MENU

CANADA'S FOODSERVICE MAGAZINE

INSIDE:
2021 Canadian Coffee & Tea Report

2021
IS A MAKE-OR-BREAK SUMMER FOR CANADIAN RESTAURANTS
BUT WILL IT BE ENOUGH?

Learn more on page 10

IT'S TIME TO CELEBRATE CANADIAN MADE

THE PEOPLE, PRODUCTS AND PASSIONS DRIVING CANADA'S CULINARY RECOVERY FORWARD.



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Summer 2021
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Restaurants Canada

The voice of foodservice | La voix des services alimentaires

For over 365 days, we have not had the opportunity to welcome guests to our patios or dining rooms. Like many of you, I have been frustrated, challenged and just tired as we all rode the open-and-close roller coaster over the past year. But there is a light at the end of the tunnel, it's patio season—the first signal for reopening. This year, I, like many of you, have placed my hope in patios, making them more important than ever and, one thing is for sure: Canadians love patios.

Patios need to be an extension of your brand outdoors. This summer, consider them your marketing plan. Instead of thinking of them in the short term, invest in them, and ensure you review every touchpoint during a guest's experience with you. This has guided much of this edition of MENU Magazine.

I urge readers to make their way to our article on how to excel at guest services and hit the ground running upon reopening. This article examines three major areas—staffing, health and safety, and operations—to fully equip our community with the takeaways they need to succeed during this challenging time.

I invite you to read through our piece on patio optimization. Especially for those less experienced with patio operations, this article acts as a resource, explaining how turnover can impact your patio business, providing insights into how you can prepare your patio for the colder, fall weather, and reviewing menu engineering best practices.

As we discuss menus for the summer, we can not understate the importance of ensuring your business is meeting customer demand for patios and takeaway. This issue explores three essential areas of the beverage sector: coffee, tea and hard seltzers. Our 2021 Canadian Coffee & Tea Report delves into the current trends in the sector through industry data and expert thought leadership, to investigate where you should invest, and in what direction you should take your menu. Our article on the rise of hard seltzers looks into this emerging category, taking a look at what the major players are, and what about this beverage style is resonating with consumers.

With summer in full swing, and vaccine rollout in progress, I want to take this opportunity to convey the importance of celebration. In March 2020, it seemed almost impossible, but we are so close to coming through the other end. On this note, I want to highlight two further pieces in this edition of MENU: our Canadian-Made section, and an update from Restaurants Canada President and CEO, Todd Barclay.

The Canadian-Made feature presents us with the occasion to highlight and showcase up-and-coming Canadian talent, unexpected Canadian spirits and locally-produced ingredients as well as homegrown tech innovations making an impact throughout the industry. Readers can also find guest posts by Jeff Stewart of Food Day Canada, and renowned chef Michael Smith.

Members should be sure to read through Todd's open letter for an insider's look at Restaurants Canada's current work, our pivotal asks, and our areas of focus for the industry. While we may be a long way out from recovery, I assure you that the Restaurants Canada team will continue to advocate for sector-specific government support across the country and help in rebuilding consumer confidence.

As we get ready for a summer that may be a bit different from those in the past, we can't forget that, when you strip it all down and it's time to welcome back our guests, we need to show them a great experience in order to help rebuild consumer confidence— it needs to be easy and frictionless, and guests need to feel safe. Once we make them feel welcomed and safe, they will be back. The survival of our industry is counting on it.



Cindy Simpson

Cindy Simpson
Chair of the Board

Summer 2021
Volume 6 Number 3

Restaurants Canada

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.

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MENU is published four times per year by Restaurants Canada

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HST Registration No. #
106866460 RT0001

Subscription price:
CANADIAN PRICE:
$75 per year; most single issues $18.95.

Publication Mail Agreement
No. 40009977
ISSN 2371-4883

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contents



ON THE COVER:
As patio season approaches, it's make or break for Canada's restaurants who remain committed to safe food and social experiences. Learn more from President and CEO Todd Barclay about Restaurants Canada's advocacy initiatives on page 10.

