more resilient future for this singular rural place. In October 2020, Newfoundland and Labrador Premier Andrew Furey announced Zita as one of the members of the Premier's Economic Recovery Team.



### Chris Zielinski

Culinary Director, Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment (MLSE)

**CULINARY EXCELLENCE AWARD WINNER**

In his role as Culinary Director and Executive Chef for all MLSE properties, Chris Zielinski has elevated game night cuisine and challenged our perceptions of what dining out at a sporting event entails.

Chef Chris Zielinski has spearheaded a company-wide commitment to sustainable practices and has ensured that MLSE takes part in initiatives that source local ingredients, recycles cooking oil into biofuel and uses biodegradable products. Chris is pivotal in prioritizing strong community partnerships for MLSE. The team rescues thousands of meals in MLSE spaces and distributes them to those in need through Second Harvest.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Chris created the "Bringing Toronto Back To Its Feet" program. By turning the Scotiabank Area into Toronto's largest kitchen, and by gathering ingredient donations from a number of partners, Chris and his team were able to support and thank Toronto's frontline health workers and their families, and to protect the city's most vulnerable population that rely on community agencies and organizations like Second Harvest for their next meal.



## *Suzanne Barr*

### Chef, Social Advocate, Author, Suzanne Barr Food

### SOCIAL ADVOCACY AWARD WINNER

Chef Suzanne Barr is not just a chef,  she is also a community leader—and speaks as passionately about mentorship as she does about food. Barr is a strong advocate for people of colour, mental wellness, equal pay for equal work, LGBTQ communities, nutrition literacy and food source sustainability.

In June 2018, Suzanne was able to showcase her love of social advocacy and food when she was chosen to participate in the James Beard Foundation Chef's Bootcamp at the New Farm in Collingwood, ON. In 2018, at the Women In Hospitality United symposium in New York City, she presented The Dinette's Program, a cooperative training program providing an opportunity to learn, co-create, devise effective solutions for workplaces, and enhance business productivity while promoting the next generation of women as industry leaders.

In the fall of 2019, Barr was Head Chef/Owner at True True Diner in Toronto, Canada. The concept was a mirror of her unique culinary repertoire and social advocacy. While now closed, her official statement calls out a pattern of the systematic disenfranchisement of BIPOC owned and operated businesses in the restaurant industry and beyond.



## *Anita Stewart*

### LEGACY AWARD WINNER

Anita was a pioneer in Canada's culinary landscape. As a Member of the Order of Canada, Food Laureate at the University of Guelph and the President of Food Day Canada and Flavours of Canada (these are just a few of the accolades Anita accumulated throughout her life), Restaurants Canada was proud to work with Anita and the Food Day Canada theme to promote Canadian terroir.

Our industry has been immeasurably bettered by Anita's actions and work. Our community has lost a positive force; however, we can be sure that Anita's efforts will go on for years to come. Anita's passion and spirit for Canadian cuisine and the people who make it happen was unrivaled.

Anita's motto - "Canada IS food and the world is richer for it", stands today as a reminder not just of Anita's incredible achievements, but also of our goals as we work through these challenging times. Anita's legacy will continue to live on as we look forward to celebrating Food Day Canada again this summer 2021.

## *Gastronomous Technologies*

### INNOVATION AWARD WINNER

This year's winner designed a ground-breaking innovation that realizes the kitchen of the future. This robust, scalable and cost-effective solution will allow restaurants to improve their cost-structure, efficiency, and scalability, while in return providing their customers with superior consistency, hygiene and food quality. This proudly Canadian kitchen innovation is inspired by automotive engineers to address the needs of our industry. **www.gastronomous.ca**

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# REBUILDING AND REINVENTING CAREERS DURING COVID-19

*Professionals share how they adapted their careers and lifestyles to pursue their passions during this challenging time.*

BY KATE AYERS

While every sector has been affected by COVID-19, the impact on Canada's foodservice and hospitality industries has been significant. But as we saw through the thought leadership at RC Show 2021, we have an opportunity to reinvent, reconnect and rebuild. We sat down to gather stories across the industry of those who have reinvented their careers, whether industry veterans or newcomers, to understand how and why they chose to pivot and what these changes may mean for the future.




## CHEF MICHAEL THOMPSON, 6FT. APART MOBILE EATERY & CATERING

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Chef Michael Thompson took his destiny into his own hands. When his former employer, The Tremont Cafe in Collingwood, ON, was affected by COVID-19, Thompson returned to his family's farm and began to draw up plans for a new business. On the heels of 11 years in the foodservice industry at establishments from Nova Scotia to British Columbia, Thompson briefly hung up his sous-chef hat to work on his family's farm and the largest duck operation in Canada, King Cole Ducks.

"I didn't know what COVID-19 was going to bring to my family's business, especially being a part of the live production side of things. I felt that it was best to move back home and help my family in any way I could," Thompson says. During his stint on the farm, Thompson worked 11-hour days on the duck processing assembly line and collected 13,000 duck eggs each day.

"I was happy to help during a difficult time but I wanted to get back to focusing on my passion. A friend suggested a food truck and the idea stuck. During the pandemic, food trucks are still considered an essential service and facilitate takeout food orders. So it was something I could do."

Then, his 6ft. Apart food truck came alive.

When Thompson mentioned his business idea to people, they all assumed he planned to serve burgers and french fries. However, he had a much different cuisine in mind. Thompson wanted to continue doing what he does best – preparing fine dining meals in a fun and approachable food-truck style. "Before I jumped into (the business) I did a lot of research. I discovered that the average wait time for food trucks was 14 minutes. People are lined up and names are called out," Thompson says.

"During COVID, I don't want to yell out names and have groups standing around." To avoid this issue, Thompson designed his entire menu around execution. The dishes are complex and take hours of prep in his commercial kitchen, but he executes them off the truck in minutes. His food truck serves gourmet duck wings, tacos and Thai bowls. Thompson makes his dishes with, "local Ontario lamb from our neighbours at the farm. The lamb is roasted on coals for about 15 hours," he says. "Duck wings are cured and confit in duck fat. The Thai bowls contain paste that I make from scratch."

Thompson also creates custom menus for special occasions, such as staff appreciation events and weddings. His specialty is private dinner parties where he pulls his truck right up to the front door and executes a six to eight course dinner with wine pairings, creating a very unique dining experience.

Like many entrepreneurs, Thompson was apprehensive of consumer perception and acceptance during COVID-19. "It's a super weird time. I didn't know how people would receive this business or would feel about coming to get food off a truck," he says. Despite his worst fears, "my business has been non-stop since the day I started serving back in June 2020. I have a clean food truck, people are distanced and they have been welcoming."



Thompson's success can be attributed to his innovation and outside-the-box thinking. He encourages other foodservice stakeholders to, "band together and learn from each other," he says. "The game plan or model that you had before the pandemic must shift to make your dreams happen," Thompson adds. "Step outside of your comfort zone. Develop something that not only generates revenue but excites your guests; something that is different than what they have seen from you."

Moving forward, Thompson looks to combine his passions for cooking and teaching. "I want to have commissary kitchens across Ontario and bring in co-op students to work with me," he states. When he was in culinary school, "I found that the hands-on learning aspect in our industry was a big miss. I want to show them the real-life working environment in a commercial kitchen and share my knowledge and passion with the next generation."

## BECCA PEREIRA, SPICE GIRL EATS

Like many other Canadians last year, 23-year-old Becca Pereira was laid off from her day job when the COVID-19 pandemic took hold of North America. When asked to return to work at a hair salon in the fall, Pereira had other plans. "I have cooked every single day during the pandemic and I was unaware of anyone else offering homemade Indian food," Pereira says. "I brought up the idea to my mom and she was fully supportive of the business."

Last October, Pereira launched Spice Girl Eats and offers Indian cuisine for pick up every Tuesday. She lives down the street from The Depanneur and rents out their commercial kitchen space. "It started out just being me in the business, but everyone in my family has joined the team," Pereira says. "I was able to hire my mom. She has been a chef since I was a kid and has a strong background in Indian cuisine. I didn't plan on what it has become. It just kind of happened."

Pereira attributes her confidence and drive to previous job experiences. "I've modelled since I was 16. Modelling was a good transition to working for myself. I have thick skin from criticism. With my food, I know that I can't please everyone but I don't let that stop me," Pereira says.

While she has no formal education in business management or cooking, Pereira is learning on the job and soaking up as much as she can from other professionals in the industry. She quickly recognized the importance of knowing your market. "I hired an accountant right away and it was the best decision. Know your finances, expenditures and where your profit lies," says Pereira.

Pereira continues to learn the ropes of entrepreneurship and looks forward to capitalizing on her business' potential. "For me, staying organized is a challenge – managing calls, orders, packing, social media and emails. I have a never-ending list of things, but I wouldn't have it any other way. I would much rather work for myself."

Pereira's mother takes care of most of the meal creation, but desserts are where Pereira's creativity and talent shine. "I really enjoy experimenting with desserts," she says. "I can create new recipes and test them out in real-time. Then, I can see, based on data, what sells. I use this information to constantly improve each week." As a testament to her baking abilities, Pereira's favourite dish is the pista-kulfi cheesecake. "I take a slice home on Tuesday no matter what," she adds.

Business is booming and Pereira has exciting plans to elevate her brand. "I think Spice Girl Eats will be my life-long brand. Where it's going to head, I'm not sure. I want to get into product creation, grocery store markets and start a cooking show. We are pivoting the entire business soon." Stay tuned!

## JANE LEE, MAMA LEE'S KOREAN KITCHEN

A hardworking mother-daughter duo are bringing their dreams to fruition with a Korean cuisine restaurant. Young Lee and her daughter Jane jumped on an opportunity to launch Mama Lee's in March 2020 when a long sought after retail space became available right next door to Kibo Sushi, a Japanese restaurant that the family has owned for 13 years.

"My mom is Mama Lee. I have always called her that and so do my friends," Jane says. "I thought it would be super cute to name a restaurant after her. The business sort of just snowballed into what it is now."

Jane previously worked in public relations but now manages logistics, design, technological and inventory for Mama Lee's. Young handles all the food preparation. They are equal partners in the business. "My mom's dream for a long time was to open up a Korean takeout



business," Jane says. "We are of Korean descent, so this business is close to home for her. The restaurant has turned into our little baby. We've done everything for it, right down to the renovations."

The pair faced some challenges along the way and had to adapt their approach in comparison to the Japanese restaurant they launched in 2008. For example, they had to source and use, "protective equipment including hand sanitizer, masks, plastic shields and gloves," Jane says. They also had some issues with consistent supply of key ingredients. "We changed our bowls because our supplier couldn't get stock into Canada," she explains.

Jane has two favourite dishes, the first being the nostalgic "jja jja myun." It is a noodle dish with black bean sauce, pork and vegetables. "There was a period of my life where it's all I would eat when we went out," she admits. The second is kimchi fried rice. "You can put kimchi on anything and it makes everything taste better," she adds.

For folks interested in starting up a business during the pandemic, Jane says, "practice patience and stand your ground. Use your resources and ask questions. Fortunately, assistance is available, including provincial and federal grants. It's worth looking into those online."

## CHEF DONOVAN GOMES, THE CHICKEN CARTEL



At the beginning of the pandemic, Chef Donovan Gomes was laid off from El Catrin Destileria, the largest Mexican restaurant in Toronto. Instead of tossing in the towel, he rolled up his sleeves and got to work on a new project. "I needed to support my wife, kids and myself," Gomes said. Gomes said. While appreciative of government funding, it wasn't enough to live on long-term, so he had to create his own opportunities.

"I used the skills that I acquired over 17 years in the industry and pursued the entrepreneurial dream when I had the opportunity," he says. Gomes turned a difficult situation into a new business prospect. "I had a number of business concepts and narrowed it down to chicken. It is affordable, versatile and consumed in many people's homes," Gomes decided. "There are so many chicken joints in this city, but I want to use chicken as the vehicle to celebrate the ethnicities in Toronto that I have been exposed to throughout my life."

The Chicken Cartel's menu reflects Caribbean, Latin, Asian and Indian cuisines. His favourite dish is the CHICKPLOSION, which features Thai green curry chicken. The business has become a family venture, as he garnered support from many of his family members, including his wife and two daughters, who have helped him along this journey. Though he had full family support, the biggest challenge he faced in the early stages was start-up and working capital. "I pulled out a substantial amount of my savings to start up, buy equipment, pay the first month's rent, etc.," he says.

However, with patience and determination, he has learned a lot along the way. "I'm digesting information that I was never exposed to as an employee. I had to learn certain things about business ownership. It has been a good learning experience in website design and photography," he says.

"Setting up vendors or suppliers is easy when you work at a big restaurant because they all come running when you call but, when you're working for yourself, it's hard to negotiate prices or you have to shop yourself. I've saved costs by doing most of the legwork myself."

Since the pandemic rules out the dine-in option, Gomes focuses on food delivery and pick up in his pop-up kitchen. Gomes hopes to soon find a permanent venue for his business and "build The Chicken Cartel to be an extremely amazing experience for anyone who comes to partake in our food."

Gomes is turning his dreams into reality and he encourages everyone to commit to their ambitions. "If you are passionate about what you do, stick with it. Don't change because the environment denotes that you won't succeed. You just have to reinvent yourself. Don't just call it quits," he says.

"You've devoted your whole life to becoming a chef, for example, so why are you going to toss all that out because you thought there was only one way to do things? There are multiple approaches, you just have to figure out your way."

## EVELYN CHICK, EVELYN CHICK PROJECTS



Evelyn Chick took the opportunity the pandemic presented to transform her side hustle into a full-time career. Chick was a beverage director for a large hospitality group, but in April 2020, she made the business, Evelyn Chick Projects, the top priority. She first launched this business in 2018 as an umbrella consultancy that offers a wide range of services from bar design, beverage innovation and spirits education to virtual events curation.

However, Chick had to adapt and reconfigure her original business model and strategies to conform to COVID-19 realities. She used her 13 years of experience in the hospitality industry to, "find new ways to connect with consumers and try to turn what I have always done, which is guest services and creating beverage experiences, into a profitable venture." Chick adds, "I had to figure out how to make that (concept) come to fruition and then build a brand and website around it."

She had to visualize what this new business could look like by focusing on her skills and expertise, but could also drive revenue. "I was swimming into the unknown," she says. "My whole business strategy right now is to bring the bar experience directly to peoples' homes and connect them with their loved ones who they may not have a chance to visit, through custom designed cocktail kits and experiences," Chick explains. "In-person webinars and workshops have shifted to a completely virtual realm."

In addition, Chick is the designer and operator of Salty Paloma, a highly successful e-commerce store and is co-founder of Stay At Home Cocktail Club, Toronto's premier custom cocktail subscription service and creator of unique corporate beverage experiences. Chick works hard to ensure her customers' experiences are top-notch.

"I think consumers miss social interaction. There is only so much you can do virtually," she says. "So we try our best to make sure that every aspect, from them ordering the kit to communication to event organization, is catered to their needs."

Just as Chick had to shift her tactics, she urges other business owners to stay open-minded when challenges arise. "As a society, we have experienced a shift in dynamics. Keep an open mind for revenue streams, because I didn't know this route was going to be my path until it paved itself," she adds.

"The more adaptive, creative and flexible you are with your goals and vision, the better off you will be. We've never experienced this situation before and need to adapt on a day-to-day basis." Chick is proud of the innovative approaches that food and beverage stakeholders create to thrive during the pandemic. "It's amazing to see other individuals in the industry alter their business models to really show they are resilient," she says.




## ALYSSA TALBOT

Generating 93 billion in revenue and 4 per cent of Canada's GDP, foodservice was the country's fastest growing industry in 2019. In total, Canada's commercial foodservice sales in November 2020 were 32 per cent lower compared to November 2019.

Alyssa Talbot was proud to contribute to this economic powerhouse of an industry as a server in Hamilton. However, she was laid off last October. Now, she works in Toronto's film industry. The biggest changes in her transition are "the hours and completely different scheduling," Talbot says. "It's just so different. I was in such a routine serving for five years. This new job in film made me change everything that I was used to."

Though she enjoyed her previous job as a server, Talbot does not see herself working in the foodservice industry anytime soon. "Restaurant owners encourage as little social interaction as possible with customers, because of the pandemic" she comments. "I don't think I will go back (to food service) because the best part about serving was the people you met and social interaction. COVID-19 has taken that away."

**Talbot's story reflects the reality of the labour force in foodservice and hospitality. So many of the incredible talent that makes up our workforce, and Talbot's story begs the question – will they return?**

**To get more insight on today's workforce, check out the "The Future Workforce: How to Recruit & Rebuild Your Team Post-Pandemic" session presented by BDO Canada through RC Show ON DEMAND on the Speaker Stage. Visit rcshow.com for more details on how you can get access to our entire library of content from RC Show 2021.**

**What does this mean for the future of foodservice?**

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused shifts in most industries, and foodservice was not immune to immense challenges posed by safety regulations and protocols in each province and territory. Fortunately, foodservice stakeholders demonstrated their drive and ingenuity.

"COVID was a terrible time to own a restaurant but a great time to launch one. Folks in this industry are creative and entrepreneurial by nature," says Jo-Anne McArthur, president and chief strategist at Nourish Food Marketing in Toronto. "They found new ways to deliver food and beverage experiences to people. Micropreneurs, both professional chefs and home cooks, have created meals and food products out of their personal kitchens using word of mouth and Instagram to find their customers. For many foodies with a dream, the pandemic and lockdown restrictions offered much-needed time and the push to launch their businesses."

With safety precautions and limited gathering sizes, food business owners must meet guests where they are most comfortable and safe – in their homes. "Home delivery will remain important even after things open up, as more people will continue to work from home part of the time. Remember, delivery and takeout were growing pre-pandemic, primarily driven by younger generations, and these are the workers who are most likely to continue working from home," McArthur says.

Restaurants and dining experiences could undergo major overhauls in a post-COVID-19 world.

"87 per cent of Canadians agree that they are looking forward to eating in restaurants again and will support their local restaurants as soon as they reopen," McArthur says."Restaurants need to be ready to meet that pent-up demand for in-restaurant experience and surge in post-pandemic visits, and ensure that the first experience does not disappoint."

In addition, robotic solutions may come into play, such as touchless technologies for condiment dispensers, door openers for guests and conveyor belt food delivery systems. "Will full service and fine dining be more purposeful, offering unparalleled and one-of-a-kind experiences?" McArthur asks.