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

4 *Cindy Simpson on investing in the success of patio season*

COMMUNITY CORNER

6 *Together Apart, Summer Cirque, Ocean Wise Seafood Program, FromTo*

THE COLUMN

7 *Chef Michael Smith: Canadian Cuisine and Becoming a True Culinary Destination*

YOUR STORIES

10 President & CEO Todd Barclay: *Sector-specific support is needed for survival*

MAIN COURSE

14 Canadian Made
Home-grown leadership, talent and innovation ready to take on the world

FRESH

30 *American Standard, Be Sweet, Fever-Tree, bubly, SilverChef, Victorinox Swiss Army*

24 Unlimited Potential:
Harnessing Canadian Opportunities for Expansion & Growth





MENU

14

38

27

SPECIAL REPORT

27 2021 Canadian Coffee & Tea Report

BAR & BEVERAGE SHOWCASE

34 *Bunn, Genuine Tea Co., Hale Coffee, Muuse, Sloane Tea, Two Bears*

BACK OF HOUSE

36 Gordon Food Service
Combatting COVID-19 Challenges: Labour & Staffing

BEHIND THE BAR

38 Summer Seltzers are Bubbling Up Across Canada

FRONT OF HOUSE

64 Hit the Ground Running:
Prepping for reopening

44 Maximizing Patio Profitability in 2021

48 A Fine Balance:
How have Canada's "greenest" restaurants adapted to ensure continued sustainability?

52 BDO
Using financial data and cash flow analysis to support a successful reopening

SPOTLIGHT

54 RC Board Member Roundtable:
Mark Findlay, CEO, Lone Star Texas Grill; Ibrahim (Obby) Khan, Founder & CEO, Shawarma Khan Inc., Green Carrot Juice Company, Goodlocal.ca; Lacey Sellinger, Co-owner & GM, Odla Restaurant and Market

Restaurants Canada is proud to partner with Together Apart, Summer Cirque to support the foodservice industry. COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on the restaurant industry across Canada and the people who show up to work every day to make it all happen. Because of this, partial proceeds from Together Apart will go directly to supporting our mental health and wellness initiatives.

This never-before-seen outdoor, live theatrical cirque show is set to amaze audiences starting July 1, 2021, Canada Day. Canada's own, Tony Award-winning production company, The 7 Fingers, creates this exclusive acrobatic theatrical production. Outdoor performances will run Thursday through Sunday nights weekly until August 1, 2021.

When restaurants thrive, so do the communities they serve.
Visit **www.togetherapartcirque.com** for tickets or to learn more—come to the table and show your support!
Use promo code RC10 and save 10%!





Restaurants Canada is a proud partner of the Ocean Wise Seafood program. Overfishing is one of the greatest threats to the health of our oceans, contributing to biodiversity loss, habitat destruction, bycatch of marine species, human rights abuses and more.

91% of Canadian consumers indicated that sustainability of seafood is important to them. This June and July we will be taking part in the Waves of Change campaign to end overfishing. Keep an eye out for content speaking to overfishing, fish farming, bycatch and sustainable seafood throughout the next two months so members can stay up to date on this important issue.

To learn more, visit: **https://tinyurl.com/4rr7763y**

FromTo is a community-first delivery platform that supports local restaurants and businesses in your neighbourhood.
Their low-to-no-cost model benefits restaurant and driver partners where they need it the most. FromTo's priority is keeping business where it belongs: locally. During the pandemic, they made a decision not to charge restaurants fees in order to support them. Using FromTo helps support local Canadian businesses and the restaurants you love in your community.

Visit **www.fromto.ca** for more information.

FromTo



Canadian Cuisine and Becoming a True Culinary Destination

BY CHEF MICHAEL SMITH

> “Consumers are looking for sustainable, local fare and that is something that will only increase as the country recovers from COVID-19. That connection to local ingredients and the people who provide them is what makes Canadian cuisine one of the best in the world.



As a chef, my values are at the core of everything I do. It is what drew me to PEI after working in some of the best kitchens in the world. I was in search of something more meaningful in the culinary sphere, and I said at the time that I wanted to meet some farmers—even though I didn’t quite know what that meant.