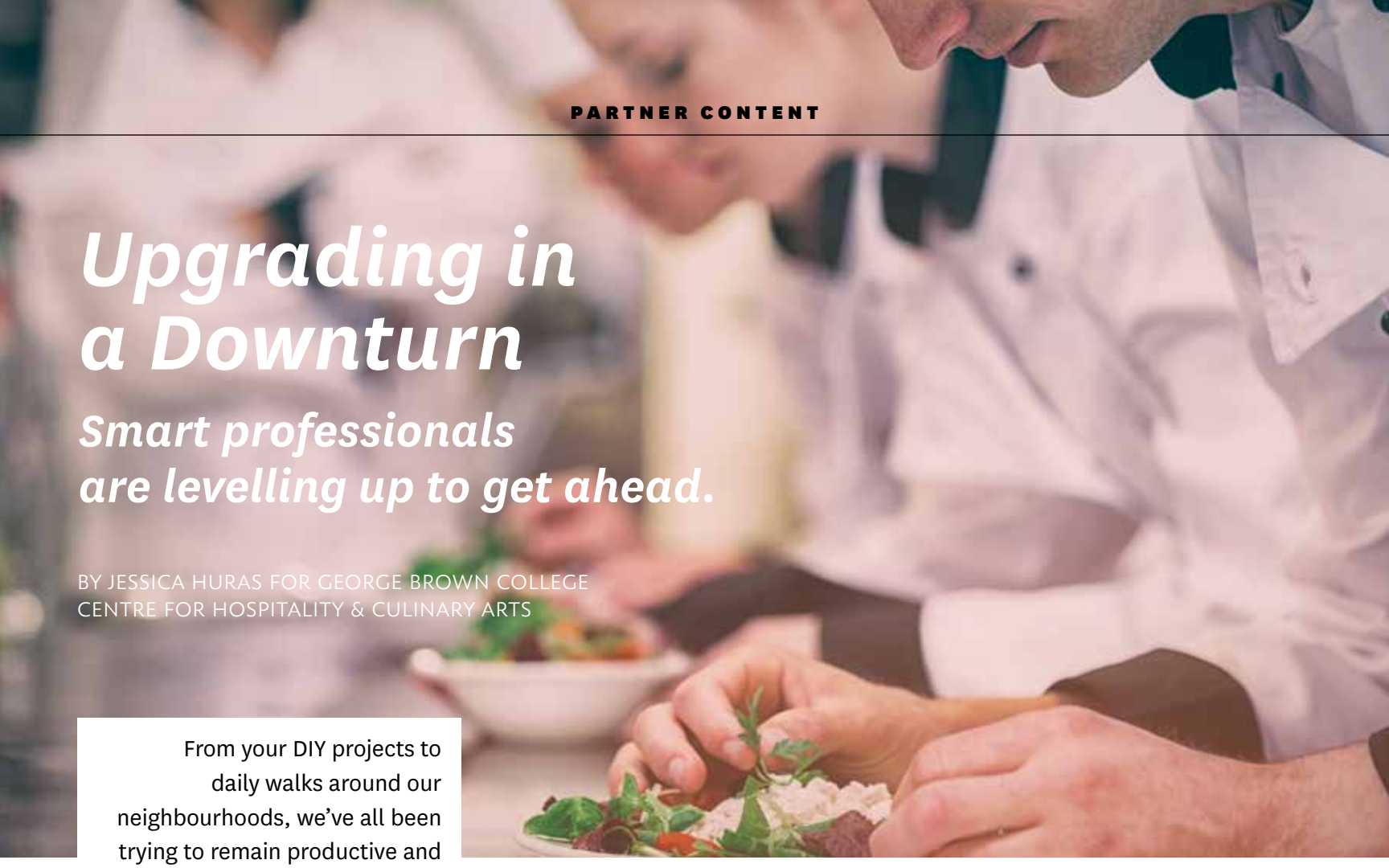
Business owners are "now competing with ghost restaurants built for mobile-first. You cannot win on convenience or operating costs – that genuine hospitality is your point of difference."

"After a year of plating our restaurant meals at home while in sweatpants, that white napkin service in a formal dining room may not be what we now equate with hospitality."

"Chefs may cook for and serve a smaller group of friends in a micro restaurant to create a more exclusive and intimate dining experience," McArthur says.

The pandemic has and will result in changes to systems and operations in all industries. How will the foodservice industry respond?





# Upgrading in a Downturn

## Smart professionals are levelling up to get ahead.

BY JESSICA HURAS FOR GEORGE BROWN COLLEGE CENTRE FOR HOSPITALITY & CULINARY ARTS

From your DIY projects to daily walks around our neighbourhoods, we've all been trying to remain productive and positive as we continue to adapt to life amid the pandemic. Many in the foodservice and hospitality community are taking advantage of the extended downtime and leveraging it as an opportunity to invest in further education. Some are pursuing long-time personal passions, while others are preparing for the next phase of their careers by gaining new skills and credentials.

While enrolling in a new program during the era of physical distancing may seem daunting at first, Jason Inniss, Professor/Coordinator, Culinary Management, Chef School at George Brown College, says that online learning and smaller class sizes can offer unexpected benefits for new students. "Since we were forced to go online, we invested a lot of time, energy and money into recording all of our skills courses. It's added a whole other layer to the learning for students," he explains.

"In the past, a student had to watch a live demo to see how something was done but now they have this resource that they can go back to and have for the rest of their life. If you're trying to roll a baguette, for example, and you can't remember exactly how to fold it or how to shape it, now you've got the video at your fingertips," he says.

For classes that are continuing to be held in-person, group sizes have been reduced to promote physical distancing. "Rather than 24 students in the classroom, there are only nine plus a professor, so it's way more hands-on now," adds Inniss.

Tammy Vaillancourt, a Professor/Coordinator for Food & Beverage Management, School of Hospitality at George Brown, says that new virtual learning options are making it possible for more students to access the college's programs than ever before. "There's just so much more flexibility for our students than what they've ever seen in the past," she says.

She points out that students who might previously have had to commute to campus or missed occasional lectures due to work or family commitments now have access to lecture content wherever and whenever it's convenient for them to learn.

Vaillancourt says that many of her students are foodservice and hospitality professionals who are using the career pause created by the pandemic to work towards new 'micro-credentials' or to pursue formal education for the first time after gaining years of hands-on experience.

**Chris Palivan, the co-founder of the Toronto Cider Festival and a George Brown graduate**, worked hospitality jobs ranging from dishwashing to bartending before enrolling in the Special Events Planning program.

"I went to intro sessions for a few different programs. I hadn't even considered special events as an avenue for me until somebody spoke about it and I realized that it completely made sense. It was everything that I wanted to pursue," he says, adding that he saw the program as a jumping-off point for his goal of becoming an entrepreneur.




Innis says that post-graduate certificates can be an excellent option for those with a background in the industry who are ready to upgrade their skills. "For people who are in the industry who might be on hiatus right now, we have an advanced French culinary postgrad, an advanced Italian postgrad, an advanced nutrition postgrad [to name a few]," he says.

**Stephanie Guth, another George Brown alumnus who now works as a portfolio manager for the Toronto-based wine agency The Living Vine**, chose to return to George Brown to complete a postgraduate certificate in Italian Culinary Arts after finishing her two-year culinary management diploma.



Guth's goal was to pave a career path in hospitality that offered opportunities to travel for work. Before the pandemic, Guth says she regularly took trips to Italy and France, where The Living Vine's portfolio is concentrated, to attend wine shows, education programs and other industry events. "I get to travel a ton which is great," she says. "Before COVID, I travelled maybe every six weeks to every two months."

While the possibility of business travel may seem far removed from our current reality, investing in education now can lay the groundwork for future job opportunities abroad. "You can travel around the world with the skills taught through our programs," says Innis, "and be hired in other places around the world because you have those fundamental culinary skills and understanding of how to cook multiple types of cuisines."

The shift to remote learning is also giving current students the chance to master new virtual platforms and tools that could enhance their future job prospects. "The curriculum is shifting to reflect what skills will be needed post [COVID]," says Vaillancourt.

"I think there's a new emerging market in virtual events," she adds, noting that students who might have been required to host an in-person event as part of their program before the pandemic are now learning how to put on a virtual gathering instead. "I don't think our students have ever learned this many technology platforms," she says.

With foodservice and hospitality professionals across the country adapting their businesses to include new online elements, ranging from virtual cooking classes to more user-friendly e-commerce sites, tech-savviness is likely to be in-demand as the industry emerges from COVID-19.

Online sales and virtual events have been key components of **Hoda Paripoush's** pandemic pivot. **Owner of Sloane Tea and a graduate of George Brown's tea sommelier program**, Paripoush focused on developing tea programs for restaurants and hotels before the pandemic. Dining room closures and reduced hotel occupancies, however, have caused her to shift her strategy to online sales.

"Online has been there from the beginning, but it's evolved dramatically in terms of the user experience and what we offer," she says, explaining that Sloane has added subscription and rewards programs to entice new online customers.

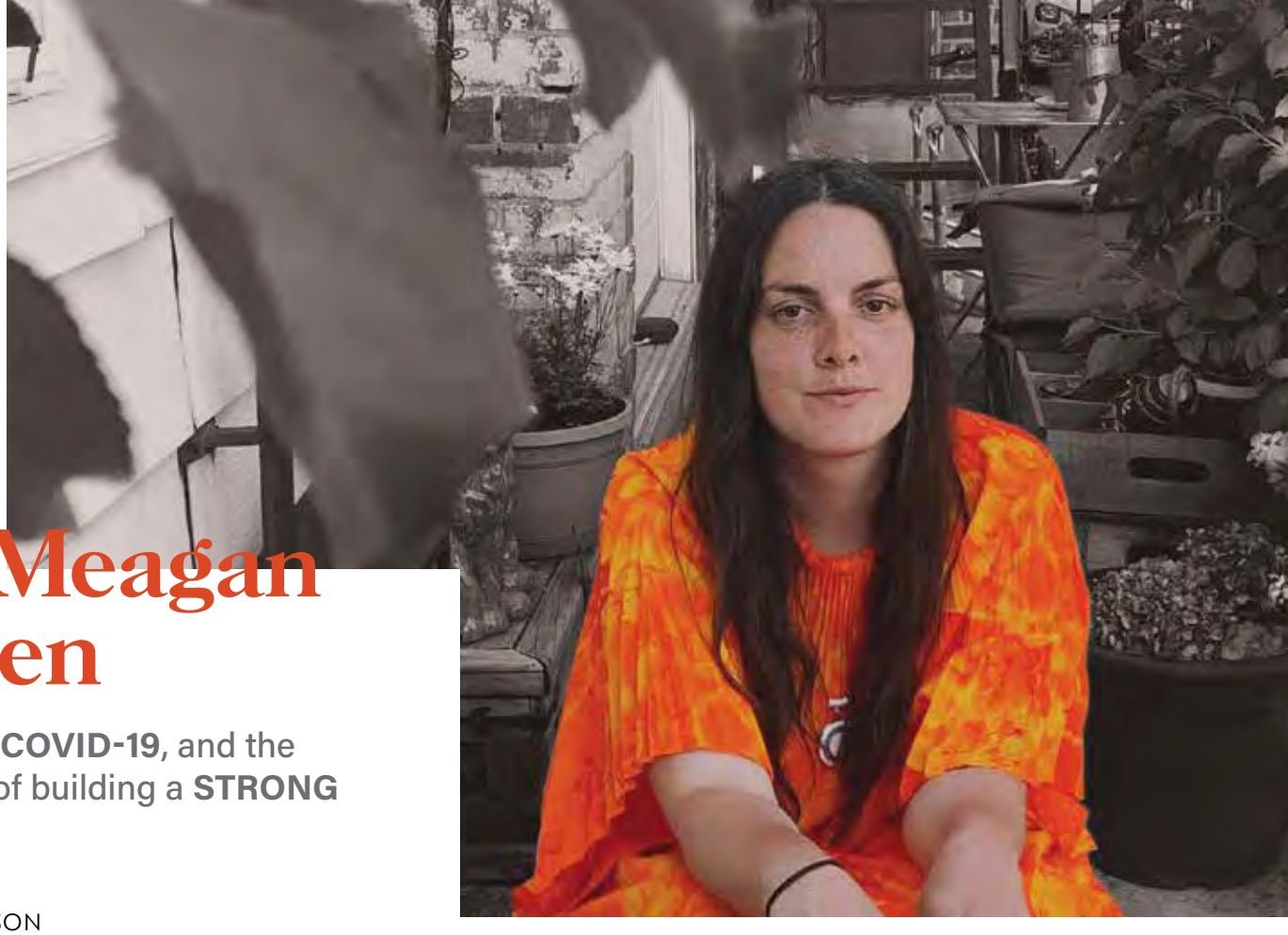
Also, Paripoush's tea cupping studio in Toronto, which was intended to become a hub for education, will soon be launching a video series to replace in-person events.

"Now we're like, let's take our cupping studio into people's homes – take those intimate and candid conversations we wanted to have and make it available to everyone," she says. Sloane's video series will include interviews with industry changemakers as well as "how-to's" designed to help customers learn techniques for preparing tea at home.



Innis points out that the pandemic has spurred new foodservice and hospitality trends, such as the emergence of virtual kitchens, which present exciting opportunities for those with an entrepreneurial mindset. "We believe that when the pandemic calms down and businesses bounce back, it's going to come back harder and stronger," he says.

"You don't just get cooking skills out of a culinary certificate or diploma. You also get leadership and organizational and management skills. It's such an amazing transferable skill, not only for a career path but also for life."



# Chef Meagan Bowden

## On **CATERING**, **COVID-19**, and the **IMPORTANCE** of building a **STRONG COMMUNITY**

BY J. MARIE NICHOLSON

Growing up, Chef Meagan Bowden was surrounded by delicious food and exemplary hospitality. In addition to having a mother who was an epic host, she had a part-time gig that she didn't dread—making mile-high meat sandwiches in a grocery store deli. It would seem logical that she was destined to have a career in the foodservice industry, and though she meandered down a different path in university, after graduating from Ryerson University's journalism program, Bowden eventually found her way back to food. She spent her days fresh out of school in the kitchen instead of the newsroom, cutting her teeth while working for Oliver & Bonacini and Drake 150. While there, she soaked up all the industry knowledge she could and dabbled in catering on the side.

Fast forward to 2016, and Phancy Food & Catering, Bowden's Toronto-based business was born. The business is a testament to her deep-rooted passion for food and hospitality. Comfort food is the heart and soul of Phancy Food & Catering. "We dress up the classics," she explained. "I like to create foods that are nostalgic, help people create a new memory and put an emphasis on flavour."

Bowden is a determined chef with a strong business acumen and loads of talent. Her self-proclaimed specialty? Cocktail appetizers, which she whimsically refers to as, "little parcels of joy." In fact, in a 2019 culinary competition organized by the Consulate General of France in Toronto, *Elles sont* Food, and you?, Bowden took home multiple awards for her impressive canapés—and it was her first culinary competition. The winning bites included a Devil's Rock Creamy Blue Cheese brioche with pickled jalapeño peppers and a cacao and chicken liver pâté crostini accented with gooseberry.

For Bowden, the outlook was sunny in 2019. Her business was thriving and she had just been nominated for best caterer by *NOW Magazine Reader's Choice*. However, things took a drastic turn when the COVID-19 pandemic engulfed the world in early 2020. In a matter of days, it was like the foodservices industry had been hit by a bullet train. Small businesses like hers were faced with two choices in order to survive: close or pivot. This was a stark contrast from Bowden's pre-pandemic life, where she often had packed calendar of catering orders for corporate events, large weddings and fancy soirées.

"My business really deteriorated when the pandemic hit," she said. "It was sad to see the whole company come to a halt and it was hard to muster up the energy to do anything about it." With a catering volume of less than half of what it was pre-pandemic, Bowden was forced to shift, adapt and diversify her business. So, in the fall of 2020, Bowden launched her first online shop, Phancy's Bodega.

A quick scroll through the shop's pages will make anyone salivate. From a monstrous mortadella pie sandwich to festive dinners with all the fixings, Phancy's Bodega has plenty of delicious offerings that are available for curbside pickup or delivery. In addition to prepared foods—the bread and butter of her business—the online shop has a unique selection of Canadian-made and Toronto-focused gourmet products. Bowden proudly stocks her virtual shelves with local and unique items, such as albacore pesto tuna from Scout Canning, beet tahini from Parallel Brothers and Cool Melon seltzer from City Seltzer.

"Having the shop has sparked my creativity," she mentioned. "Over the course of the last year, I've found joy in creating food in a more personalized and intimate way. I can incorporate local products into a package or a nice spread." For example, Bowden uses a meaty pasta sauce from Montreal-based Stefano in her date night for two pasta kit.

*"Over the course of the last year, I've found joy in creating food in a more personalized and intimate way."*

Her biggest seller, by far, has been the high tea kit for two, which she created on a whim. It's a perfectly assembled package of ready-to-eat finger sandwiches, scones, pastries, preserves from Provisions Food Company and tea, along with cute napkins. An aromatic muffuletta finger sandwich that's equal parts familiar, comforting and dainty is just one of the sandwich selections in the kit. Due to its overwhelming popularity, Bowden envisions selling the kit in local cafés one day—or perhaps even opening a brick and mortar shop of her own. While there are currently no plans in the works, she often dreams of finding the perfect spot to set up shop. "I would love to find a corner spot in the middle of a residential neighborhood so I can directly serve that neighbourhood with food staples, comforting food and drinks, and a place for the community to gather." After the pandemic, Bowden feels strongly that there will still be a market for at-home experiences—at least in the short-term—and the high tea kit could serve as a new revenue stream with some further tweaks. "Upgrading the high tea kit to include fancy dishware that people could keep and hosting high tea themed parties would be a great way to incorporate catering with the kits," she shared.

From the launch of Phancy's Bodega to creating innovative product offerings and forging new partnerships, Bowden has become all too familiar with trial and error. In the pandemic's early days, Bowden teamed up with two other female food entrepreneurs and launched a barbeque takeout pop-up called 852 Curbside Collective. "It was my first time having an online platform and doing delivery, and there were so many new things to navigate," she mentioned, casually referring to the experience as, a "pandemic training course." "We started the whole thing with no long-term plan in sight because we literally didn't know what the next month would hold with the constant changes in lockdown," she said. "It was exciting, challenging, fun and exhausting all at once." While the learning curve was steep, and, ultimately, the business didn't pan out, Bowden expressed that she wouldn't be where she is today if she hadn't teamed up with these women.

"Ultimately, I have no regrets. Everything serves a purpose in life and that leads to the next step," she said.

That sense of community—especially with other women in the industry—has been crucial to Bowden's career success thus far, as well as her mental survival while navigating COVID-19's choppy waters. Bowden has long been a passionate advocate for female and female-identifying entrepreneurs in the hospitality industry. In 2018, The Female Foodie Entrepreneur Network was created out of her desire to provide a support system for like-minded individuals. Pre-pandemic, Bowden organized monthly meetings for people to connect, problem-solve and learn from each other. "At our last event before the pandemic, we had four women with different backgrounds share their stories about working in the industry," she mentioned. "It was so cathartic for everyone to open up and share their stories."

Like many others in the industry, Bowden has leaned on her community more than ever throughout the past year—and she would offer the same advice to fellow entrepreneurs. "I've learned firsthand that having a good community around you will help you get through the tough times," she openly expressed. "Help others when you are able to and you will likely receive support in return if you are surrounded by like-minded people." With strength in numbers, Bowden has no doubt that once the pandemic dust settles, the foodservices industry will rebuild, grow and thrive once again.



RC Show — Restaurants Canada — THE HOSPITALITY EVENT OF THE YEAR

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# 4 DAYS, 150 LEADERS, 1 VOICE:
# REIMAGINE & REBUILD

## TODD BARCLAY'S TOP TAKEAWAYS

At the recent RC Show 2021, Patrick Saurette of The Marc Restaurant Group said during the "Canada's Independent Leaders Talk the Fate of the Independent Restaurant" panel: "We viewed the pandemic as a pivotal moment of change within the industry."

It's this idea that seemed to be a recurring theme of RC Show 2021. The devastation of the foodservice and hospitality industry due to COVID-19 cannot be understated, but neither should the opportunities it is providing our community. Opportunities not just for technological innovation, new revenue streams and business diversification, but also to reinvent the way our industry operates and the values and systems it perpetuates.

For example, one of our most important panels this year was 'Inclusive Kitchen: Tackling Systemic Racism' which provided insight into how we can break down barriers and biases to create change and encourage inclusivity in our own kitchens and operations. This sentiment of dismantling was echoed in the 'Progress in a Recession' panel which discussed how even with massive difficulties: a recession, low staff, and a shrunken job market, it is still important to incorporate topics like sick days and anti-racism in your day-to-day operations and business strategy.

As we reflect on the opportunity to reinvent, we're also presented with the chance to rebuild and reconnect. While we've remained separated due to social distancing guidelines, in many ways our community has never felt closer. One only needs to look at the RC Show Award winners to understand this sentiment. These pioneers have spearheaded initiatives to bolster neighbourhoods and provide for communities.

We were also in awe at the speed at which trends and technology have evolved due to COVID-19. As we're forced to reinvent our operations, we're seeing the adoption of digital like never before. Take for instance the 'Maturing of the Ghost Kitchen Concept' panel that spoke to how the pandemic amplified the already growing consumer demand for convenience shown in the rise of delivery and that brought to light some of the interesting evolutions we have and will continue to see in the ghost kitchen category.