My culinary career really came full circle in 2015 when my wife Chastity and I decided to take over The Inn at Bay Fortune, where I had worked for seven years in the 1990s. When we took the plunge, we had a vision for what we wanted to create—a culinary destination that showcased fresh, locally grown food and the best that PEI has to offer. We are now going into our seventh season and I believe that we have created something truly special; something that I wouldn’t have even imagined seven years ago. The terroir that we have cultivated with the help of our talented farmer and dedicated team produces some of the best food around, which elevates everything we do in the kitchen. Our farm is at the heart of The Inn at Bay Fortune and that true connection with the land is something that I am proud to provide our employees and pass on to our guests.

There is no doubt that this past year has been extremely difficult for the restaurant and hospitality industry. When the pandemic first hit early last year, our operations skidded to a halt. I knew that we had to make some hard decisions to not only keep our business afloat but also protect our staff,



Chef Michael gave a passionate speech on the local sourcing and the staffing issues facing the industry as keynote speaker at this past RC Show 2021.

which was the number one priority. I knew that in order to survive we had to go back to our core values; that DNA of innovation and creativity that has been key to our success over the past six seasons.

Although the pandemic has been devastating, I believe it is also an opportunity to really look at innovation and creativity throughout the industry. If we don't learn some giant societal lessons from this experience, we have failed. This pandemic has shed a light on our industry and consumers are starting to pay attention to the reality of how restaurant employees are treated, paid and respected. I feel very passionate about the need to improve the way we pay and treat our employees, which has our antiquated gratuity system at the crux of the problem. This time of pause and reflection is a real opportunity for more establishments to figure out how they can implement a gratuity-included system. We, as an entire industry, need to find a way to pay our staff appropriately, and, in turn, pass those costs on fairly to our guests. In the end, it is about respect for Canadians, both consumers and those within the hospitality industry.

As a Canadian by choice, I know first hand what this country has to offer in terms of top-notch cuisine. One of the benefits of the pandemic has been an increased focus on "local" which has been an emerging trend in the industry for the past few years. Consumers are looking for sustainable, local fare and that is something that will only increase as the country recovers from COVID-19. That connection to local ingredients and the people who provide them is what makes Canadian cuisine one of the best in the world. All we have to do is wave our flag a bit higher to make the world see how truly special we are as a culinary destination.

At its core, this industry is about people. It's about the producers and farmers, the chefs and wait staff. It's about our guests who come to us to escape and enjoy a great meal. That is something that will be even more important as we recover from the pandemic. That connection is so valuable, and placing an emphasis on all the people who play a role in the industry is something that is not only going to help us in recovery from the pandemic, but make us stronger. Let's stay true to our values and let them guide us in building a progressive and united industry that will establish us as a true culinary destination on the world stage.



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SECTOR-SPECIFIC SUPPORT IS NEEDED FOR SURVIVAL

BY TODD BARCLAY,
PRESIDENT & CEO, RESTAURANTS CANADA







As the spring turns to summer, and the pace of vaccinations across the country continues to speed up, restaurant operators and staff finally have a reason to look forward—bring it on; it's patio season. Many provinces have started to announce and roll out their reopening plans which include patio dining, and, thankfully in some cases, a return to indoor dining.

While we have continued to echo health experts' statements that outdoor settings pose very little risk, and data and evidence show restaurants have not been the source of COVID-19 outbreaks, restaurants have continued to be singled out. We continue to position restaurants as the safe alternative to private gatherings they have always been. We are pushing for the inclusion of restaurants in all reopening plans; a light at the end of a long tunnel and a sense of a return to some sort of normalcy.

However, we cannot hide from the fact that revival and recovery will not be instantaneous. With Canadians now looking forward to hopefully enjoying a "one-dose summer", we know this will not mean restaurants can operate at 100 per cent capacity. We expect physical distancing requirements will remain in place for the short-mid term in some regions across Canada. In fact, with the strict lockdown measures implemented across several regions in Canada to contain the third wave, and the resulting continuance of restrictions into the near future, we do not expect the industry to be on the road to full recovery until 2023.

To say we have been "impacted" is an understatement. According to a recent Restaurant Outlook Survey,:

- Eight out of 10 foodservice businesses have been operating at a loss or barely breaking even throughout the entire pandemic.
- Nearly half of all restaurant operations have consistently been losing money for more than a year.