In fact, due to COVID-19, Restaurants Canada was able to reinvent the RC Show itself. While we were not able to gather in person this year, the virtual format provided us with the chance to welcome a number of foodservice and hospitality leaders from across the world. And perhaps most importantly - for the first time, all attendees are able to relive these four action-packed days with RC ON DEMAND through their RC Show registration credentials.

Additionally, RC Show 2021 content is now available to everyone to access on demand: sign up at rcshow.com.

Our world-class programming remains a valuable resource for our entire community during these challenging times and we hope you take advantage of our library of stage content, as well as the Exhibit Hall filled with leading companies and special offers to feed the recovery. To support your experience, I've pulled together some of my own personal favourite highlights and top takeaways from RC Show 2021 ONLINE LIVE that I highly recommend you relive through ON DEMAND.

## UP-CLOSE-AND-PERSONAL CONVERSATIONS WITH CANADA'S LEADING CULINARY EXPERTS

**CHEF MICHAEL SMITH IN CONVERSATION WITH CHEF DONNA DOOHER**

In an emotional discussion with Chef Donna Dooher, Prince Edward Island's food ambassador, Food Network host and nutritional activist Chef Michael Smith discussed how he built his career, sharing lessons along the way and how he shifted his family's restaurant and inn in response to the pandemic.

**SPEAKING WITH JIM TRELIVING, CHAIRMAN & OWNER, BOSTON PIZZA INTERNATIONAL AND DRAGON, DRAGON'S DEN**

I was honoured to have the opportunity to sit down with Jim Treliving, Chairman and Owner of Boston Pizza International, for a personal conversation that ran the gamut of mental health in the workplace to his days starting out in the foodservice industry.

**FIRESIDE CHAT WITH RITCH ALLISON, GLOBAL CEO, DOMINO'S PIZZA INC.**

In a fireside chat with Ritch Allison, CEO of Domino's Pizza, we explored how innovation has driven this 'tech company that sells pizza'. This exclusive, one-on-one discussion provided insight into how this company is accelerating the use of technology and how and why they are looking into how robotics can be used to create a more seamless experience.

## EIGHT INSIGHTFUL CEO PANELS

**THIS YEAR, RC SHOW BOASTED EIGHT CEO PANELS INCLUDING:**

- 'CEO Panel: Quick Service Restaurant'
- 'Beer CEO Panel: Business Building Beer Insights'
- 'Spirits CEO Panel: Alcohol Innovation to Keep Spirits Up'
- 'CEO Panel: Fast Casual Restaurants'
- 'Wine CEO Panel: Pouring to Profitability'
- 'CEO Panel: Full Service Restaurants'
- 'Canada's Independent Leaders Talk the Fate of the Independent Restaurant
- 'Coffee Panel: Robust Discussions on Coffee Diversification & Shifting Cafe Culture

With more CEO panels than ever before, operators are able to hone in on the knowledge and expertise from leaders in their own field and gather advice and best practices from those paving the road during these bumpy times. We welcomed Duncan Fulton, Chief Corporate Officer, Restaurant Brands International, Nivera Wallani, President and General Manager, YUM! Brands, Kyle Norrington, President, Labatt Breweries of Canada, Fred Landtmeters, President & CEO, Molson Coors Canada, Neale Graham, Managing Director Canada & Canadian Brands, Beam Suntory, and Scott Boatwright, Chief Restaurant Officer, Chipotle on our panels this year - and that's just a sampling of the leaders who shared their insights.

## CANADA'S INDEPENDENT LEADERS TALK THE FATE OF THE INDEPENDENT RESTAURANT

Presented by American Express Canada and their Shop Small Program, this roundtable was part of our CEO panel programming and featured Donna Dooher, Chef & Owner, Mildred's Temple Kitchen, Patrick Kriss, Chef & Owner, Alo Group, Brenda O'Reilly, Co-Owner & President, YYT Foodservices, and Patrick Saurette, Owner, The Marc Restaurant Group. As part of one of the hardest-hit sectors of our industry, this chat got to the heart of the matter and allowed us to delve into how COVID-19 has affected the independent restaurateur, how they've pivoted to stay afloat and what the future may hold for these operators.

## DATA YOU NEED TO SUCCEED

Much of the Show programming brought forth the essential data and forecasts that operators are able to leverage and put into action for 2021. Data-driven decision making is just one of the tools in our belts that we can implement in order to stay afloat in the turbulent waters of the COVID-19 pandemic. With a perceptive view into changing consumer habits and tastes, a look at and greater comprehension of our economic future or comprehension of how COVID-19 affected or is currently affecting the supply chain, operators can make more informed choices to drive success.

**RESTAURANTS CANADA'S INDUSTRY OUTLOOK**

*Presented by Groupex*

RC Show 2021 kicked off with the Restaurants Canada's Industry Outlook. Featuring Restaurants Canada's Senior Economist Chris Elliot, exclusive industry data was presented to provide an in-depth understanding of where the industry is headed. Attendees learned about the latest consumer and sales trends and gained a deeper appreciation of what these market behaviours mean for their business.

**ARE CANADIANS READY TO COME BACK? DATA INSIGHTS ON CANADIAN CONSUMERS**

Presented by Corus Entertainment, Canada's largest media company, this panel provided a look at how consumers' feelings have shifted throughout the pandemic and what that means for the future of foodservice. Janet Zuccarini, CEO & Owner, Gusto 54 Restaurant Group joined this panel to bring the data to life, with anecdotal experience that positions analytics and data within 'real life' situations. Corus tracked Canadian consumers' attitudes from last March and provided deep insights into different psycho-segments and regional differences. Check out this panel to hear what Canadians are thinking to help you prepare your business for the future, and win them back.

**STATE OF THE BAR**

Presented by SkipTheDishes, this session reviewed the major shifts in how the bar industry operates and interacts with its customers. With Donna Crecca, Principal, Technomic, Blair MacNeil, General Manager Canada, Bacardi, and Steve Puchala, Senior Vice President, Restaurants, SkipTheDishes, these data experts dove into the latest consumer and sales trends to get a deeper understanding of what these market behaviours mean for the bar business.

**FEEDING THE RECOVERY: UNDERSTANDING POST-PANDEMIC INDUSTRY SHIFTS**

One of the most highly-attended sessions of the RC Show, this panel explored the question: 'how do we move forward and recover?'. Presented by Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, this discussion included Sylvain Charlebois, Senior Director of Agri-food Analytics Lab, Dalhousie University, Andrea Johnson, Chief Storyteller, Brain Candy Marketing Ltd., and Vince Sgabellone, Foodservice Industry Analyst, The NPD Group. The effects of the pandemic will have a lasting impact, and the industry and consumers are changed forever. By examining successful case studies, these experts imagined how we might re-emerge from the pandemic and move forward with a solid understanding of what lies ahead.

Feeding the Recovery
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## HEAR FROM THESE INDUSTRY LEADERS AND MORE




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Founder & CEO, Calii Love



**FRANK HENNESSEY**
CEO, Recipe Unlimited Corporation



**NIVERA WALLANI**
President and General Manager, YUM! Brands



**PATRICK KRISS**
Chef & Owner, Alo Group



**ROGER MOOKING**
Chef & Host on Food Network & Cooking Channel



**MASSIMO BOTTURA**
Chef, Osteria Francescan



**SUZANNE BARR**
Chef & Judge on TV's Wall of Chefs



**SCOTT BOATWRIGHT**
Chief Restaurant Officer, Chipotle

## SESSION HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:



### EIGHT CEO PANEL DISCUSSIONS

Leaders of Canada's top restaurant and beverage brands will discuss the biggest challenges facing the industry today and how they are addressing them.



### WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Find out the latest data and trends in foodservice sales and changes in consumer behaviour from Canada's top research companies including Ipsos, The NPD Group and Technomic.



### INSIGHTS TO ADAPT & EVOLVE

Explore the next generation of ghost kitchens, learn how to market to a virtual customer, gather the latest revenue-generating ideas and set your business up for success.



### STATE OF THE BAR

The bar industry has been one of the most impacted areas of hospitality due to lockdowns. Find out how veterans have been pivoting their business model and what the outlook is for the future.

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**THE PANDEMIC EFFECT: ECONOMIC OUTLOOK ON ISSUES AFFECTING YOU**

*Presented by FCC*

This engaging discussion between Restaurants Canada's Senior Economist Chris Elliott and J.P. Gervais, VP & Chief Economist of Farm Credit Canada (FCC) was another top-attended session. Watch to learn about supply chain disruptions and economic trends to identify emerging opportunities and risks in food markets. This discussion moved past the numbers and into analytical answers and data-backed insights to help you prepare, plan and recover. For a sneak peek into what you can expect, and to dive a little deeper, check out coverage of this session on page 62.

**REDISCOVER YOUR GUEST: THE 2021 CONSUMER**

Presented by Labatt Breweries of Canada, this session took data and stats into account to understand how Canadian consumer sentiment towards the pandemic has evolved. Tracking changes in consumption patterns, at-home occasion trends, shopping behaviours and planned post-COVID-19 behaviour – essential key insights to understanding who your guest is and who they've become – it's all here for you to design the right experience for the 2021 consumer.

## BREAKFAST WITH CHAMPIONS

Breakfast with Champions is Restaurants Canada's annual power breakfast event. It's where the leaders of the hospitality industry gather to ingest data-driven insights from top research companies and gain exclusive knowledge from industry innovators and inspiration from world-class speakers. The latest research, trends, ideas and insights are presented to equip attendees with the knowledge and tools to successfully set a path forward. This year we welcomed Danny Meyer, Founder & CEO, Union Square Hospitality Group, as our feature keynote, along with presentations and talks by David Henkes, Senior Principal, Technomic, Maeve Webster, President, Menu Matters, Ryan Freeman, Director of Enterprise Partnerships, DoorDash, John Bunner, Operations Director, Alo Food Group, and David Bloom, President & Co-Owner, Sumac Restaurant. A special thank you to our sponsors for this event: PepsiCo, Diversey, Dairy Farmers of Canada, Doordash, Technomic and The Globe and Mail. Get an extensive examination of this session on page 69.

## RECOGNIZING CANADIAN TALENT

Every year, Restaurants Canada honours some of the brightest culinary talents in the hospitality industry. With such a monumental year, we were glad to have the opportunity to shine a light on a few people who put the thought, work, effort, and care to help the community around them. This year's winners: Zita Cobb, Chris Zielinski, Suzanne Barr and Anita Stewart are profiled on page 16.

## COMPETITIONS

There's nothing like the buzz of a live competition, but this year's virtual competitions were a wonderful substitute that allowed some of Canada's best up-and-coming talent to be showcased. This year we were proud to prioritize and hold space in the competition for BIPOC and female chefs and 50 per cent of competitors met this criteria.

In the Garland Canada Culinary Competition, young chefs were challenged to create a dish that demonstrated how to "Feed the Recovery". Dishes were designed with the present and future state of the industry in mind and explored themes such as: innovative solutions for takeout, a dish that could travel long distances, a dish that could be frozen and reheated creating a retail solution, a fine dining home solution or a health-focused, nutrient dense option, to name a few of the possibilities. The Garland Canada Culinary Competition was presented by Garland/Welbilt Canada and Restaurants Canada with support from Dairy Farmers of Ontario, Canada Beef, Victorinox Swiss Army, High Liner Foods and Chicken Farmers of Canada.

Congratulations to all competitors for an amazing job well done. Special congratulations to Daniel Kim, Sous Chef, Boulevard Kitchen & Oyster Bar (1st), Samantha Lamanna, Chef de Cuisine, Il Covo (2nd & Fan Favourite), Kasyndra Noseworthy, Commis Chef, Momofuku Kojin (3rd), Ken Yau, Chef & Owner k.Dinners/k.Dumps (3rd) and Nikko Policarpio, Sous Chef, Mineral Restaurant (3rd).

During the Beyond the Rail Competition presented by Beam Suntory, finalists were tasked with developing a cocktail to-go kit that demonstrated their creativity, marketing savvy and business expertise. Selected finalists created a short marketing video promoting their concept and a presentation to virtually pitch a "sellable" cocktail kit concept in front of a panel of esteemed judges. Congratulations to Josh Mellet (first place), and Madison Homewood and Marta Ess who tied for second place.

## WORLD-CLASS CONTENT

While every single session, panel and talk were curated to benefit any operator seeking information, these are a few of our most-attended sessions I would like to call out. I highly recommend you catch the replay of these sessions with RC Show ON DEMAND.

**THE FUTURE WORKFORCE: HOW TO RECRUIT & REBUILD YOUR TEAM POST-PANDEMIC**

*Presented by BDO Canada*

In order to recruit and retain quality talent, restaurants need to reevaluate their recruitment tactics and company culture. This involves understanding the employment landscape and how to reach the new generation joining the workforce.

**MENTAL HEALTH: INCREASING AWARENESS & SUPPORTING TOOLS**

*Presented by WSPS*

While health concerns over the past year have been centred on COVID-19, there has been another pandemic bubbling under the surface; a mental health pandemic. Lost and uncertain work situations, financial concerns and isolation have had devastating effects on many within our industry.

**PROGRESS IN A RECESSION**

Now, more than ever, it continues to be vital to understand and navigate important issues such as fair wages, civil rights, wellness, sustainability, zero waste, ethical sourcing and intersectionality.

**SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS TO BOOST YOUR BOTTOM LINE**

*Presented by L.E.A.F.*

Practicing sustainability doesn't have to be a luxury. Sustainable solutions can be affordable, accessible and often put money back into your pocket. Hear from industry experts on the resources and solutions available so you can make green decisions, to bring more green bacito your pocket.

**INCLUSIVE KITCHEN: TACKLING SYSTEMIC RACISM**

As we take a step back to reflect on this year, we need to look at how we can tackle the systematic racism that is omnipresent in our kitchens and restaurants. Learn how to break down these barriers and biases to create change and encourage inclusivity in your own kitchens and operations from our esteemed panel: Suzanne Barr, Roger Mooking, Eden Hagos, and Philman George.

**MATURING OF THE GHOST KITCHEN CONCEPT**

*Presented by Russell Hendrix*

The ghost kitchen model is continually evolving and we are seeing new models and business approaches emerging. We brought international and local ghost kitchen operators to talk about their approaches, from a turn-key set-up to the sister restaurant partnership model, and the importance of location

**EXPLORING NEW REVENUE OPPORTUNITIES**

*Presented by BDO*

We're continuing to see restaurants and food businesses thrive outside the traditional bricks and mortar model. We sat down with caterers, pop-up purveyors, food trucks and franchisers to learn how they grew, thrived and found success outside of the box.

**Check out the full schedule of RC Show for a sneak peek of all sessions here: www.rcshow.com/why-attend/schedule/**

## INCREDIBLE EXHIBITORS AND PARTNERS

We were so lucky to collaborate with a number of brands and partners at RC Show 2021 who brought their expertise, knowledge, and informative and exciting activations to the dynamic virtual Exhibit Hall, Featured Areas, or with live sessions. These companies and brands are still available to connect with and take advantage of special offers through RC Show ON DEMAND. Here's an appetizer of a few brands I recommend checking out.

**EGG FARMERS OF ONTARIO**

Egg Farmers of Ontario brought ideas to help restaurants 'reinvent with eggs' in a session with Technomic. Experts guided attendees through culinary and consumer trends for an exploration into how operators can leverage this cost-efficient and versatile ingredient. Find this session on the Culinary Stage.

**CHICKEN FARMERS OF CANADA**

Chicken Farmers of Canada brought us 'Behind the Barn Door' with a live, onsite farm tour and Q&A with a farmer. Learn about what Raised by a Canadian Farmer truly means, so you can educate your guests and reassure them that the delicious chicken on your menu is raised by farmers you can trust. Find this session on the Culinary Stage.

**DAIRY FARMERS OF ONTARIO**

Dairy Farmers of Ontario brought Victor Barry, Owner, Piano Piano and Afrim Pristine, Maître Fromager & Co-Owner, Cheese Boutique together to speak on the "Community & Collaboration: Diversifying Restaurant Revenue & Growing Margins through Smart Local Partnerships" panel. These culinary titans chatted about how local partnerships with dairy and other agri-food producers were essential to operators diversifying and growing into new sectors. Find this session on the Culinary Stage. Also be sure to make your way to the platform's Resource Library where you can find the 2021 Ontario Guide where you can discover local Ontario dairy products and recipes and learn about new opportunities and innovation to grow and diversify your business.

**QUEBEC SPIRITS**

In the "Discovering the Gems of Quebec" on the Bar & Bev Stage, presented by Spirits of Quebec & Made with Love, Andrew Whibley, Bar Expert & Owner, Cloakroom Bar, helped attendees discover the wealth of amazing gin products from Quebec through an innovative workshop. Head over to Featured Areas to learn more about the exhibiting brands brought to the RC Show by Quebec Spirits and download the Quebec Spirits *Made with Love* downloadable brochure including information on all Quebec spirits with recipes.

**BELLAVITA ITALIAN PAVILION**

Bellavita brought world-renowned chef Massimo Bottura with them to this year's RC Show for a session called "Made-in-Italy & Zero Waste: A Message of Authenticity & Sustainability", check out page 64 for interview with chef Massimo and a wrap up on this session. Ralph Carlone, Bakery & Pizzeria Consultant, Pizza Per Passione Academy was also present with Bellavita for a workshop on "How to Make the Perfect Italian Pizza Dough" on the Culinary Stage. Under Featured Areas, make your way to the Bellavita Italian Pavilion for an overview of the exhibiting brands straight from Italy, information on the Bellavita tradeshow, and more.

**UBER EATS**

Presented by Uber Eats, "How to Bring Transparency & Consistency to Your Delivery Partnership" featured Asad Amin, Vice President of Ipsos, Robert Cifarelli, Director, Mobile Consumer Success, A&W Food Services of Canada Inc., Dan Gunam, Founder & CEO, Calii Love, and Nicole Wharry, Sales Manager, Uber Eats Canada. With delivery becoming a growing avenue for restaurants, they discussed how important it is to create win-win relationships with your delivery partners. This panel was about making delivery work for your business with a partnership built on transparency, trust and providing a top notch and consistent guest experience to your customers. Also be sure to visit the Uber Eats booth in the Exhibit Hall to learn more and take advantage of special offers.

**If you didn't get a chance to join us for RC Show 2021, head over to rcshow.com and register for RC Show ON DEMAND to take advantage of all the programming at your disposal until April 30, 2021. The first 20 new registrants will receive an exclusive Feeding the Recovery Buyer Box. If you want to relive the incredible content, use your RC Show login credentials at onlinelive.rcshow.com.**


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# 2021 Canadian Beer & Wine Report

Restaurants Canada
The voice of foodservice | La voix des services alimentaires

CGA

As we head into the next era of on-premises food and drink experiences, it's safe to say that while beer and wine remain alcoholic beverages of choice for Canadians, the categories will evolve to meet rising consumer interest in trial and experimentation.

While the beer and wine sectors appear to be holding on to their share through a period of extraordinary challenge and change, there is a measureable zeitgeist on the horizon as consumers seek out new and premium flavours, styles and experiences.

In other good news for operator bottom lines, CGA reports that beer and wine are the top two drink categories where consumers are willing to pay a little more for premium products.

Our bet is that the wineries and breweries ready to embrace the change and arm on-premises operators with products that respond to the shift will reap the rewards ahead.

## PLANNING AHEAD FOR SUMMER TRAFFIC.

According to a recent CGA survey of Canadian consumers, **72%** stated that they would still visit bars and restaurants even if they didn't have outdoor patios, which is an encouraging sign for operators who may not have the ability to host consumers outdoors.

When CGA asked consumers how often they think they would visit restaurants/bars with an outdoor patio during the summer months, **29%** said weekly and **26%** said monthly.

Ultimately, CGA is seeing that consumers are still showing a willingness to return to the on-premises, and that warmer weather will help encourage this behaviour.

Casual dining restaurants rank highest in terms of the venue format consumers reported being most comfortable visiting in both Canada and the U.S. This can be due to a wide range of factors, but these venues tend to be familiar for consumers and they can make them feel comfortable visiting. The survey results also speak to the skew in food-led versus drink-led visitation. The food-led occasion is much easier to accommodate right now for outlets given the restrictions that are currently in place.

### REPORTED CONSUMER COMFORT LEVEL IN RETURNING TO RESTAURANTS BY FORMAT:

- CASUAL DINING: 62.5%
- NEIGHBOURHOOD BAR: 29.8%
- FINE DINING: 28.0%
- PUB: 24.8%
- SPORTS BAR: 17.9%

### ON-PREMISES ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE PREFERENCE (BY CATEGORY)



BEER 51% | WINE 42% | SPIRITS 34% | COCKTAILS 21%

### CONSUMER APPETITE FOR PREMIUM PRODUCTS (BY CATEGORY)



WINE 50% | BEER 43% | WHISKEY 25% | VODKA 21%

### TOP FACTORS INFLUENCING PREMIUM BEVERAGE SELECTION

- PRICE: 42%
- SPECIAL OCCASION: 40%
- QUALITY OF BRANDS AVAILABLE: 37%
- SPECIAL OFFERS/DISCOUNTS: 33%
- INFLUENCE OF BAR STAFF: 25%

### UPTAKE ON WINE AND BEER WITH TAKEOUT

According to a spring 2021 consumer survey, CGA reports that 20% of consumers stated that they have ordered takeout/delivery in the last three months. Based on the different drink categories that consumers are ordering, it bodes well for beer and wine:

- TABLE WINE: 19%
- IMPORT BEER: 17%
- CRAFT BEER: 15%

These categories play well within the takeout/delivery space, given their portability and convenience but also with their importance to the food occasion. This bodes well for the provinces that have made takeout/delivery of alcohol permanent and provides another revenue stream for operators.

*Source: CGA Restaurants Canada wine, beer and trends data; OPUS Canada Fall 2020, OPUS Canada Spring 2020*



# BEER WAS THE BEVERAGE OF CHOICE FOR 49% OF CANADIAN ON-PREMISES CONSUMERS WITHIN THE LAST 6 MONTHS

*Canadians are reporting a preference for domestic premium and craft beers. As venues reopen, the strength of support for craft beer (43%) shows that the 'local' theme could help boost craft beer sales.*

## TOP OCCASIONS FOR BEER CONSUMPTION

- BOTH FOOD AND DRINK-LED OCCASIONS 47%
- FOOD-LED OCCASIONS 29%
- DRINK-LED OCCASIONS 24%

## TOP FOOD-LED OCCASIONS FOR BEER CONSUMPTIONS

- MEAL WITH FRIENDS 71%
- MEAL WITH FAMILY 52%
- CELEBRATORY MEAL 42%

## CONSUMER BEER PREFERENCE BY ORIGIN

- DOMESTIC PREMIUM 52%
- IMPORT 48%
- CRAFT 43%

## TOP CRAFT BEER STYLES

- IPA 39%
- AMBER 36%
- PALE ALE 32%
- STOUT 24%

## ON-PREMISES TRIAL

*percentage of survey respondants who have not yet, but would be willing to try new products*

- WOULD TRY A DRAFT COCKTAIL 88%
- WOULD TRY UNIQUE FLAVOURED BEER 85%
- WOULD TRY A SOUR-STYLE CRAFT BEER 84%
- WOULD TRY A HARD/SPIKED SELTZER 78%

## IMPORT PREFERENCE BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

- BELGIUM 38%
- GERMANY 32%
- MEXICO 25%
- U.S. 25%

## WATERLOO BREWING: INVESTING IN LOCAL CRAFT

There is no denying the feverish creativity of the Canadian craft brewing sector over the past decade. As consumers are clearly spending a little more at retail we asked leaders at Waterloo Brewing, Ontario's first craft brewer, to share their insights and what they think is coming around the corner with operator and on-premise partners.

Jim Manz, VP Sales and Key Accounts, underscores that brands with a clear sense of community and local focus will remain important to consumers. "We talk about local, our history and heritage, it's all about our commitment to quality throughout our portfolio. We've worked hard to be relevant and resonate with consumers based on their evolving tastes and industry trends. Real fruit juice takes our craft radlers up a notch, and we know our Waterloo family of craft beers represent each beer style in quality and with local flair, starting with our time-honoured Waterloo Dark. That instills a lot of confidence with consumers and with the trade. Certainly, we have seen a shift to more expensive brands, as people have more money in their pocket. This premiumization allows consumers to explore new brands and flavours and can also bring new consumers into the category."

Waterloo CEO George Croft added, "When the on-premises business was required to shut down, people largely went to at-home consumption and so they started trading up. On the importance of being local and buying local, we aspire to be Ontario's favourite regional brewer.....we are from here, this is our home, and we have invested about $85M in our facility over the last eight years to ensure we deliver the highest quality products to our consumers. The brewery's investment in the local community was recently extended to Ontario bars and restaurants, with special pricing on Waterloo kegs and tall cans coming online in March and lasting at least to the end of summer. We felt it was the right thing to do to help the pub and restaurant workers and owners whose businesses have been decimated by the pandemic," continued Croft.

Both Croft and Manz acknowledged that consumer confidence in on-premise safety and sanitization practices will play an important role. "Consumer concern about sanitation is real," said Manz. "I know that operators are thinking about that and pursuing numerous options to reassure consumers their establishments are safe. My guess is that operators are going to rethink their assortment somewhat, particularly what's on tap, and focus on brands that have higher turns to ensure best quality. That means that brewers are going to continue to have to provide more interesting, quality products to get into the mix."

Like larger breweries, Waterloo is keeping a firm hand on the wheel of their core business, while focusing on growing their share and offerings within the beverage market. "I've always been a believer in building brands. If you are serious about a brand, you have got to spend and invest against it on an ongoing basis," said Croft.

Croft believes the key to the successful creation and introduction of new products for both on-premises and retail is building on proven strengths. "Core brands are the foundation of the building. One of our competencies is dark beer – we're really good at it, so you can expect to see more interesting fall/winter porters and stouts coming from Waterloo Brewing."

## THE OUTLOOK FOR IMPORTS.

A little removed from the frenzied oddsmaking and forecasting preoccupying the domestic industry, we find Guy McClelland, President of McClelland Premium Imports, importers of European beers. McClelland, a veteran of the beer industry, has the cool confidence and measured approach of someone who has weathered a few market cycles and earned a studied perspective. "Look, you can't beat quality. Cream rises to the top. It doesn't mean all beer is for everybody. It doesn't mean all beer will be imported, and it doesn't mean all beer should be imported. It doesn't mean that everyone is an import drinker. But, I have a marketing belief that one in five people are willing to pay more for something they believe is special. And that's what the data says."

"With COVID, people have had their value equation questioned – what are they willing to pay for? And there's been an adjustment. I think we Canadians – human beings – want to get out, want to socialize - that's not going away. In Canada, imports represent roughly 17% of the total industry. About 10% of those imports are Belgian." McClelland acknowledges, noting that the numbers reported should be taken with a grain of salt, as not everyone has perfect recall when it comes to beer styles and origins.

"McClelland is big on Belgium. We have Huyghe Brewery, which makes Delirium Tremens, Früli, Averbode and Mongozo. The Lindemans Brewery, which is the world-leading producer and seller of lambic beer, a very special style. We have Chimay, which is by far the world's most successful Trappist brewery, meaning brewed by monks.

We also have the world's greatest sour from West Flanders, it's called Duchesse De Bourgogne. Sour beers are on trend. Two or three years ago, some were predicting it would be the next IPA because the U.S. craft market was going after sour. Now, just about everyone and their dog makes a sour, and it's a blessing and a curse because they're bringing notariety to the term 'sour'. Most of them are really terrible because making a good sour like Duchesse takes a lot of years of understanding and practise on how to acidify beer through the use of time and the use of wood. Duchesse is a 15th century style brewed by the acidification of beer in used wine barrels that use the natural bacteria of the oak to acidify the beer. The crafty Belgians know how to age it properly and how long and how to blend the various casks to make a superior, perfect product.

"As for the on-trade business, McClelland shares that while the channel was shrinking for many years leading up to the pandemic, 95% of their on-trade customers are surviving COVID, noting that those who are going to pull through share two common features: good food and thriving curb-side businesses. "It's not that the whole world's premium – it isn't – but there has been a premiumization; there's been a growth in import beer within a shrinking pie. Even during the curb-side pickup phenomenon, the places that were doing well were the ones with good food. One of our customers in Winnipeg, The Oxbow, did a Stiegl can with a schnitzel for $15 bucks. We sold 500 Stiegls in one month. Again, it's a place with a reputation for good food where customers don't mind paying for value."

"In the 80s, beer was farily homogeneous and mainstream, the next big phase was about variety of style. And the next thing was about glassware – we're talking 1997, not ancient history. Glassware culture became a thing because what glassware allowed you to do is blend margins. The thing now, I think, will be alcohol range. The good old days of 'keg size everything' are dangerous in today's social standards. In Europe, there's alcohol range. In our portfolio we have two non-alcoholic beers, three 2-2.5% beers. Lindemans Creek is 3.5% and Früli is 4% - we have a zero to 10 alcohol range."

"Charcoal Group in Southwestern Ontario are a really high-quality operator, in my opinion. Their CEO, Jody Palubiski, came to me saying he wanted to be a leader in talking about alcohol-free options on his beer menu. He wanted to launch one of my alcohol-free beers. I thought he was bang on, which leads to another trend: is your business to put alcohol on the street or is your business to make money? I think operators should be going out of their way in their menu, offerings, and internal merchandising to make it known that the availability of the non-alcoholic options is there. And get better non-alcoholic options that are fun to pour and have a cool glass, etc. I think smart operators are operators who are already on to that."

"Get it out of your head that selling more beer is the goal. It isn't. It's making more money."



***Source:*** *CGA Restaurants Canada wine, beer and trends data; OPUS Canada Fall 2020, OPUS Canada Spring 2020*

# MOLSON COORS BEVERAGE COMPANY ALL-IN ON EVOLUTION, STARTING WITH SELTZERS

Brewers for over two centuries, Molson Coors Beverage Company has embraced the change within the alcoholic beverage landscape, jumping in feet first to develop a modern, forward-looking beverage portfolio. While they continue to thrive as a cornerstone within the brewing industry, the company has gone all-in on a transformational strategy, a shift both in iconic name and position from a brewing to a beverage company and an approximate $100M investment in capital improvements at its Canadian operations. Having successfully launched two new seltzers—Coors Seltzer and Vizzy—in the U.S. market last year, the company is poised to distribute both seltzer brands across Canada.

"It's a perfect storm in the beverage business right now with the continued momentum of refreshment beverages as a category, really showing us it wasn't just going to be a blip on the radar. It really was here to stay, and that intersection with 'better for you' beverages is where we see the sweet spot of seltzers." Brand Director Leslie Malcolm shares. There's just huge demand in the market right now for products that are lower in calories, carbs and sugar while still delivering on those critical consumer needs of taste, flavour and value. We've kept a very close eye on this category for a number of years. We have full confidence that this category is not going anywhere and it's one we wanted to get very serious about. We made the decision this year to prioritize seltzer as our number one commercial priority within the business."

The brand introduction strategy for Vizzy will focus on on-premises for 2021. "Vizzy stands out among the 'sea of same' in the seltzer category with its bright orange visual identity and iconic dual flavours, which is a real point of differentiation within the category. For us, Vizzy was just a real natural when it comes to premiumization within the on-premises, which for us and all of our partners is so top of mind right now. We'll be serving pineapple-mango and blueberry-pomegranate as our two lead flavours."

## SELTZERS: THE NEXT 'BIG THING'

CGA's Spring 2021 On Premise User Survey sampled 5,000 Canadian on-premise visitors between spring 2020 to spring 2021 and reported a rise from 7% to 10% in hard seltzer consumption, largely driven by the younger demographic. CGA predicts that with warmer weather coming, operators should expect to see more interaction and consumption of the hard seltzer category given the amount of innovation and new entrants.

### HAVE NOT TRIED, BUT WOULD TRY HARD/SPIKED SELTZER




78% 79%

### TOP HARD/SPIKED SELTZER FLAVOUR CHOICES

BERRY 30%

LIME 30%

LEMON 29%

MANGO 29%

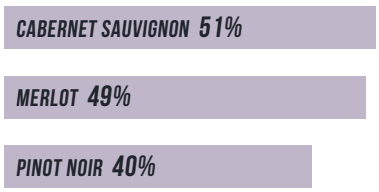
*According to a recent CGA survey, consumers show a slight preference for red wines, but still solid engagement with white. Red wine should be a popular choice with the heavy visitation geared around food-led occasions.*

**WINE** WAS THE CHOICE OF 36% OF CANADIAN ON-PREMISES CONSUMERS WITHIN THE LAST 6 MONTHS.

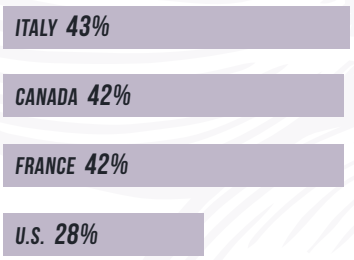
### CONSUMER PREFERENCE BY WINE STYLE




### RED WINE PREFERENCE (BY VARIETAL)




### ORIGIN OF RED WINE OF CHOICE




***Note:*** *during the initial survey period (Spring 2020), Canadian reds were wine of choice for 0% of sample group, likely showing a significant swing toward domestic/local wines.*

## WHITE WINE PREFERENCE (BY VARIETAL)

- PINOT GRIGIO/PINOT GRIS 49%
- CHARDONNAY 45%
- SAUVIGNON BLANC/FUMÉ BLANC 37%

## ORIGIN OF WHITE WINE OF CHOICE

- CANADA 48%
- FRANCE 34%
- ITALY 31%
- U.S. 22%

***Note:*** *during the initial survey period (Spring 2020), Canadian whites were wine of choice for 0% of sample group, likely showing a significant swing toward domestic/local wines.*

## SPARKLING WINE OF CHOICE

- PROSECCO 71%
- CANADIAN SPARKLING 31%
- CAVA 25%

## ON-PREMISES TRIAL

*percentage of survey respondants who have not yet, but would be willing to try new products*

- WOULD TRY WINE IN A CAN 87%
- WOULD TRY WINE ON TAP 78%

# VINDICATED: LOCAL FOOD AND WINE ENTHUSIASTS AND ASSOCIATIONS HAVE EARNED THE RIGHT TO FEEL A LITTLE SMUG.

The CGA survey shows a strong likelihood of growth in consumer interest in local, Canadian wines. This insight dovetails perfectly in the macro trend toward wine styles that Canadian wineries are well-suited to produce, like sparkling, rosé and riesling.

The Wine Marketing Association of Ontario (WMAO) is dedicated to promoting the VQA (Vintner's Quality Alliance) wines, wineries and winemaking regions of the province and, like many regionalized marketing groups, has long had a passion for local. The association reports that Ontario wines and the operators who offer them are poised to capitalize on accelerated consumer interest in local and that Ontario wineries have positioned themselves to deliver on trending varietals and styles.

A trip to the local LCBO or wine store will reveal the expanding colour palette of Ontario wines like Rosé and the exciting new Skin-Fermented White category. As of 2019, 102 wine producers crafted 175 unique Rosé SKUs and, based on LCBO net sales year-to-date (November 2020/21), Ontario Rosé consumption grew a staggering +44%.

"From soft and lush to crisp and structured styles, there is a VQA Rosé for every plate and every palate." Says Magdalena Kaiser, WMAO Director of Public Relations – Marketing and Tourism. "Over 100 Ontario VQA wineries craft sparkling wines in a variety of styles including Traditional Method, Charmat/Cuve Close Method and Methode Ancestral (Pet-Nat). Cool climate wines are trending and Ontario is uniquely positioned as a cool climate region with food friendly—complex and balanced with higher acidity—and lower alcohol wines. Ontario icewine, with its firm backbone of acidity, is the perfect complement for delicate or intensely flavoured savoury, spicy or sweet dishes. It's also exciting to see that there is renewed interest for Riesling as Ontario is Canada's largest Riesling producer and one of our most top planted grapes. We produce a variety of styles from dry to varying levels of sweetness that are all in balance with refreshing acidity."

"In 2017, Ontario became the second wine region in the world to establish a Skin-Fermented White category, and as of 2019, 21 wineries were producing 30 unique Skin-Fermented White/Orange wines, says Kaiser. "It's an expression of the strength of established and new Ontario wines that applications and approvals are on the rise."

# PROSECCO: KING OF SPARKLING

Prosecco is the number one sparkling wine in Canada, the UK and in many other countries around the world. No longer dismissed as the down-market alternative to Champagne, Prosecco has come into its own, winning on its taste and drinkability and adored by restaurants and patrons for its value and versatility.

We reached out to Flavio Geretto, Global Export Director of Villa Sandi for his take on the growing love for Prosecco.

"The best answer for the enormous popularity of Prosecco is what our President, Giancarlo Moretti Polegeto, always says: "Prosecco is a democratic wine!" Prosecco is affordable. It has a style that encourages opportunities to use it across many occasions—alone, like an aperitif, for celebrations, like a party pop and during lunch and dinner. You can pair it with many dishes of all the different cuisines all over the world. Italian, Japanese, Thai, British, French and South Asian. You will always find the perfect Prosecco to pair, from DOC to DOCG Superiore Valdobbiadene to DOCG Superiore Asolo. The distinctive element that makes Prosecco different from all the other bubblies is the freshness. Consumers love that."

"The sparkling category is growing in general. I see a very big interest in sparklings linked to sustainability and health, like zero alcohol, low calorie, organic and vegan. Villa Sandi has a big sustainability project called "Villa Sandi for Life" that encompasses all activities we've undertaken to reduce our environmental impact, starting with the Biodiversity Friend certification that represents our philosophy."

"The other big trend in bubblies is sparkling Rosé, and the start of Prosecco Rosé helped the category catch fire."

"We're seeing restaurants introduce a 'Prosecco Experience' with a comparative tasting of the different apellations of Prosecco (DOC to DOCG) and different styles (Extra Brut to Dry), Ros included. The best seasons for Prosecco are spring and summer, where people can enjoy it outside, chilled. It is also the perfect holiday and celebration drink."

Sounds like it's always Prosecco time somewhere...



# WINE EXPERTS SHARE INDUSTRY TRENDS & THEIR BIG BETS FOR WINNING WINE & MENUS.



**Jennifer Huether, Master Sommelier from The Social Herbivore**, share her insights on the Canadian wine palate and what's next for the industry. Jennifer recommends embracing the coming age of innovation and experimentation as the industry rebuilds, taking advantage of consumer curiosity and willingness to trial new wines by integrating wine recommendations with complementary food pairings and simple explanations that showcase each wine's flavours, style and sweetness level.

## On the popularity of bold reds…

"In Canada we love our more bold, lush and rich-styled Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. I think these grapes have been popularized here because of the amazing examples coming out of California, Washington State and British Columbia. With our colder/longer winters these heartwarming wines make sense. Pinot noir is a very different style, more acid driven and less tannin —I feel like Canadians are embracing this great wine because of the awesome examples from Ontario (and cooler pockets of the Okanagan—it excels in cooler climates). Pinot Noir is extremely food friendly and versatile as well."

## On the popular whites…

"Truthfully while Pinot Gris/Grigio can be made in really outstanding examples, the bulk of these wines are sold, well, in bulk. They are simple, fresh—not too 'anything'—and therefore not offensive to anyone. They work well with food and are easy also to drink as an appertif, on their own or used in a cocktail or wine spritzer."

## What's next:

### RIESLING:

"People are discovering that not all Riesling is made in a sweet style, and Canadians are embracing this wonderful and versatile grape that is very happy to be grown in Ontario and cooler pockets of BC."

### ETHICALLY-INSPIRED WINES:

"Vegan-certified wines, sustainable wines and fair labour wines will continue to grow in availability and popularity."

### ALTERNATIVE PACKAGING:

"Canned wine is hot, and tetra packs are on the rise. Alternative packaging is increasingly accepted by consumers seeking portability and convenience."