The federal rent and wage subsidies have been providing our hardest-hit industry with vitally needed life support. But restaurants aren't charities; they need hope that they can make at least the slimmest of profit margins to justify staying in business. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has stretched their resiliency to its limit. While these programs are providing a lifeline to restaurants and other small businesses across the country, our industry is going to need more sector-specific support to continue reviving main streets and helping the government keep its throne speech promise to bring a million Canadians back to work.







This is just one example of why, while we appreciate what the government has done thus far, restaurants across the country are going to need further funding and sector-specific support to ensure they have the bridge they need to survive until they can reopen once and for all.

According to the April 2021 Labour Force Survey from Statistics Canada, more than two thirds (70.9 per cent) of the 503,000 jobs still missing from the Canadian economy in the wake of COVID-19 are from the foodservice sector. Factoring in the 80,700 employees who didn't work any hours last month, there are still 437,500 fewer people working in the foodservice sector than there were in February 2020.

One out of every five jobs lost during the first six weeks of lockdown last year was from the foodservice sector. More than a year into this pandemic, one out of every three jobs lost is now from our sector.

Further to that, we estimate that at least 10 per cent of restaurant operations across the country have had to permanently close—that's about 10,000 establishments that are now gone for good. And, if subsidies are scaled back too soon, half of restaurants face risk of closure.

With these latest numbers, Restaurants Canada reiterated our call to the federal government to immediately introduce a sector-specific Restaurant Survival Support Package containing the following measures to help our industry survive:

- An exemption from the scheduled phase-out of the rent and wage subsidies for the highly affected foodservice sector, and an extension of these vital programs for restaurants until at least April 2022. This will be necessary as Restaurants Canada survey data has consistently revealed that restaurant operators expect they'll need at least a year to return to profitability once the COVID-19 pandemic subsides.
- The option for restaurants eligible for the wage subsidy to apply for added funding through the Canada Recovery Hiring Program so that they can hire new workers, in addition to keeping the ones they already have on payroll.
- Partial forgiveness for all government-backed loans and an extension of application deadlines for existing programs. Currently, loan forgiveness is only available through the Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA). Restaurants Canada would like to see this as well for the Highly Affected Sectors Credit Availability Program (HASCAP) and any other loan program that the government introduces to help businesses recover from the pandemic.
- Tax credits to defray costs of COVID-19 health and safety expenditures.

We also continue to push for changes to unfavourable alcohol policies and credit card fees. The impact in these areas has been compounded through this pandemic.

In late May, Restaurants Canada provided an update on the devastating impacts the pandemic has had on the Canadian foodservice industry, along with recommendations to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance (FINA), which was meeting to discuss the implementation of the federal government's new budget. If the budget is implemented without any changes, the federal government will essentially be pulling up the support ramp right before relaunch, putting half of Canada's restaurants at risk of being left behind. Restaurants are key to bringing jobs back to the Canadian economy and helping main street get back on its feet.

But first, they need to survive.

We continue to discuss and advocate for our recommendations for a Restaurant Survival Support Package with elected officials and key government policymakers engaged in our Restaurant Revival Working Group and will continue to keep you updated on our advancements.

If you have any feedback, please do not hesitate to reach out to me directly, at: **CEO@restaurantscanada.org**.



Print and digital advertisements have been placed in publications provincially and nationally to bring awareness of the challenges faced by our industry.

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As we enter patio season and our vaccine rollout shows signs of picking up speed across the country, many of us are hopeful and optimistic for the first time in months. With this in mind, it's important that we take pause to celebrate and recognize the incredible talents that make up our industry.

The Canadian foodservice and hospitality industry continues to go through incredible challenges and while recovery still presents a mountain for us to climb, we are resilient. It's this strength that is something to highlight and admire. And this strength is something to highlight and admire.

With Canada Day (July 1) and Food Day Canada (July 31) around the corner, we want to shine a light on amazing Canadian culinary leaders, foodservice brands and services that are at the forefront of the story of Canadian cuisine and innovation.