**Jay Wright, President and CEO of Arterra Wines Canada,** confirms the surge in consumer preference for local. Arterra is leaning into that desire by featuring local, VQA wines (grown and produced in B.C. and Ontario) on restaurant menus and by partnering with operators on social media, promos and meal kits with local brands like Jackson-Triggs and Sumac Ridge.

While 'local' is a trend that expected to endure well beyond 2021, Wright also identifies several additional trends and innovation areas he feels will guide category evolution in the coming period:

## What's next:

### 'BETTER FOR YOU':

"Health and wellbeing continue to be top of mind and translate into moderation, lower alcohol (or no alcohol) and low sugar. This is fuelling our innovation pipeline with wine-based hard sparkling sodas like In Good Order, BASK and Growers Cider Light."

### ROSÉ, SPARKLING AND SPARKLING ROSÉ:

"Rosé continues to grow in popularity – it's no longer just a summer wine. When it comes to sparkling, consumers are moving beyond milestones and holidays and are looking to celebrate the everyday. Many wineries are embracing the opportunity, as Arterra is with Saintly Rosé, Ruffino Prosecco Aperol Spritz, etc."

### CONVENIENCE/DIGITAL:

"Online shopping and direct-to-consumer delivery has grown exponentially as a consequence of COVID-19 and will continue to be a huge opportunity for the wine industry. Digital will help consumers discover new wines or stock up on their reliable favourites – all from the comfort of their own home and delivered directly to their doorstep."*

### PACKAGING INNOVATION:

"Like many in the sector, Arterra is exploring new formats (e.g. single serve tetra packs), particulary those that can benefit restaurants and the environment."

**IWSR – Covid-19 Consumer Tracker US Market Report; Nielsen, Life Beyond COVID-19 – The New Shopper Normal)*

***Source:*** *CGA Restaurants Canada wine, beer and trends data; OPUS Canada Fall 2020, OPUS Canada Spring 2020*






## *Waterloo Grapefruit Radler*

Waterloo Brewing has earned a reputation for high quality, great tasting radlers, crafting up exciting new flavours year over year. Currently Waterloo Brewing has five radler flavours in stores, none better known than the radler that started it all: Waterloo Grapefruit Radler. A blend of real grapefruit juice and craft lager, small-batch brewed in the traditional German style. It's crisp and uber refreshing, the perfect drink for any season. 2.5% alc/vol

**Available to order through the Beer Store or direct from Waterloo Brewing.**
**www.waterloobrewing.com**
**$49.95 for 24x473mL cans, or $113.95 for a 20L keg**




## *19 Crimes announces the arrival of Cali Red,* the brand's first-ever California wine, produced in collaboration with Entertainment Icon Snoop Dogg, in-store at the LCBO. Cali Red is part of a multi-year partnership between the entertainer and the wine company. The line expansion casts a contemporary lens on 19 Crimes, whose original wines were inspired by the convicts-turned-colonists that built Australia. This wine is 65% Petite Syrah, 30% Zinfandel and 5% Merlot - that has been aged in American oak, and the wine contains rich vanilla and chocolate notes and hints of smoke.

**Pricing: $20.95**
**https://www.lcbo.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/en/lcbo/19-crimes-snoop-dogg-cali-red-18116#.YGNw_WRKhos**

## *Vizzy is the first hard seltzer made with superfruit acerola cherry.* This superfruit ingredient helps naturally bring out the refreshingly bold flavours with absolutely nothing artificial and only 130-140 calories per 473mL can. This fizzy seltzer is unique and uplifting refreshment that you can feel good about. Available across Canada in cans in both Vodka and Malt formats. The two licensee-specific flavours are Pineapple Mango and Blueberry Pomegranate.

**www.vizzyhardseltzer.ca**
**Facebook | Instagram | Twitter: @VizzyHardSeltzerCA**
**Price varies by format and province**







ANNO 1622
VILLA SANDI
THE ICONIC PROSECCO

## *Il Fresco Prosecco Doc Treviso Villa Sandi*

appears very pale straw yellow and fine, with a persistent perlage. The aroma is fruity and flowery with hints of ripe golden apple and small mountain flowers. The dry, fresh and flavoursome sensation on the palate is followed by a fruity and harmonious aftertaste with pleasant acidity. An excellent apéritif to accompany savories. Ideal with steamed shellfish. Drink it at 10 °C.

**Facebook: VillaSandi.it | Twitter.com/VillaSandi_it | Instagram: villasandi**




## *Frico Frizzante*

Northern Italy is known for its great sparkling wines. Frico Frizzante brings you the joy of Italian sparkling wine in a can. Refreshing bubbles with flavours of crisp green apples and pear.

**Price - $4.50**

## *Frico Lambrusco*

Lambrusco is the quintessential sparkling aperitivo of the Emilia Romagna area of Italy and a great pre-dinner start to every occasion. Frico Lambrusco brings this central Italian wine tradition to life in a can! This Lambrusco is vibrant, fresh with a kiss of sweetness and a wonderful tart finish. Dark ruby red with small shimmering bubbles. Grasparossa, Salamino and Maestri. Aromas of red currant and strawberry. Flavours of plum, raspberry and pomegranate. Pairs well with cheese, prosciutto and pizza.

**Price - $4.95**

**Purchase through: canadawines.breakthrubev.com**
**Available on consignment in Ontario**




TOM GORE
VINEYARDS

## *Tom Gore is a second-generation grape farmer from Sonoma County.*

With Tom Gore wines, Tom is stepping out to tell the story of the farmer's role and to create wines that prove what insiders have long known—great wines start with the work of a farmer.

Tom Gore's Cabernet Sauvignon is dark red in colour with aromas of cherry and currant and notes of leather and tobacco leaf, along with hints of dark chocolate and mocha from oak aging. This wine is fruit-forward on the entry with a rich, round mouthfeel and fine, supple tannins leading to a long finish.

**For more information, head over to tomgorevineyards.com**
**Pricing: varies by region and retailer (Ontario SRP $19.95)**




## *The Refreshing Raspberry treat Imported from Austria!*

"Radler" is the German word for "cyclist" and is romantically known for being a homemade blend of one's favourite pure lager and fruit juices or sodas. The product benefit being high refreshment with lower alcohol and calories for family outings or picnics –usually attained by bicycle.

Stiegl-Goldbräu (Lager) - brewed according to the Bavarian Purity Law of 1516 – blended with real raspberry juice. The result is an enchantingly red, soft berry treat at 2.5% ABV. The raspberry flavour gives the retro-Radler a rich scented bouquet of fully ripe berries. The fruity and juicy overall impression provides thirst-quenching, low-calorie refreshment. Only 25 calories per 100ml!

**Pricing: Pricing varies by province and retailer.**
**Availability: National (except Quebec – available 2022) 500ml cans**

# HEY ONTARIO...
# WE'VE GOT YOUR BACK.

The hospitality sector, and those who work in Ontario's bars and restaurants have already been among the **hardest hit** and prospects going forward are going to be difficult. So, today, we choose to stand with you as we persevere through the months ahead. We will begin selling a **selection of our most popular beers** at essentially cost to Ontario pubs and restaurants, for the foreseeable future, effective **Monday, March 22nd**.



## 24X473 ML TALL CANS — $10 OFF

Waterloo Dark, IPA, Craft Lager: **$46.95** *(Reg. $56.95)*
Grapefruit Radler, LandShark Lager: **$49.95** *(Reg. $59.95)*



## 20L KEGS — $25 OFF

Waterloo Dark, IPA, Grapefruit Radler: **$113.95** *(Reg. $138.95)*
LandShark Lager: **$102.95** *(Reg. $127.95)*



## 58L KEGS — $50 OFF

LandShark Lager: **$282.95** *(Reg. $332.95)*

LOCALS *Helping* LOCALS

WATERLOO BREWING

LANDSHARK Lager

For more information or to place an order, contact: **localshelpinglocals@waterloobrewing.com**



# How Cafe Culture is Shifting in the Wake of COVID-19

BY HILARY THOMSON

## COFFEE PANEL:
## ROBUST DISCUSSIONS ON COFFEE DIVERSIFICATION & SHIFTING CAFÉ CULTURE

Coffee is a $6 billion industry in Canada. Whether sipping on a hot cup of joe at home or grabbing a latte from a local shop in the way to work, coffee is more than just a hot drink. It is a culture.

As with many foodservice industries, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a dramatic impact on how people are consuming coffee, which may have lasting effects. At this year's RC Show 2021 ONLINE LIVE, panel, Robust Discussions on Coffee: Diversification & Shifting Cafe Culture presented by Dairy Farmers of Canada, Restaurants Canada brought in experts from the industry to talk about exactly how the pandemic has affected coffee culture and where they see it going as we enter a period of recovery.

Chair of the Coffee Association of Canada (CAC), Catherine Crozier, says that, according to their research, COVID-19 did not significantly shift Canadian's desire for coffee. "We all needed the same caffeine fix pretty much day to day," she said. "But of course, what we all know as part of the restaurant industry is *where coffee was consumed* with the lockdowns is what really changed."

In terms of the QSR segment, data collected by the CAC indicated a marked decrease in people going to coffee shops to get their daily coffee. This is in line with the rest of the restaurant industry that has been devastated by COVID-19. Co-founder of Unified Data Labs, Kyle Brown, noted that as of January 2021, 2,180 restaurant locations across North America closed permanently due to the pandemic. According to Restaurants Canada, over 10,000 restaurants have closed since the beginning of the pandemic in Canada alone.

Sam Heath, head of retail for Tim Hortons, says the pandemic drove a big spike in coffee products sold at grocery and drug stores across the country. He says their experience at Tim Hortons backs up the CAC's data that consumers still wanted their coffee, they just shifted where they were consuming it. Since March 2020, Tim Hortons has seen a rise across the board in the sales of their Tassimo pods, K-Cups and ground or whole bean and instant coffee. "We've seen some shifts in exactly what people are buying in retail, but ultimately that need to 'have my coffee' was probably a source of comfort and familiarity of 'at least this hasn't changed' as the last year has gone by," said Heath.







> **“I think we’ll see more experimentation [with coffee] as a food product or as an ingredient for main courses and entrées.”**
>
> – Catherine Crozier

Because of this there has been a huge opportunity for coffee shops in Canada to move into the retail market. Heath says there are many QSRs that have their own packaged coffee and marketing this at-home option is a great way to increase their bottom line. “People know when they are going into restaurants that they are going to be drinking coffee at home and I think it is a big opportunity to increase your average cheque size from five dollars to 20 dollars,” he said.

Looking to the future, Health believes that there will be some interesting changes in the QSR coffee segment. Even if commuting drops by just 10 per cent, that represents a lot of business for coffee shops in the morning. Stores will have to figure out how to get customers into their locations perhaps later in the day for that mid-afternoon break to regain that revenue. “That’s a different focus for the restaurant than it was before,” he said.

That being said, Crozier believes that even if many people continue to work from home post-pandemic, they may still crave the experience of going into a coffee shop, interacting with the staff and getting their favourite specialty beverage. “Who says we don’t walk there or drive our cars or go to the drive-thru and then come right back to our work from home experience,” she said. “We don’t know that yet so it’s going to be an interesting time for us to keep our fingers on the pulse of the consumer.”

While the pandemic has certainly created some lasting changes to the industry, Crozier believes there are some positives that have come out of adapting to the realities of COVID-19. The industry has seen a huge shift in ensuring safe environments for customers and employees and many businesses have also leaned into limited or no contact models with improved drive-thru accessibility and delivery. According to CAC research, consumers have embraced these adaptations with curb-side pick up, delivery and drive-thru services all on the rise. “These are giant shifts,” she said. “We’ve come so far in just one year and it shows how adaptive our industry is.”

Health says that from the retail side they are also noticing an interesting shift in people experimenting with higher end and specialty coffee products. This includes a trend towards more cold coffee, which Heath says may increase coffee consumption overall. “There may be an underlying trend towards more experimentation with types of coffee than people have had before,” he said.

According to Heath, coffee innovation will continue to be a focus in the industry, with many consumers looking to experience a new drink or coffee product even after the pandemic is over. Brown says this sector innovation will reach past QSR and shops and into rest of the restaurant industry. By looking at their database, which contains 450,000 restaurant menus, Unified Data Labs is seeing a lot more variety in the ways that restaurants are using coffee on their menus and the sky is the limit when it comes to innovation. “I think we’ll see more experimentation [with coffee] as a food product or as an ingredient for main courses and entrées,” he said.

Overall, COVID-19 or not, the data shows that Canadian consumers are always looking to get their coffee fix. Adaptation and innovation have been a huge part of coffee industry throughout the pandemic and this will continue to be a priority as it recovers from the impact of COVID-19. Overall, panelists agreed that no matter what the next couple of years bring, consumers will continue to prioritize coffee and welcome new products and services as the industry evolves.

**Coffee shops and retailers across the country have been using their creativity to help keep their products top of mind throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.** We reached out to **Minna Van, Owner of Ca Phe Vietnamese Coffee House** in Vancouver and Canadian Cheese Ambassador, **David Beaudoin** for their thoughts and insights into innovative pivots.From diversifying offerings to inspiring new coffee combinations, here are a few ways that coffee shops can adapt to the ever-changing COVID-19 climate.

- Work with local artists to create a pop-up shop in cafes. This is a win-win as it draws customers into the café to look at the artists' work while also giving vendors a place to display their art with the absence of craft fairs and markets or the closure of retail spaces.
- Work with micro-food vendors to expand menus in cafes and help support businesses lost due to the pandemic. Owner of Ca Phe Vietnamese Coffee House in Vancouver, Minna Van, found success with this offering authentic street snacks from Laos and Thailand through an online market.
- Diversify your menu with food items that consumers already love like dairy and cheese. Cheese can be a great accompaniment to coffee. According to Canadian Cheese Ambassador, David Beaudoin, a lovely mascarpone, ricotta or cream cheese like Boursin is a great accompaniment to a milky coffee. For something less creamy try an aged gouda and encourage customers to let it melt in their mouth with their coffee to discover notes of caramel and saltiness.
- Create coffee kits so that consumers can try making their favourite beverages while working from home.
- Invest in consumer packaged goods (CPG), partnering with local grocery store chains to get your products on their shelves.
- Create a line of branded merchandise and equipment that consumers can use to make your authentic coffee at home.


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# Global Bar Check-In

BY SHANNON MURPHY



The COVID-19 pandemic has created a worldwide experience that's had a tremendous impact on the global bar community. While recovery in Canada still remains to be seen, what can we learn from bar industry leaders in other countries? Recently the RC Show 2021 ONLINE LIVE brought together a panel of bar industry experts from around the globe to talk the good, the bad, the innovations, the insights and the lessons from this past year.

Martin Hudak is the co-founder and owner of Maybe Sammy, located in The Rocks, Sydney, Australia. Winner of numerous bar industry accolades including the Michter's Art of Hospitality Award as part of The World's 50 Best Bars 2020, the bar experienced a three-month shutdown from March to June 2020. Lockdown measures in Australia were regionalized with some areas seeing immediate restrictions including roadblocks and nightly curfews. During this time, the Australian government provided substantial financial relief to employees and many establishments did not have to pay rent. Hudak and his team focused on staying in touch with existing customers and building connections with new customers so that when they did reopen, they were able to get the business going right away, even with capacity limits. The government stepped up even further by financing the build of a new outdoor terrace that provided 40 extra seats - but that came with its own set of challenges. "We had to figure out how to bring the indoor experience outside. A lot of training and effort went to the floor staff to ensure that they were equally as entertaining and as knowledgeable as a bartender to deliver something that you would see behind the bar, but in an outdoor environment." Currently they are operating with no capacity restrictions or PPE requirements and recently customers have even been allowed to stand at the bar and dance.




Staying in touch with customers and focusing on training was something Bannie Kang, co-owner of Mu Taipei, concentrated on during the shutdown in Taiwan. She had quite a different experience, opening Mu Taipei in an alley of the Da'an District of Taipei in March 2020, just days before the pandemic hit. Early on, while much of the world waited for more information, Taiwan activated its Central Epidemic Command Center (CECC), which coordinates different ministries in an emergency. The military was brought in to boost mask and PPE production, with the country adopting mask wearing almost immediately. Taiwan introduced tight restrictions on who could fly into the country, banning all foreign nations from entering the island, apart from diplomats and those with resident visas or with special entry visas. Winner of the 2019 Diageo World Class cocktail competition and DRiNK Awards Bartender of the Year (Asia) 2020, Kang worked with her team to develop specialized communications and reached out to customers with customized care packages to keep them engaged. "We also took the opportunity to educate our bar team, practicing how we serve. In Taiwan we were not allowed to deliver drinks, so we focused on the opportunity to improve how we worked together as a team." Currently the bar is operating with no capacity limits or PPE requirements.



> “Every single thing you improve makes their job easier and they feel they are involved in the evolution of the bar. Your staff will be more invested in the space when it reopens if they're involved in the rebuilding process.”
>
> – Sly Augustin
>
> Trailer Happiness,
> Nottinghill, London, UK




Sly Augustin, owner of Trailer Happiness, an award-winning cocktail bar with a Tiki twist in Nottinghill, London, UK, is currently in a third lockdown with the UK having one of the highest COVID-19 death rates in the world. Each lockdown period has resulted in his bar being completely shut down. “During the first lockdown we all rallied, and the community and government really stepped up and supported our industry. Even though it was kind of scary, it was a very positive time for the industry because we were determined to push through it.” He opened between lockdowns with restrictions such as two-metre distancing, mandatory masks and reduced capacity from 110 to 30 people during the first reopening. After the second lockdown he was able to reopen with a 10 p.m. curfew and only being allowed to sell drinks with a “substantial meal.” The third lockdown has proven to be a bit more challenging with a total closure once again. “It’s the roughest. Right now, we're prepared to be open but at the same time we know that nothing is certain,” he says.

This 'not knowing what the future holds' has resulted in the bar industry pivoting both its operations and interactions with customers, forcing bar owners to become creative about how they curate different programs to ensure their businesses survive.

Hudak was able to leverage a sister company, an Italian pizza bar called Maybe Frank, and offer their takeout customers free cocktail samples from Maybe Sammy to entice them to take home Maybe Sammy bottled cocktails as a complement to their meal. Social media offered the strongest platform for him to stay connected with his guests. “We always tried to announce next steps and be as clear as possible with the guests about hours of operations and capacity limits so that we didn't create any confusion.” Kang also stayed connected to Mui Taipei’s customers via social media. “Whenever customers posted about our small gifts, people would become interested in our bar so not only could I keep existing customers but also be recruiting new ones.”




While Trailer Happiness saw some measure of success in terms of cocktail delivery and bespoke brand collaborations during the first lockdown, recently Augustin has stepped back to focus on the environment and service. “I made the decision to focus on how we can improve service. We still offer a few cool things to customers and interact as much as possible but right now our focus is on improving our ability to serve the customers for when they return.”

**ALL THREE EXPERIENCES OFFER VALUABLE LESSONS AND INSIGHTS THAT CANADIAN OPERATORS CAN LEARN FROM AS WE PREPARE FOR OUR OWN REOPENING:**

- Understand that our customers may be looking for different levels of service when they return and train staff to understand the importance of spending more time with the customer and how to connect post COVID-19.
- Ensure bar programming reflects the desires and interests of customers and even provide diverse offerings as part of the overall experience.
- Take the time now to improve and focus on fixing all the gaps within the establishment that often went unnoticed due to other priorities.
- Leverage social media platforms to keep an open and clear communication channel with your customers as reopening requirements pivot.

But, perhaps the most important learning of all is the necessity of local bar owners coming together with one collective voice and allowing for transparencies within the business. Augustin noticed this change happening in his own local community in Nottinghill. “When it comes to the social side of things we have always been very connected, but the difference has been in the business side of things. Now everyone is a bit more open about their business operations. I think having a shared voice is something that has to remain going forward. This pandemic has let us know that we are by ourselves together.”

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>
> – Martin Hudak
>
> Maybe Sammy,
> The Rocks, Sydney

In an ironic way, the pandemic’s forced shutdown provided the opportunity to focus on matters that might have been neglected in the past. This opportunity to continuously improve allows customers to experience something better every single time they return to the venue. Says Hudak, “When you're closed you realize there are so many mistakes in the service and in the menu and you have this empty space. We took the opportunity to work with the team behind the scenes to make sure everything is spotless.” Augustin spent countless hours grouting tile in Trailer Happiness. “I wanted to show my staff how much I passionately love the bar. I did a lot of work on the space and when they came in they felt a sense of pride in the space because it had been neglected. Every single thing you improve makes their job easier and they feel they are involved in the evolution of the bar. Your staff will be more invested in the space when it reopens if they're involved in the rebuilding process.” Kang agrees with this approach, helping her team to be more educated on hospitality and storytelling. “I asked them to think about how to create and describe new cocktails, giving them a bit more ownership,” she says.

During the periods of being open, all three owners saw a massive and encouraging shift in their interactions with customers. Augustin felt it created a much better atmosphere for both his customers and staff. “Since we are restricted in terms of how many people we can have in the bar, our floor and bar staff spend more time with each individual table. Previously Trailer Happiness was always packed and it was a lot of fun but I can see in my staff’s faces that it's a much more enjoyable experience if they can actually take the time with the customer and enjoy the environment they're in. I don't think we would have taken this experiment to cut our capacity to see what happened, so in that regard it's actually been positive.” Hudak echoes that sentiment. “It's good that the bar is busy with the high volume but sometimes we lose that interaction with the customers. Now they understand that we're here to take care of them.” There has also been a change in what types of drinks customers are ordering, so even though there are less customers, the split between spirit mixes and cocktails has shifted dramatically.

This swing to a proclivity for premium cocktails could also be attributed to a deeper appreciation from customers now that they realize the value in cocktail pricing. It’s a great opportunity to educate customers on the experience a bar provides and why. Augustin agrees. “Consumers have been making their own drinks at home and I think they appreciate more than ever that it's harder than you think to create delicious cocktails.” While customers may be spending more, there are still less of them due to capacity restrictions, but this too has offered an unexpected opportunity for bar owners. “We need to be more focused in terms of what we want to offer because now we don't have as much margin for error,” says Augustin. “Now everything that you do and offer has to be done in the best possible way because you can't afford any weak spots.”

# A Deep Dive into the Biodiversity of Peru's Gastronomy

BY SINEAD MULHERN
IN COLLABORATION WITH
JORGE MUÑOZ

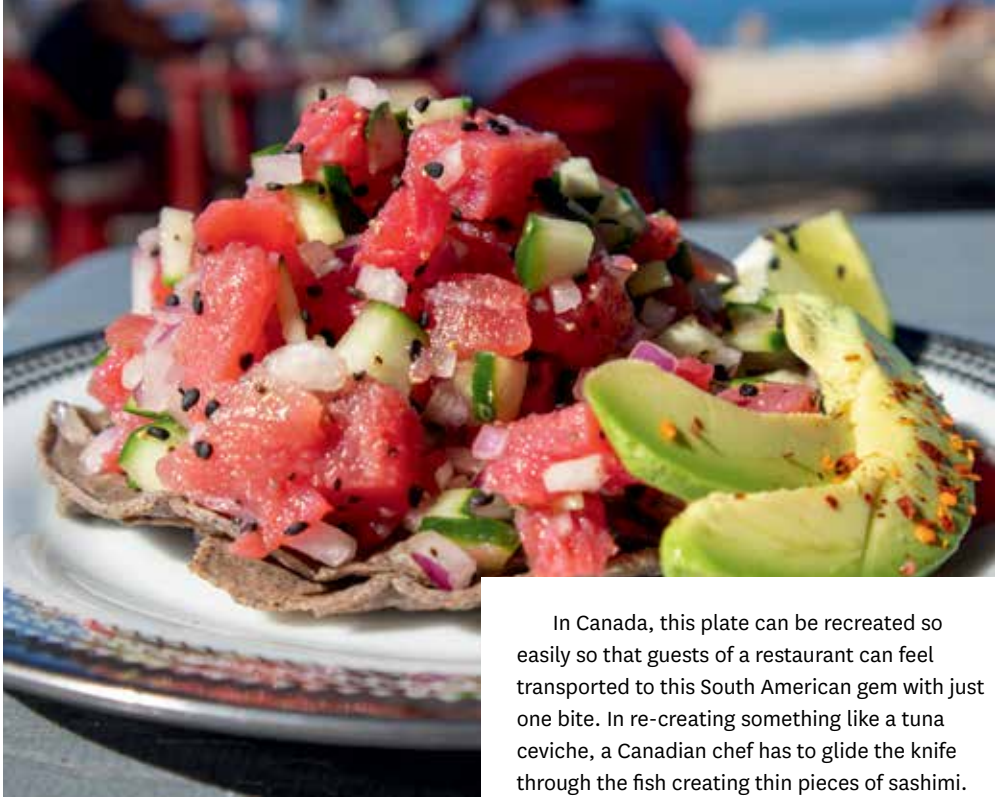




Peru should be on any foodie's travel bucket list - travellers need to pack an empty stomach, healthy appetite and adventurous taste buds. To travel to South America's third largest nation is to venture along a trail of taste where each region's traditional dishes differ largely from the last.

Peru is located on the central western coast of South America. With an area of 1,285,216 square kilometers, Peru is the 20th largest country in the world but what's more remarkable is how its geographical regions are so full of contrasts.

The territory is divided north to south by the Andean mountain range—a terrifyingly tall row of mountains with toothy peaks that bite into the Peruvian sky and snow-capped mountains whose tips remain frozen like a chunky ice cube floating atop Peru's iconic pisco sour.



By lunch time (Peru's main meal), the sun heats the dreamlike landscapes around the country. By happy hour, temperatures in the Andes drop to below zero.

It's these climatic and geographical peculiarities that make Peru one of the most diverse places in the world. It has 84 of 103 ecosystems and is considered the fifth most biodiverse spot in the world. As one can imagine, with its superfood-rich crops, wealth of produce, rich ancestry and mosaic of cultures, restaurants in this South American country are serving up entrees, appetizers and drinks with unbeatable flavours.

Peru's cuisine is steeped in history. Some of Peru's favourite products have pre-Hispanic or Incan roots and have even been staples for 5,000 years. Migration of Japanese, Chinese, Europeans and Africans introduced new tastes to the country and greatly influenced dinner tables across nation wide. The presence of Peru's many Chifa restaurants highlights the Chinese influence due to mid-19th and early 20th century migration from these Asian countries to Peru. Japan's impact is experienced through the number of fusion dishes that feature fresh seafood.



Due to its versatile gastronomy, Peru has gained culinary clout worldwide. It's why foreign restaurateurs invest in local cuisine, opening Peruvian restaurants and franchises all around the globe. New York's Llama San, for example, has received accolades from The New York Times and within Peru, Astrid + Gaston and Maido regularly snatch up World Travel Awards spots.

To add bragging points for the country, its cuisine has also been recognized by the "World Travel Awards" as having the World's Best Culinary Destination eight consecutive years in a row. In 2011, Peruvian cooking won the Cultural Patrimony of the Americas award by the Organization of American States. Likewise, trendy Peruvian restaurants in Lima (Peru's culinary capital) regularly place on rankings like "The World's 50 Best Restaurants," "Latin America's 50 Best Restaurants, and "The World's 50 Best."

That can likely be attributed to the merit and creativity of Peruvian chefs who have introduced new techniques, textures and flavours and even elevated street food so that a roadside meal can be gourmet.

And the good news for Canadians whose mouths water at mention of Peru's coffee, chocolate, hearty soups, fresh ceviches and crisp pisco? It's all possible to recreate and even fuse with flavours of the great white north.

Peruvian cuisine sets the bar high with its interesting fusions, rich flavours, hearty Andean stews and fresh seafood. But even though the standard is as high as Huascarán's summit, that's ok: the dishes are easy to recreate. And in a moment when travel is still very much shutdown, our taste buds might be one of the only ways to globetrot to places as enticing as Peru. Canadian chefs might as well capitalize on this trendy South American cuisine that has already been making headlines worldwide. And why not start with its most famous dish: ceviche.

One of the dishes that carries the most national pride is Peruvian ceviche. This is a perfect mixture of seafood, lime, salt and chili peppers. A bite into a well put together plate of ceviche should taste fresh like the ocean, zesty like Peruvian limes, spicy like the chili peppers that grow in both the Amazon and regions to the north with a strong hint of Peru's Japanese history.

In Canada, this plate can be recreated so easily so that guests of a restaurant can feel transported to this South American gem with just one bite. In re-creating something like a tuna ceviche, a Canadian chef has to glide the knife through the fish creating thin pieces of sashimi. They will then place the sashimi on top of a bed of leche de tigre—a fiery blend of lime juice, salt and chiles. From there, a classic ceviche is usually topped with coriander, parsley, onions, aji, red peppers and sometimes avocado. Garnish with olive oil or extra chiles for an added spice. To up the ante, for a different variation, the chef could blend mayo and olives into the leche de tigre for a creamier base. Add to that bed pieces of carefully sliced octopus and the artfully arranged combo of parsley, coriander, onions and chilis and you're giving a Canadian a quick escape to the Peruvian coast.

"The freshness and well balanced combinations of ingredients makes Peruvian ceviche very attractive to any palate," says Peru Embassy's Juan Pablo Guerrero. He adds that Canadians can take advantage of local ingredients like cilantro, fresh white fish and even sweet potato in their creations. In terms of ingredients to import straight from Peru, he recommends aji limo, Peruvian corn or, of course, seafood.

That's not the only way that a Canadian chef can add a Peruvian spin to their menu. Consider one of Peru's internationally-known spirits: pisco. There are eight grapes that produce pisco, coupled with Peru's warm climate and fertile soils, the result is an alcoholic beverage that is quintessentially Peruvian. (To get the full history of pisco and mixology classes, visit Restaurant Canada's virtual show.)

A flavour so uniquely Peruvian happens to blend well in a cocktail glass with an ingredient that's iconically Canadian: pure maple syrup. The



boozy lovechild of Canada and Peru is the salted maple pisco sour. That's one part maple syrup, one part lime juice, one part acholado pisco and one part torontel pisco. Add a chunky ice cube, give it a good shake and you have in a margarita glass a flavour that has taken Peru's trail of taste on a distinct detour north.

To add another Peruvian-Canadian cocktail to the menu, take your classic chilcano (pisco, lime juice, ice, and ginger) and mix it with Canada's favourite carbonated beverage: Canada Dry. A sip of either of these thirst quenchers is proof that, though many borders exist between them, as far as blending flavours goes, Canada and Peru were meant to be together.



Peru is of course, world renowned for both its coffee and chocolate. (The chocolate comes all the way from the Amazon, which accounts for 60% of Peru's territory.) Each is a relatively simple Peruvian ingredient to add interest to a Canadian menu. And despite its simplicity, both of these Peruvian products are ones that Canadians go wild for.

But what makes Peru so special in terms of producing these two mouth-watering, addictive ingredients? "The richness of its land and micro-climates is what makes Peru the perfect place to grow coffee and chocolate," says Guerrero. In terms of including these on a Canadian menu (you know, apart from just serving a steaming hot cup of coffee with a square of dark chocolate) it's a sweet tooth's game. Anything from a freshly-baked chocolate cake with a hint of coffee to chocolate truffles to mousse tiramisu to even chocolate ice cream with liqueur coffee will add a touch of Peruvian decadence to an otherwise Canadian menu.

Peruvian gastronomy has exploded around the world, and rightly so: it's a cuisine that offers such impeccable flavour-pairings and creative concoctions. The popularity of Peruvian food is an opportunity not just for young chefs from the South American nation, but also Canadian chefs who, in a time of locked-down borders and postponed travel, desire to bring international flavours to taste buds at home. Peruvian chefs have done much to push boundaries in the kitchen. Much of that inspiration has come from deep respect to their native products and traditions. But it also comes from cultures outside of their own. If Canadians want to borrow the flavours from the Peruvian trail of taste (and add a northern spin!), that's easy. But in doing so, it's also about borrowing the Peruvian mentality. No one knows better than Peru's most talented chefs that international exploration can easily start with what we choose to put on our dinner plates.

**Catch chefs and bartenders in action bringing Peruvian gastronomy to life with RC Show ON DEMAND. Register at rcshow.com for access to our entire library of content from RC Show 2021 including sessions like "Peruvian Cuisine: From Our Land to Your Menu" Presented by PROMPERU Canada featuring Jorge Muñoz, Executive Chef, Astrid & Gaston.**

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# Managing the Digital Evolution:

## IMPROVING OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY AND THE GUEST EXPERIENCE




For the past several years, the foodservice industry has undergone a digital evolution and the COVID-19 pandemic only accelerated this transformation. Restaurateurs are turning to technology to support actionable, data-driven strategies for growth. With changing guidelines across the country, technology is essential as operators seek out ways to engage with the digital consumer in an effort to communicate the brand experience via pixels. Over the last year, digital spending on food orders has tripled with half of all Canadians turning to digital platforms for both takeout and delivery orders.

Between February 2020 and 2021, Silverware POS witnessed a 1,500 per cent increase in the number of restaurants taking up a digital ordering platform and an almost 2,500 per cent increase in the number of transactions made.

Lucky Thalos, EVP of Silverware POS was one of three panelists at Reigniting Your Business: Big Ideas, Big Data, Big Influence as part of RC Show 2021, and he noted, “Guest behaviors have changed permanently. We don’t see this as a temporary solution to a temporary problem, but rather a trigger for restaurants to adopt automation that offers numerous benefits.” These benefits include supply chain efficiencies, optimization of inventory and resource management and improved overall workflows that strengthen the bottom line, quality and the overall guest experience. A strong online presence and integrated technological platform from which to collect, manage, analyze and evaluate data is no longer an option, it is necessary to remain competitive.

From a supply chain perspective, technology and data allow for closer monitoring of resources to optimizing freshness, quality and safety while reducing waste and spoil. The ability to track supplies from farm to table facilitates a more sustainable and accountable business model that helps to meet the demands of an increasingly discerning consumer.

As Thalos so eloquently noted, "Creating a profitable and sustainable business with digital automation is really the objective of better technology," and how this technology is integrated and how the data collected is aggregated can make all the difference to an operation's efficiency and profitability.

## The Power of Integration and Aggregation

To effectively engage the digital consumer, it requires systemic engagement across the entirety of a restaurant's footprint and data from these various sources must be aggregated to get a true sense of reality: context is everything.

"Independently, data is relevant, but having these systems integrated really creates a powerful data set," explained Thalos, who encouraged the industry to, "Harness even a fraction of that data into a measurable strategy for success."

Technology and data are empowering when you know how to properly utilize them. Data enables informed decision making which leads to improved operational efficiency, competitiveness and return on investment (ROI). It creates a virtual feedback loop from which improvements and adjustments can be made in real time.

From POS and CRM systems that provide insight into sales and transactional metrics like consumer behaviour and buying patterns, to social media posts, third-party apps and website traffic, there are countless ways to use technology, as Tami Coughlan head of sales and partnerships at Pelmorex noted during the Reigniting Your Business panel, "to do more with what they have to get in front of the market."

## Size matters

Restaurants of all sizes are trying to do more with less, and when it comes to investing in technology and leveraging data, size matters. While data is accessible to anyone, the challenge is being able to aggregate and evaluate that data into an actionable strategy, and not every restaurant has a dedicated IT department and endless resources to do so.

"A minimal approach executed expertly will be more effective than a broad approach executed poorly. The biggest challenge is figuring out what you need, what you can implement, what you can afford; but you need to do something, at the very least have a social media presence," said Vince Sgabellone, a food industry analyst with The NPD Group who concluded that the only missed opportunity is to do nothing at all.

Technology is the great equalizer, as there are countless ways to take advantage of the digital expanse that is the internet, but the best strategies are those that take a multiplatform approach and aggregate data from the many sources available to them. Cloud technology has made this possible, regardless of an operation's budget or size.

When choosing technology or software platforms, there is no one-size-fits-all solution but there are plenty of options. Selection requires somewhat of a Goldilocks approach: the solution shouldn't be too big or too small, it should be just right for your operational needs and budget, to ensure optimization and ROI. It is also imperative that the technology is being used correctly and the results are trusted.

This is exactly what St. Louis Bar and Grill did when it leveraged technology to effectively scale its growth from one location in 1992 to 70 franchises in four provinces at present-day, while preserving the brand voice and guest experience it offered across its entire footprint.



According to St. Louis CEO and Founder Brent Poulton, “The brand is what the consumer says and thinks it is. Your job is to make sure the strategies that you’re putting in place are 100 per cent in linear alignment with the consumer’s expectation of the brand.”

The initial step for St. Louis was to vet its franchisees, which required taking a closer look at the core values and ethos of its various franchisees to understand what made them perform well in the first place. This was achieved by turning to technology to use a personality profile platform to identify a pathway to success.

Technology and data enabled St. Louis to evolve from an entrepreneurial management style to the adoption of systems and procedures that entrenched the brand and culture into its operations, to build a more solid foundation from which its franchises could grow.

Using a mix of proprietary and standard platforms, management became better equipped to maximize the potential of its people and the environment at the franchise level and communication became more streamlined, minimizing the potential for error and optimizing the guest experience.

“Data and technology has been the single biggest investment on an annual basis, outside of people, over the last five years,” said Poulton, and St. Louis continues to utilize the various platforms to measure, validate and prove out hypotheses that lead to better decision making to ensure the resources and support are where they need to be when franchisees need it most.

“We’re not a restaurant company, we’re a brand, and a brand is a living, breathing thing that evolves,” explained Poulton. “You need to evolve it, nurture it and grow it,” which is why St. Louis went from being a wings and beer brand to a lifestyle brand that is recognized across North America.

## Assumptions versus reality

Data provides valuable insight into consumer preferences, trends and market realities by bridging the gap between assumptions and reality. For instance, technology is often associated with youth, but the fastest growing cohort of digital consumers are the over 45 age group, and one of the best ways to reach them is at their fingertips.



Mobile phones can be converted into a POS terminal from which guests can view the menu, order, customize and pay, essentially streamlining the in-restaurant experience. With apps and QR codes, which are the way of the future, customers can be engaged wherever they are, be it at home, school or work, or even in restaurant. They also serve as an endless supply of data.