CELEBRATING CANADA'S MENU OF STORIES

BY JEFF STEWART

My mother, Anita Stewart, exemplified her mantra "Canada is food and the world is richer for it," by exploring and promoting Canadian food culture and by amplifying the voices of the Canadian food community. Her efforts and beliefs come together in no better way, than with Food Day Canada®, a national celebration that provides the opportunity for all Canadians to enjoy locally-produced foods and to give thanks to those who make it happen.



FOOD DAY CANADA FOUNDER, ANITA STEWART

Food Day Canada began in 2003 as "The World's Longest Barbecue," a massive, Canada-wide response to the sanction of Canadian beef exports by our largest trading partner and the dramatic hardship it imposed on our agricultural community. This evolved to Food Day Canada, an annual mid-summer celebration, always held on the Saturday of the August long weekend, when we share Canada's rich culinary heritage, our delicious northern bounty and the best-managed food system on the planet. This year's theme is 'Gratitude'—appropriate given the tumultuous challenges of 2021.

What I love about Food Day Canada is that it's made for everyone and anyone can celebrate: chefs, home cooks, farmers, ranchers, fishers, writers, winemakers, brewers, food processors, researchers...and the list goes on. The day presents us with the opportunity to delve into the diversity, culture, geography and ingredients of Canada. Canada is a menu of stories; a land of ultimate culinary possibilities! The richness and biodiversity of the indigenous harvest—our original palate—is the foundation of it all. Built solidly upon that base are our iconic ingredients: wheat, beef, apples; enriching and embroidering the culinary traditions of a multitude of immigrant groups who have gathered together from the four corners of the globe, men and women with a passion for this land which they now call 'home'.

With a landmass of roughly 9,976,128 km^2, we also boast the longest coastline on earth, bordering on three oceans and measuring 243,000 km. This is a staggering figure. It would take nine regions the size of Italy, which measures a mere 116,303 km^2, to fill the space occupied by the province of Ontario alone. There are 1.4 hectares of arable land for each living Canadian. We have more freshwater than any other nation on earth.

There is not one Canadian cuisine, there are hundreds, depending upon ethnicity, climate and history. It is ultimately based on the land and the sea. It is defined by a mindset, a philosophy, an attitude, and it uses ingredients that speak volumes of the glorious culinary history of Canada.

We need to celebrate the triumph of our food system and let the world know. The food system in Canada deserves recognition for all the hard work they do! Today the journey continues with faith in the future and with tremendous admiration for the producers of our nation who have set our tables so well.

Though my mother's focus was food, her mission and philosophy were to connect the people of this vast, diverse nation with the land and each other while actively promoting the growth and study of our distinctly Canadian food culture.

HOW TO CELEBRATE FOOD DAY CANADA?

- Make a pledge to commit to using Canadian ingredients on Food Day Canada, July 31st, 2021 now and beyond at https://fooddaycanada.ca/pledge-canadian-2021/
- Chefs and restaurateurs can plan a daily special or menu for the day and let us know; we are featuring selected Food Day Canada chefs online, promoting and amplifying your voices of support for local Canadian Foods. Learn more at: https://fooddaycanada.ca/our-restaurants/
- Join us virtually via social media! Post your Canadian-made food and dishes and use #FoodDayCanada

CANADIAN-MADE MARKETPLACE

This special edition of Marketplace features Canadian products, brands and services in three categories: Bar & Beverage, Food and Tech & Innovation...

BAR & BEV

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This Canada-wide exposure became a quick phenomenon for this unique spirit! They've even paired it with Mrs. Garrett's Butter Tart for the ultimate combo you don't want to miss out on. Try this unique and decadent spirit in a favourite classic like a Butter Tart Old Fashioned cocktail!

Visit **www.topshelfdistillers.com** to purchase this unique spirit—they can ship right to your home!

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LAST MOUNTAIN DISTILLERY

Last Mountain Distillery is family-owned and operated in Lumsden, SK, the heart of grain country. Their success lies in their commitment to producing high quality, handcrafted spirits. Their signature products include Saskatchewan's best selling naturally infused dill pickle vodka, organic cherry whisky, apple pie moonshine and more. Last Mountain's craft distilling process brings out the full flavour of the grain and leaves a smooth finish unlike any other.

Their Dill Pickle Vodka is made using their corn-based Vodka, and is then naturally infused with fresh cucumber, dill and garlic all sourced locally in Saskatchewan. Best enjoyed in a Caesar!

To purchase in Ontario, contact: **info@102import.com**

To purchase in Saskatchewan, please visit their store or find distribution info online at: **www.lastmountaindistillery.com**

For all other inquiries, contact: **lmdinfo2@gmail.com**.

Pricing: C$28.75 (750ml, prices will vary by size and province)

TABOO GENUINE ABSINTHE



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One of the secrets to the smoothness of Canada's Original Absinthe is that it starts in their local cherry orchards and progresses through the fermentation and distillation leading to a gluten-free, silky smooth base fruit spirit. The quintessential black licorice aroma and flavours are infused into this once forbidden elixir by re-distilling the base alcohol with our local botanicals highlighted by fennel, anise, lemon balm, hyssop and petite and grande wormwood. All of these herbs grow wild in their back garden and can be readily found in many meadows and grasslands within Western Canada.

An award-winning Absinthe, Taboo's recipe has won Gold at the World Spirits Awards (2013, 2015, 2017, and 2020), an affirmation that Okanagan Spirits' Absinthe had "made it'" by European standards.

For more information or to purchase, visit: **https://okanaganspirits.com/products/absinthe/taboo/**

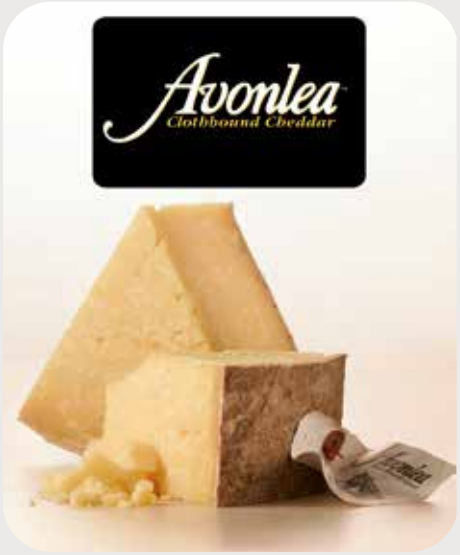
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Yvonne Langen *is the food and cocktail content creator behind Taste & Tipple. She is an ambitious home bartender committed to taking the intimidation factor out of craft cocktails and inspiring others to approach their liquor cabinet with confidence. Through her popular Virtual Happy Hour series on her Instagram Stories (and now YouTube channel) she has hosted more than 200 cocktail tutorials in just 14 months, teaching her audience how to recreate the classics, modern classics, and tipples of her own making. Her fun and accessible approach to shaking and stirring has earned her recognition and regular features on national and regional news outlets including CBC, CityTV's Breakfast Television, CTV Morning Live, and many more. Follow Yvonne on Instagram at* **@tasteandtipple**.

FOOD

CURATED BY FOOD DAY CANADA



Avonlea Clothbound Cheddar's recipe comes from the Orkney Islands, north of mainland Scotland, and is handmade in the style of the great traditional English Cheddars.

The milk of Holstein cows from the small, local farms in the rolling hills of Prince Edward Island is gently heated, but not pasteurized, to allow beneficial microbes to thrive and give depth of character and flavour. The cloth, which is applied to the exterior of the wheels, allows the cheese to breathe as it ages for 12-16 months. The salt air and iron-rich soil of Prince Edward Island combine to add quality and a robust flavour to this Cheddar.

Avonlea is available coast-to-coast from various retailers and distributors. You can find a list here: **https://www.cowscreamery.ca/pages/where-to-buy**

For more information, reach out directly to our team at: **andrea@cows.ca**

CanMar Foods Ltd. is a fully integrated, "closed loop", state of the art Canadian seed processing company in Regina, SK, serving both the ingredient and retail industry. By roasting locally grown flax seeds and hemp seeds, they are creating wholesome ingredients for a healthy life.



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For more information, reach out to: **myles@canmarfoods.com**.