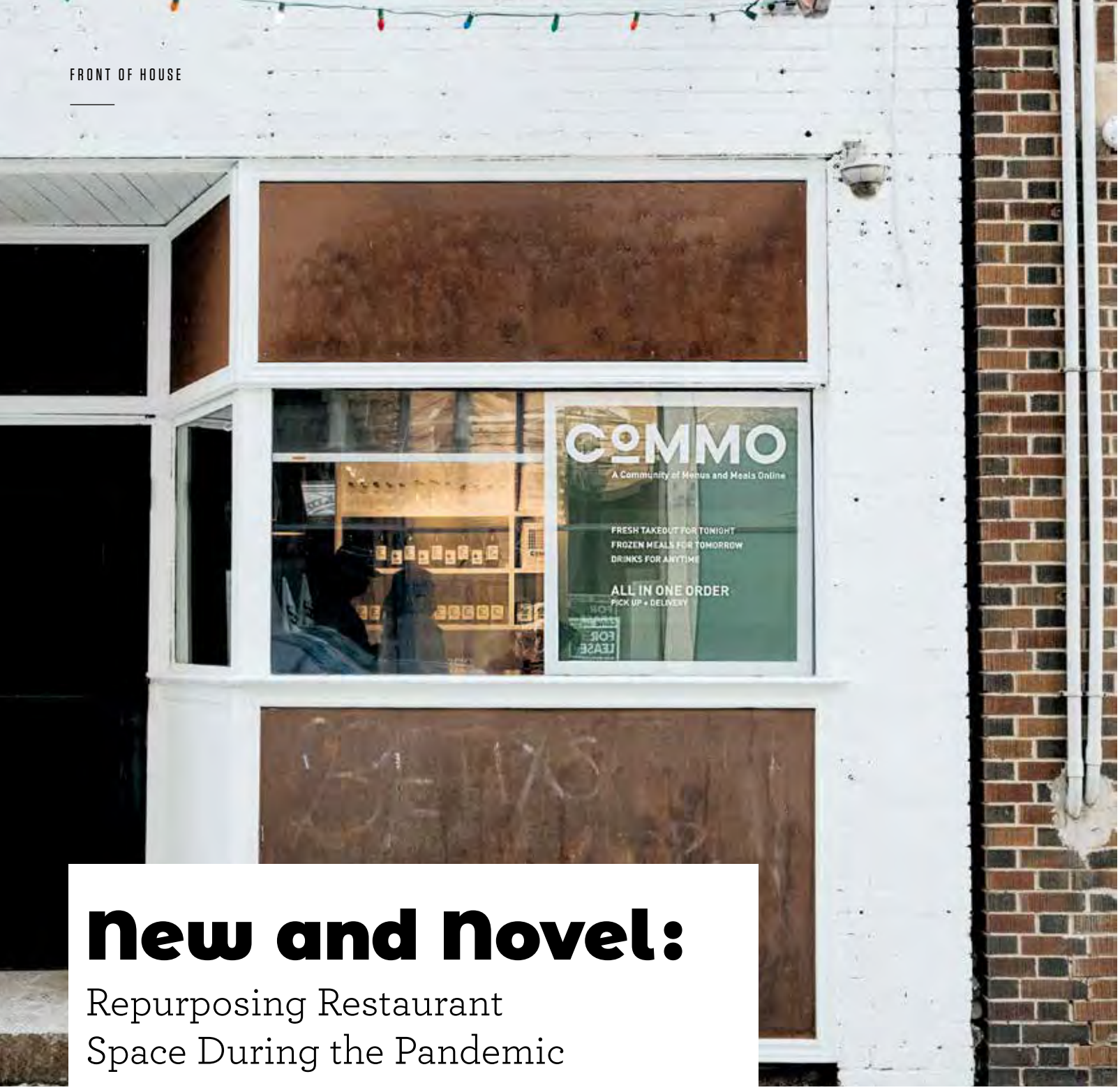
According to Thalos, any digital strategy should, “enable a digital platform to your guests while they’re seated in your restaurant. The data shows that pre-pandemic, deploying solutions to speed table times and increase averages were priorities for restaurants and in the current environment, with caps on the number of diners, this is mandatory to optimize business.”

One of the biggest disadvantages of technology is the absence of a human touch. Guests are really missing the human interaction and personalized service delivery and restaurants are missing the upselling opportunities that go along with it, but there are ways this can be addressed.

To build better rapport with consumers, restaurants can utilize data that has been collected to tailor interactions based on previous orders and personal preferences. Likewise, loyalty programs are a great way to build a sense of community and are a way to have guests continually engage with the brand. It could also be as simple as a written thank you on a takeout order to show appreciation.

“The long-term viability of restaurants is building that loyal customer base—that customer that’s going to continue to come back over and over, again and again, because of who you are,” said Sgabellone. “This is where you win the hearts, the minds and the wallets of your customers, because a restaurant meal is often about so much more than food,” it's about the experience, and the experience has gone digital.

**Watch the replay of the ‘Reigniting your Business: Big Ideas, Big Data, Big Influence’ panel with RC Show ON DEMAND, available until April 30th. Register at rcshow.com or use your RC Show login credentials at onlinelive.rcshow.com.**




# New and Novel:

## Repurposing Restaurant Space During the Pandemic

BY KIMBERLY LEUNG

The scene is a familiar one. A row of storefronts on a previously thriving street, doors and windows now shuttered. Lights dim, shops and restaurants on a skeleton staff, or closed altogether. Handwritten signs in the windows promising a quick return or saying a fond farewell. While these troubling images are often used to illustrate the economic effects of the pandemic in the news, there's a more hopeful story unfolding if you scratch the surface and look deeper.

Rather than accepting the conditions of intermittent lockdowns, small businesses are finding new ways to operate, and restaurants are no exception. Many are offering expanded takeout, pick-up and delivery services, a natural pivot for eateries. But other restaurateurs are seeing a chance to get creative, finding some truly innovative, out-of-the box ideas for an alternative revenue stream.

## **A Total 180:** Legal Tenders Pop-Up at The Shameful Tiki



Alana Nogueda knows a thing or two about having to pivot. After temporarily closing her Toronto-based bar, The Shameful Tiki Room, in March 2020 during the initial wave of shutdowns, she quickly moved to offering DIY cocktail kits. But after a brief reprieve over the summer and fall when restaurants could operate at partial capacity, it soon became evident that with rising COVID-19 case numbers and cooler weather moving in, she'd need an alternate stream of income to survive. While The Shameful Tiki offers a limited menu, takeout was never a significant source of revenue at the establishment.

It was her partner Aviva Rosnick who came up with the idea for a nostalgic, throwback-to-your-childhood take on chicken fingers, paired with coleslaw, sauces made in-house and cocktails to-go. A bartender by trade, Nogueda encountered a learning curve to transition her operations to takeout comfort food, but she was up for the challenge. "We just figured it out as we went along," she says.

After experimenting with different recipes and asking their friends and family to help taste-test, Legal Tenders was born, less than a month from when Rosnick first pitched the idea. They used social media to get the word out, but an unexpected assist from Jason Momoa—who was spotted picking up an order—helped boost their profile and their business. The concept currently operates as a pop-up, from Wednesday to Sunday, out of The Shameful Tiki's restaurant space.

"I love bartending. That's what I do. Never did I think I'd be in the kitchen, slinging chicken," admits Nogueda. But her and Rosnick's quick thinking and speedy execution have given her Parkdale business another lifeline during the months of lockdown in Toronto.



## **A Natural Transition:** Flossie's creative repurposing of a space




Four years ago, Kyle Jones gave up his steady, well-paying job to take a considerable risk—buying a food truck and moving to the countryside to start his own sandwich business. With hard work and a lot of patience, Flossie's Sandwiches gained a local following and attracted tourists visiting the Prince Edward County area. Then COVID-19 hit. "The food truck business is tough in the winter, even without the pandemic," says Jones. This time, it was worse. Even his usual catering gigs were drying up due to restrictions and fewer celebrations taking place.

Jones operates outdoors at Carson's Garden + Market. Flossie's has a family-friendly deck area with seating and a green patch for kids to play. This open-air arrangement was ideal for the summer months of 2020 when dining guidelines were in flux, but it wouldn't work for cold weather. Jones and Carson Arthur, owners of Carson's Garden + Market, landed on a great solution—bringing Flossie's indoors for the winter months. The seasonal reduction in inventory within the greenhouse meant there was space for a mini-cafe, and the natural light and warmth in the facility was perfect for patrons looking to chase away the winter chill. Although the greenhouse did not have conventional kitchen facilities, Jones saw an opportunity. Cooking with a couple of griddles, he streamlined his menu to make efficient work out of preparing sandwiches and soup.

With spring on the horizon and the greenhouse restocked for the 2021 growing season, Jones has closed up and plans to move back into the outdoor space. The shift indoors opened a path for him to continue to run his business in a cost-efficient manner while providing an invaluable opportunity to test-run his operations in a different setting.



## **Expanding your reach:** Partners with benefits




Restaurant owners are realizing that while dine-in capacity may be limited for some time to come, customer interest is still there. The challenge? Finding new ways to meet that demand in a scalable, COVID-19 guideline-compliant manner.

One of the first innovations to come out of the pandemic last spring was the restaurant meal kit. Instead of picking up a ready-made meal, the kit contains all of the ingredients you need to recreate your favourite restaurant dish at home.

Recognizing that not everyone has the time, interest or skill to use a meal box on a regular basis, the founders of CoMMO (which stands for a Community of Menus and Meals Online) have found a different approach. "People are tired of cooking, but takeout and delivery costs can be exorbitant as well," says Michael Sullivan, CoMMO's culinary director. Sharing a space with Betty's pub in downtown Toronto, CoMMO partners with community chefs, providing them with the facilities to make and offer frozen, restaurant-quality entrees. Sullivan and his team invested in equipment that allows the participating chefs to cook, process and pack their meals for freezing using the kitchen at Betty's. The result? Customers can pick up hot takeout for their evening meal and grab a few frozen entrees—along with a bottle of wine or a few craft beers—for the week ahead.




## **Nurturing new businesses:** Join forces to sublet space and bolster businesses



Borrowing an idea from the tech industry, the founders of Ration Food Lab took the idea of a shared kitchen one step further and turned the restaurant space at the Beverley Hotel into an incubator. Currently home to four burgeoning new brands that offer takeout and delivery, the objective is to kickstart each of these brands into self-sufficiency. "We try to take some of the risks out of starting a new restaurant," says Chris Nguyen of Ration Food Lab. Overhead costs are shared between the participants, and the more experienced chefs provide advice and guidance to those who are newer to the business.
The Beverley Hotel restaurant currently hosts Ration Burger, an offshoot of Ration Food Lab's usual operations, Beverley Pasta, ChickMagnet and Letterbox Donuts.




Nguyen is also the owner of Strange Love Coffee, an independent cafe with four locations across Toronto. He currently sublets space from one of his shops to k.Dumps, a specialty pop-up with a fresh take on traditional Asian dumplings run by Chef Ken Yau. With office workers staying home and non-essential businesses closed, foot traffic is way down, and his coffee business has taken a significant hit—a reduction of close to 80 per cent. The benefits of subletting are twofold: it opens up another source of income while helping him support a startup in the industry.

### Buying, selling and everything in between

Despite the current situation, some prospective restaurant owners see the current downturn in the industry as an opportunity to get in. With the number of permanent closures that have occurred over the past year, some see it as a chance to secure a spot in a prime location that would have been out of reach in an average year. And those who are established and able to weather the risk are looking into expansion.

> "When COVID first hit last spring, it was like a wakeup call to many of the people who work in hospitality. They had to consider whether staying in the industry was worth it for them. As a result, those who are choosing to stick it out are the ones who believe that the future is full of potential."
>
> **– Chris Nguyen**
>
> Ration Food Lab, Toronto

"They see it as an investment," says Stephen Murphy, the principal director of OMG Real Estate, a firm that specializes in restaurant real estate. "They see what's happening with COVID-19 as a temporary situation and scoring a bargain that helps set them up for future success." Perhaps surprisingly, 2020 has been one of the busiest years for his company, with higher than usual buying and selling activity. While Murphy believes that the effects of COVID-19 will continue to pose a challenge to most restaurateurs in 2021, he's optimistic for an upturn beyond that.

## A bright future

Nguyen agrees with the positive outlook. "When COVID first hit last spring, it was like a wakeup call to many of the people who work in hospitality," he says. "They had to consider whether staying in the industry was worth it for them. As a result, those who are choosing to stick it out are the ones who believe that the future is full of potential." Indeed, Nogueda, Jones and Sullivan have all brought up plans for growth and expansion at their respective businesses, expressing hope for the years ahead.

With so many stories of resilience and innovation in the industry over the past year, Nguyen's confidence seems well-placed. "Personally," he says, "I think things will come back stronger than ever."







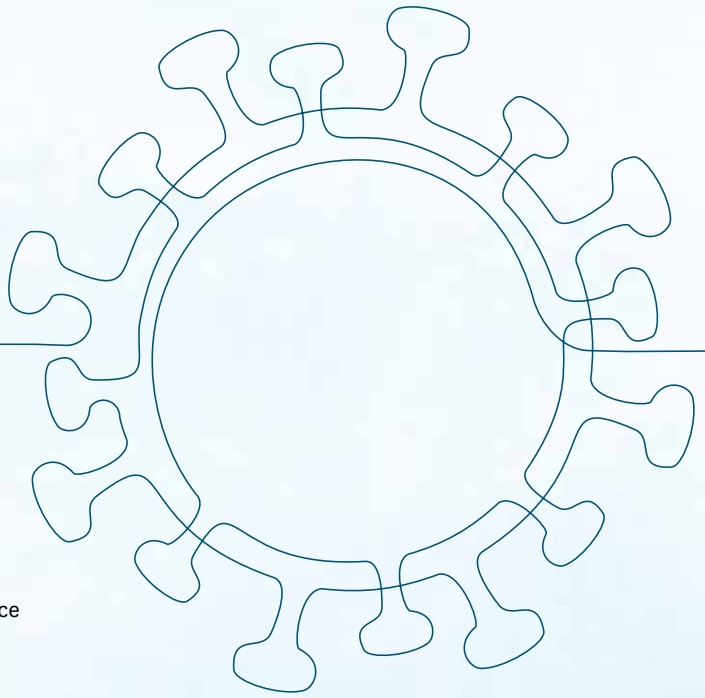

## Physical Presence Optional

**Another concept that's picking up speed? Ghost kitchens.** In essence, a company leverages existing, mobile or underused kitchens, leasing these facilities as a turn-key solution for restaurants looking to start or expand their takeout or delivery services. Most ghost kitchens can accommodate several brands at the same time. In many ways, this new system is perfect for consumer habits during the pandemic. It's a lean, no-frills system to get quality food into the hands of hungry diners craving something other than their umpteenth home-cooked meal, with no dining space or physical location required.

**For more insights, check out the "Maturing of the Ghost Kitchen" session of RC Show 2021.**

# THE PANDEMIC EFFECT:

## *Economic Outlook on Issues Affecting* YOU



BY MARISA PELLEGRINO
IN COLLABORATION WITH FCC

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the food industry, resulting in 10,000 restaurants already permanently closing their doors since the start of the pandemic.

This year's RC Show held one of the most relevant panel discussions between Chris Elliott, Senior Economist, Restaurants Canada and J.P. Gervais, VP & Chief Economist, FCC, regarding the effect the pandemic has had on the industry from supply chain to upcoming trends.

FCC is a financially self-sustaining Canadian federal Crown corporation. FCC lends money and provides other services to food and beverage processors, equipment manufacturers, logistic providers and businesses that provide inputs or enhance the Canadian food and beverage industries. They are the only lender 100% invested in Canadian food.

A domino effect of the impact of COVID-19 is a loss of jobs which impacts the suppliers. If there is a disruption in the supply chain at the processing level, where a plant shuts down or reduces production because of higher costs or COVID outbreaks, this affects the next in line, points out Gervais.



**“The support we’re offering at this time for suppliers can help keep the industry afloat,” explains Gervais.**

The food industry also saw a shift in the types of products restaurants were using, specifically frozen versus fresh. As Elliot mentioned, at the height of the pandemic, everyone was cautious about picking their ingredients. The quality remained an important factor; however, they also had to think of what happens when they are suddenly told they have to close.

Restaurants have also rethought their menus, where, according to this year’s Chef Survey, six in 10 have reduced the number of items offered and four in 10 have said that they will continue with a shorter menu after restaurants are allowed to open. This gives restaurants an opportunity to focus on what they are offering and form relationships with local farms and processors to source specific products. Elliot emphasizes that, “restaurants want to support local suppliers and they can support each other to get out of this situation.”

A great example of this is Fallentimber Meadery, who has been working with FCC since their start, and has benefitted from their relationship during COVID. FCC was instrumental in helping to market and promote their business, which is important, especially now, when more and more people are looking to support local businesses. As Dan Molyneux, Marketing and Business Development Manager, points out, “these initiatives will continue to provide extended value beyond lending capacities.”

What will happen when restaurants open? According to Gervais, we are looking at what is known as a K-type economic recovery where some businesses are doing well and others, like restaurants, have been impacted hard. Gervais also points out there is “strong, pent-up demand” on the sidelines and people will want to go out and have get-togethers and spend this money. Currently, in Q1 of 2021, full-service restaurants are down by 40% compared to the same period in 2019 and, by Q4 of 2021, sales are expected to be down to 15%. As the third quarter approaches with warmer weather, restaurants will look to patio season and possibly extend it well into early winter if they are capable.

There is expected to be a spike in foodservice recovery in 2022, but there is work that needs to be done in order to get to this point. Restaurants will inevitably increase prices gradually—as much as 3 to 3.5 per cent—in 2021 to compensate for increased food costs, minimum wage increasing in some provinces and hiring of extra people for the sole purpose of cleaning.

A source that unexpectedly flourished for restaurants is the grocery channel. This is a trend that will remain as seven per cent of restaurants indicated that they did as well or better than expected and the majority will keep offering this extension to clients. This ties in to the relationships between suppliers and restaurants and painting a story for the end user. Transparency will increase as people are curious to know where their food comes from and how it was grown. Along with local suppliers, global trade deals which encompass agriculture and food will introduce new products which may help restaurants who trim down their menus to offer quality over quantity.

A long-time FCC partner, King Cole Ducks, says, “We have the support of an organization that understands our business, customer base, and the impact mother nature can have on operations,” says Craig Thompson, President of The Tangerine Group.

During COVID, FCC invited King Cole Ducks to participate virtually in the RC Show. In doing so, they were able to reach a large audience and let people know they were ready to build a relationship and were “ready to work with them on the road to recovery.” And this is something that the industry has seen since the start of the pandemic and will continue long after it is over, where relationships have been formed where the source and the end results support one another. Another long-time partner of FCC, Black Fox Farm and Distillery, echoes this sentiment. Barb Stefanyshyn-Cote, co-founder of Black Fox Farm and Distillery, says “it allowed us to introduce our spirits to an interested demographic and reach a cross-country audience.”

It will take time to bounce back, and both Gervais and Elliot agree that “the pandemic brought all areas of the food industry together and this is a trend that will last after the pandemic.”

# TRADITION THROUGH A CONTEMPORARY LENS

BY CHRIS SZEGO




Tradition in cooking is important to Chef Massimo Bottura, Italian restauranteur and chef patron of Osteria Francescana, a three-Michelin-star restaurant based in Modena, Italy. "A recipe is an important script handed down - that is tradition. Follow the script, buy the perfect ingredients, you can make the dish." But he adds, "But if you want to write your own music, that's a different thing."

Born and raised in Moderna, in the Emilia Romagna region of Italy, the tastes and textures of his home guided his love for cooking. "We're sitting on centuries and centuries of tradition - it's about the product, about your terroir, the flavours that are transferred by centuries to our days, filtered through a contemporary mind." Closer to home he says, "My mother was obsessed with the quality of ingredients. That kind of obsession stays in your mind."

Inspired by the culinary traditions of Italy, he was driven to explore new ideas. Chef Bottura studied in Monte Carlo, where he learned to add French techniques to Italian cuisine. Travelling, working and cooking in different countries and continents, gave him a new approach to the world of food. "It's important to grow slow like a tree - big roots into the earth. If you grow like that, you have the ability to express yourself."

Throughout his travels, Chef Bottura always knew he would be deeply connected to the culinary traditions of his homeland and how that influences his outlook on food. "Italy is a place kissed by God, in the middle of the Mediterranean, protected by the alps so the harsh winter doesn't hit, with soil that is the definition of biodiversity. It's a place that produces foods perfected by generation after generation of farms, cheesemakers and fishermen."

Although inspired by the past, Chef Bottura's focus is definitely contemporary. He is clear that traditions and a modern outlook are entirely compatible. "It's important to look at the past in a critical way, not a nostalgic way. Nostalgia feels good for a moment, but a critic can look to the past and bring forward what's best. It's not easy to break tradition and stay respectful, but it's the only way to recreate tradition."

Respect for tradition includes the need for evolution, to take what you've learned and move forward. As part of his ongoing attempts to recreate tradition, he began bottling his family's balsamic vinegar in 1995. Where he comes from, "Parmagiano makes up your muscles, balsamic vinegar makes up your blood." His company, Villa Manadori now sells several types and flavours of balsamic vinegar, extra virgin olive oil and essential oil all around the world.

Connection to the wider world is part of his personal ethos, as is surrounding himself with his passions, chief among them music and visual art

for inspiration. His well-renowned collections of music and art fuel his creative fires. “As Picasso said, stealing from others is necessary; copying yourself is a sterile exercise.” Chef Bottura is philosophical about the process of recipe development. “It can be one step. It can be twenty. You may have to try many times. There can be walls in the creative process.” But those walls can provide opportunities. “Even when you make mistakes, they can be very helpful.”

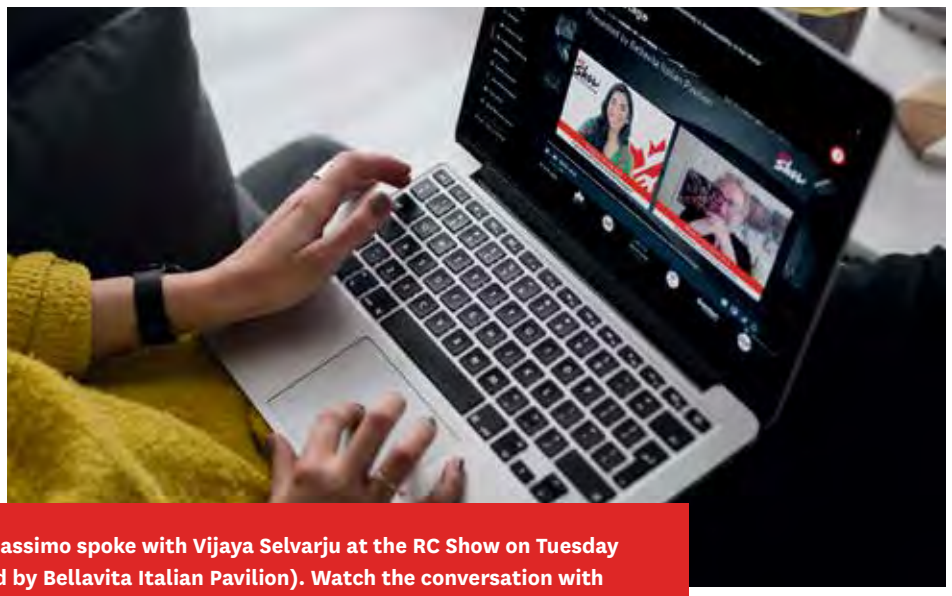
During Italy’s first COVID-19 shutdown, Chef Bottura and his daughter launched, ‘Kitchen Quarantine’ online, a web show filmed on an iPhone. The goal was to share the joys and difficult moments of a family cooking together. Not a masterclass, but something more personal and approachable. “The whole world was the same as we were. How to manage the fridge that you have in your home, how to buy and shop for a family, not a restaurant. And how to not waste anything.”

Eliminating food waste is another of his major passions, one with implications for the entire world. As a species, he explains, “We produce enough food for 12 billion. We waste 33 per cent of what we produce. Eight hundred and sixty million people have no access to that food.” The scale of that waste motivated Chef Bottura to try something new and daring. For the World Expo in Milan in 2015, Chef Massimo and his team of more than 65 chefs created a refettorio, a place where the most vulnerable communities could come together for a superb meal created from produce donated by the Expo pavilions that would otherwise have been discarded. The idea continues to expand today; there are now seven refettorios around the world.

For his activism and his efforts to combat food waste on an international scale, Michelin created and awarded him the first Green Star in 2020, and the UN Environmental Program (UNEP) has appointed him as a Goodwill Ambassador. Chef Bottura hopes it will inspire other chefs to examine their own practices. “Though restaurants are not the places we waste the most - that’s at home. Restaurants know food waste is bad business.”

Chef Bottura’s own restaurant Osteria Francescana is a distillation of all his passions: food, art, music. “They come not just because of the good food. They want to come because of the creative process, because of the emotion. We feed people with emotion.” Though many are eagerly anticipating the end of the shutdown (their email waiting list is 232,000 emails long) of all the people waiting to get back to Osteria Francescana, Chef Bottura is the most eager. “I can’t wait to hug people. I’m Italian: I have to move my hands and I have to hug people!”

> “IT’S IMPORTANT TO LOOK AT THE PAST IN A CRITICAL WAY, NOT A NOSTALGIC WAY. NOSTALGIA FEELS GOOD FOR A MOMENT, BUT A CRITIC CAN LOOK TO THE PAST AND BRING FORWARD WHAT’S BEST. IT’S NOT EASY TO BREAK TRADITION AND STAY RESPECTFUL, BUT IT’S THE ONLY WAY TO RECREATE TRADITION.”



**Want to hear more? Chef Massimo spoke with Vijaya Selvarju at the RC Show on Tuesday March 2nd, 2021 (presented by Bellavita Italian Pavilion). Watch the conversation with RC ON DEMAND using your RC Show login credentials at onlinelive.rcshow.com until April 30, 2021. Or visit rcshow.com for more information.**

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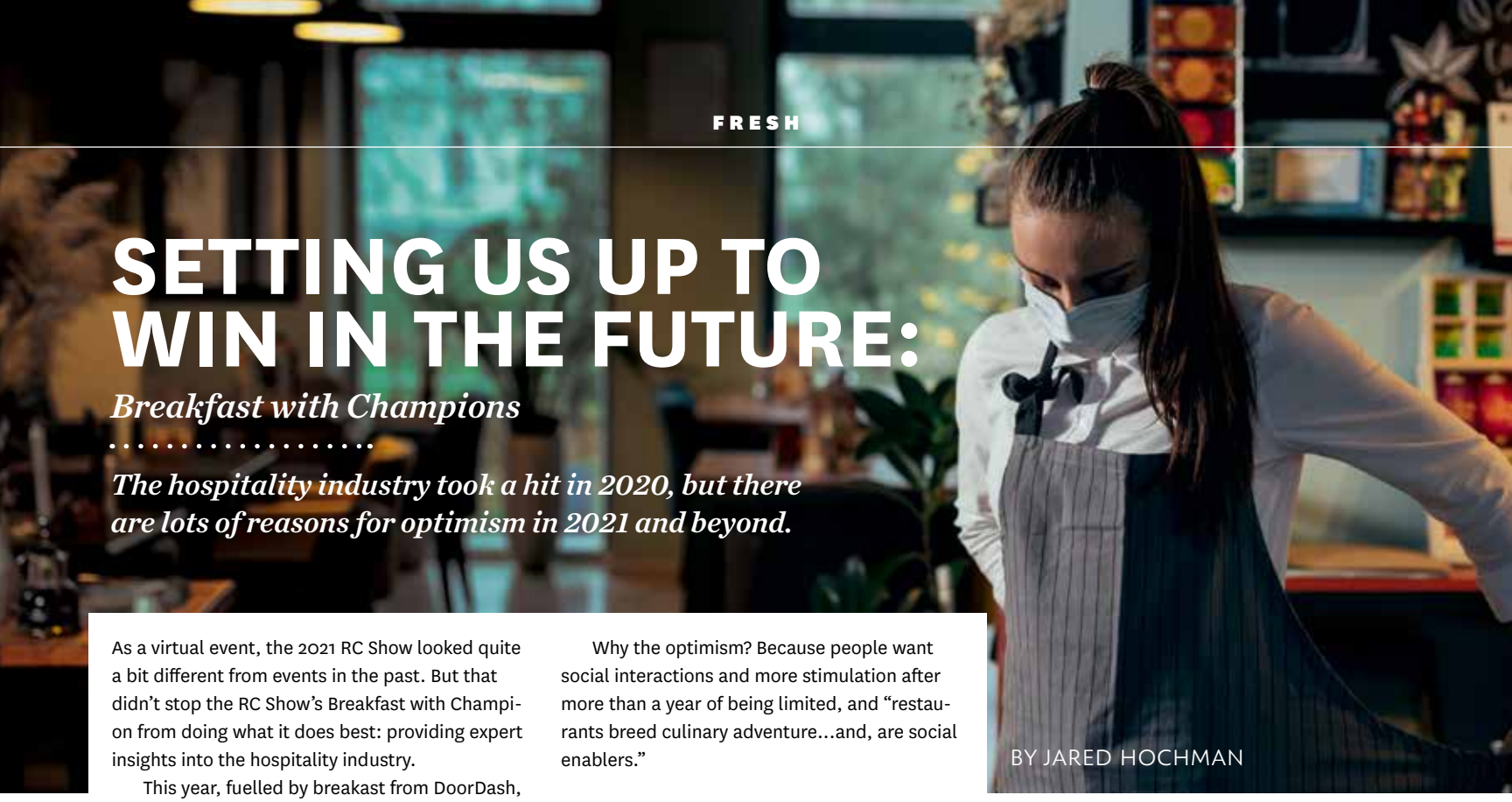
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# SETTING US UP TO WIN IN THE FUTURE:

## *Breakfast with Champions*

***The hospitality industry took a hit in 2020, but there are lots of reasons for optimism in 2021 and beyond.***

BY JARED HOCHMAN

As a virtual event, the 2021 RC Show looked quite a bit different from events in the past. But that didn't stop the RC Show's Breakfast with Champion from doing what it does best: providing expert insights into the hospitality industry.

This year, fuelled by breakast from DoorDash, operators, suppliers and staff learned the pivotal trends—both for the short- and long-term—to help their businesses emerge from the pandemic in the best possible position for success.

While handshakes and hugs were replaced with side-by-side boxes on digital screens, the insights provided by the industry leaders and innovators and success stories on the digital stage did not disappoint.

In case you didn't get a chance to attend the 2021 Breakfast with Champions, here are some of the key findings.

### THE SOBERING REALITY

There's no way around the fact that 2020 will always be known for the negative impact COVID-19 had on the hospitality industry. But David Henkes, senior principal at Technomic, shared some stunning statistics.

In tracking 25 global markets, there was a 27 per cent decline in the value of the global foodservice industry last year, with Canada seeing a 28 per cent drop and hotels being the hardest-hit sector (39 per cent decline), while restaurants and bars dipped by 29 per cent.

"Technology became a big focus for operators," said Henkes. "And will be an enabler to meet rising safety and convenience demands."

He expects 10-25 per cent growth of the industry over the 2020 lows, which isn't back to 2019 levels but is a step in the right direction, with 11 per cent growth expected in Canada.

Why the optimism? Because people want social interactions and more stimulation after more than a year of being limited, and "restaurants breed culinary adventure...and, are social enablers."

### GEN Z THE KEY?

While the numbers were staggering, the focus of *Breakfast with Champions* was not to dwell on the past, but rather collaborate on how we can feed the recovery of both our industry—and society as a whole.

Maeve Webster, President of Menu Matters, highlighted that one of the keys to recovery will be Generation Z.

Generally regarded as consumers between the ages of five and 23, this group is developing the behaviours and habits—either initially as children or further refined as a young adults entering the workforce—that will dictate how our industry operates going forward.

"There will be a new normal. We need to be prepared for things to be different," said Webster. "The desire to go back to what was familiar is so strong that it is easy to forget that it's not possible."

With the emerging prominence of this demographic, Webster said trends suggest restaurants should expect to focus more on activism and being able to promote sustainability—not just environmental, but also social and animal-rights based, in a profitable manner.

The most important trend; however, comes from Gen Z forming habits and behaviours during a time when dining experiences were all at home, so their expectation of off-premises dining is much higher. Off-premises dining will need to be more sensitive, thoughtful and closer than ever to replicating the on-premises experience.

### RESTAURANTS ALREADY TAKING NOTE

A roundtable discussion, moderated by DoorDash's Director of Enterprise Partnerships Ryan Freeman, saw David Bloom, owner of Sumac in Montreal and John Bunner, operations director of Alo Food Group share how their restaurants pivoted quickly to focus on enhancing their off-premises experience.

Considering Alo did not have an off-premises program before the pandemic, their restaurant, that was situated and designed in a place with lots of actual foot traffic, was able to switch to partnering with companies such as DoorDash to create digital foot traffic rather quickly.

Bunner stressed that considering all aspects of the experience and packaging, like using circular containers so the restaurant could plate and present the food as it normally would look, would help replicate the on-site experience.

"We also tried to keep that extra-effort service," said Bunner. "Be it customizing orders, doing off-hours runs and operating the same hours every day, we wanted to keep things consistent just as if we had the sit-in service operating."

While takeout was already about 35 per cent of Sumac's pre-pandemic business, that number jumped even more. The kitchen didn't see much of a dramatic change, but Sumac's front-of-house went from focusing on face-to-face service to interacting primarily with a tablet.

Busy service periods are now bags and boxes instead of people, but Bloom emphasized that restaurants cannot waver in their commitment to the little details and treating off-premises business the same as you would launching a dining room.

"We're still striving to take that guest that is sitting on their couch, enjoying a shawarma and a hummus plate—how would we treat them if they were sitting in our restaurant?" said Bloom. "And how can we find a way—whether it's packaging, or food, or answering the phone—to bridge that gap and bring them closer to the restaurant, and us closer to them."

## *If it doesn't fit, then let it sit*

One of the major things **Jon Bunner** noted was that Alo's approach to their menu changed dramatically.

You have to be willing to change your menu to make it as wide as possible and welcome as many guests as you can, but difficult cuts may need to be made. Items that take a long time to cook, or are very finicky, need to be removed and offered in slow hours or as daily specials.

"A dining room is only so big and even if it is at full capacity, you can only take so many orders at once," said Bunner. "And when it comes to fancy cooking, if your dining room is now expanded to the radius of a delivery area, with no buffer on how quickly orders come in, you can get yourself into a bad situation quickly."

Bunner also notes that you can be adventurous with your menu—try adding cocktail suggestions, wine pairings, playlist suggestions and QR codes – but when it comes down to your items, you can't be patient.

"Normally, we would give a dish a long time on a menu after we introduce it: Test it, train the servers on it, find better ways to talk about it," said Bunner. "We don't have that time right now, however, so if it's not working, drop it."

### CHANGING OUR MINDSET

The headliner of *Breakfast with Champions* was Union Square Hospitality Group Founder and CEO Danny Meyer, who did a Q&A with The Globe and Mail Retail Industry Reporter Susan Krashinsky Robertson.

As successful as Union Square has been, even Meyer acknowledged that they had to find new ways to pivot. They looked, and will continue to look at, the off-premises service from a consumer perspective, encouraging restaurants to continue to add the little touches—such as insulated delivery bags, packaging hamburger buns separately so they don't get soggy and substituting french fries (which don't travel well) for items that hold up longer such as tater tots or house-made potato chips.

"We didn't only test the athleticism of our hospitality team, but we tested our hospitality muscle overall," said Meyer. "We asked ourselves how would we feel if we were on the receiving end of this…and what would make us RAVE?"

Meyer also noted that sometimes, pivoting wasn't enough; restaurants needed to suspend their sense of brand, and go from doing something niche to doing something that consumers wanted.

It may not be what you're known for, but if you have good staff, good processes and good ingredients, Meyer sees no reason why you can't still do an exceptional job of the *food people want*.

Meyer also gave his insights into how he sees dining culture changing as we head into the new normal.

"Well, we won't be looking for more ways to touch more things," he quipped.

A simple idea, but it extends into so many practical applications.

Contact-free payments, revamping the entire coat check process – involving more technology, automation and possibly tableside delivery – along with using more QR codes for menus, bill splitting and contact tracing. Not only could those investments enhance your customer's experience, but they can help add those extra touches guests will appreciate and crave.

But regardless of what changes you make, Meyer reminded us all that it still comes down to delivering a great experience. Especially in fine dining, where many chefs create lavish, multi-course meals with unique items that take hours to execute, Meyer suggests restaurants simplify as we get our industry back on its feet.

## *Your People Are The Most Important*

While **Danny Meyer** has always put his staff first, be it his decision to remove tipping in his restaurants five years ago (and paying all his staff fair and equal wages), he reiterated that at the *Breakfast with Champions* with his "Virtuous cycle of enlightened hospitality."

The system is simple: as you keep the top tier happy, it will keep have a trickle effect and keep all subsequent groups happy below.

**The cycle:**

1. Keep your staff happy first.
2. Your customers come second.
3. The community you operate in and support is third.
4. Your suppliers are fourth.
5. The shareholders' needs are fifth.

While this goes against the 'customer is always right' mantra, Meyer has a simple explanation. "Your customers will never be any happier than the people who work for you."

And why are the shareholders fifth? Well, if you keep groups one through four happy, you'll make money. And if you make money, your shareholders will be happy.

"If the chef is so talented, make me the best mac and cheese I've ever had in my life!" said Meyer. "I'm not saying the world needs to be distilled down to meatloaf and macaroni and cheese, but people want to be welcomed home to our restaurants more than ever."

"And I know we're all more than capable of doing that."

**Want to hear all the insights shared by our expert speakers? You can still watch the *Breakfast with Champions* in its entirety at onlinelive.rcshow.com.**

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# LOCAL CHEF. LOCAL HERO.

## THE INDUSTRY FINDS A CHAMPION WITHIN ITS RANKS

Egg Farmers of Canada Ambassador: Chef Dale MacKay

Nominee: Mixologist and Grassroots Restaurant Group Co-Owner Christopher Cho

As the food industry continues to persevere, Canadians across the country are rising to the occasion. Canadian egg farmers have seen it first-hand as hard-working members of almost every community across Canada. While these farmers have proudly donated millions of eggs to food banks and given back to their communities in a multitude of ways, today they're showing their admiration for another integral part of the food industry, the culinary community. Because not all heroes wear capes – some wear an apron.

Saskatchewan-based chef, Dale MacKay is a familiar name to many. His restaurants are some of the most renowned in Canada, and he'd be the first to say, you don't get there on your own. Back in 2009, he met Christopher Cho – an aspiring cook at the time who had travelled from Toronto all the way to Vancouver looking for a new place to learn and grow. Chef Dale decided to give him a chance and the young man quickly proved his heart was in the right place. Twelve years later and his heart has only grown. Today, Chef Dale is shining a spotlight on Christopher, in celebration of him continuously going above and beyond to support his local community and the whole hospitality industry.

**Chef Dale: In a year that presented many challenges, how have you been able to support others and give back to the Canadian food industry?**

Christopher: In the restaurant industry, gratuities mean everything to our staff, and it's no surprise we've been hit hard by the pandemic. Unfortunately, there are very few relief funds for our industry, even though many live paycheck to paycheck. I'm proud to be a board member of the Bartenders Benevolent Fund, which provides financial resources for hospitality professionals across Canada. We help everyone who needs it, from dishwashers to bartenders, anyone in the industry can apply. In the past year we've provided $500,000 in relief funds.

**What learnings or positives can you take away from this past year?**

I just don't take things for granted anymore. I keep learning from the producers and farmers who dedicate their lives to producing fresh, local food. It helps me celebrate what we all do in the culinary community and appreciate the hard work and people in the entire food industry. More than ever, I really just celebrate what we have here in Canada.

**How have you seen the culinary community come together this year?**

My friends are spread out across the country and even in the States. This year, more than ever, they're reaching out asking me how I'm doing. We've had video chats and done cooking tutorials. The tough times in the food community have kind of united us, and we've all rallied together.

**In an industry that's usually so competitive, this year definitely feels like we're all on the same team.**

Yeah for sure, and the obligation goes both ways. We're really conscious about our food orders because we know a lot of farmers depend on us just as much as we do them. This year we had local farmers drop off produce and some brands drop off products for free. We ended up making some custom cocktail kits and it really helped us keep our staff going.

**How can we work to maintain the strength of the Canadian food system?**

It's all about collaboration, cohesiveness and sustainability. Basically, it all comes together when everyone from the farm to the table all work together. And it helps when you work with ingredients from your region starting with local farmers. I do a lot of research before I order, then share that with the community. That approach is how we'll support each other through this and come out on top. Also, I want to give a shout-out: Saskatchewan's mushrooms are some of the best in the world. And you know what goes great with mushrooms... fresh, high-quality, local eggs!

Resilience and community are the bricks and mortar of Canada's culinary community, and while our brick and mortars may have changed for the time being, our foundation has not. Stories like Chef Dale and Christopher's are why Canadian egg farmers are so proud to play a role in Canada's food supply chain. Discover more at @eggsoeufs or #LocalChefLocalHero

EGG FARMERS OF CANADA

# READY WHEN YOU ARE

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