For availability and pricing, visit: **www.canmarfoods.com**

Food Day Canada*'s mission statement is to actively promote the growth and study of our distinctly Canadian food culture. This year, Food Day Canada will be held on Saturday, July 31, 2021. The celebration presents all Canadians with the chance to join hands in one massive celebration in praise of our farmers and fishers, chefs and researchers and, above all, our home cooks.*

For more information, visit: **https://fooddaycanada.ca/**

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FOODTECH

CURATED BY CANADIAN FOOD INNOVATION NETWORK



Chiber is a new, natural shelf-life extender for leading foodservice operators and/or their fresh product suppliers who are looking to extend the shelf-life of their premise-made menu items or packaged goods, from beverages to sauces, spreads, dips and plant-based meat alternatives. A clean-label mushroom extract, Chiber is effective against pathogenic bacteria, yeast and mold, and has no sensory impact on taste and appearance. It also fits with today's consumer's dietary preferences (allergy-free, gluten-free, halal, kosher, organic compliant, non-GMO, vegan, etc.).

Chiber is a shelf-stable liquid with a 12-month shelf-life. Currently available on a special-order basis with a minimum order quantity of 2x10kg.

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Gastronomous Technologies, Innovation Award Winner at RC Show 2021

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, and further provide 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.

For more information, visit: **https://www.gastronomous.ca/**



One of Canada's most beloved cold-pressed juice brands and a world leader in the fight against food waste, **LOOP Mission** saves fruits and veggies from needless waste—rejected because they don't have the proper size or shape, or simply lack the shelf life required to survive the cycle of distribution. Recent innovations mean that they also brew beers with day-old bread, distill gin using potato cuttings from the potato chip industry and make soap from rejected cooking oil.

LOOP Mission works with distributor partners to deliver products to businesses all across Canada and provides direct distribution in the Greater Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver areas, with plans for this coverage to grow into other major Canadian city centres.

Their foodservice clients range from cafes and bakeries to restaurants, bars, meal delivery services, catering and more!

Want to partner with LOOP Mission at your business? Contact **sales@loopmission.com** for more details about wholesale distribution in your area.



Nabati Foods Global Inc. is the owner of Nabati Foods Inc., a family-founded company offering whole, natural, plant-based, gluten-free and soy-free foods including dairy-free cheesecakes, cheese alternatives and plant-based meats. Its plant-based Nabati Cheeze in particular is extremely popular with

foodservice operators because it tastes and melts just like real cheese.

Nabati Foods distributes across North America. Nabati Cheeze is distributed by Sysco and GFS in Edmonton, Calgary, Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto and Montreal.

For more information, visit:
https://www.nabati.ca/

GRAIN DISCOVERY

Consumers are more engaged and increasingly interested in knowing where the ingredients in their food and beverages come from, how it is made and what happened along the journey to their plate. **Grain Discovery** is addressing this complex challenge through its traceability software, by enabling verifiable journey maps from farm to finished good. Imagine a QR code on your menu, displays or products providing a 'Digital Passport' for each ingredient. This can elevate your brand by enhancing the ingredients and beverages on your menu, resulting in increased sales and higher guest checks. Grain Discovery solutions are custom made. If you are interested in learning more we would love to hear from you.

For more information, contact:
rory@graindiscovery.com

CANADIAN FOOD INNOVATION NETWORK

The ***Canadian Food Innovation Network (CFIN)*** *is Canada's new gateway to food innovation designed to grow our food and beverage industry by stimulating strategic connections, collaborations, innovation and investments across Canada.*

Launching soon, membership will be open to Canadian-based organizations, including foodservice operators, distributors and their suppliers. There is currently no cost to join. For more information, visit: **www.cfin-rcia.ca**.

CANADIAN RAISED & PRODUCED

KATE AYERS FOR FARMWORK TO FEED CANADA

The pandemic has shown the importance and positive implications of buying local goods and services and consumers are actively seeking out local products. So how can restaurant owners demonstrate that they purchase and use Canadian-made ingredients? These three commodity groups are using brand recognition strategies to promote the importance of local...

Dairy Farmers of Canada:

The "blue cow" label

As you walk down the dairy aisle, how can you tell if your favourite yogurt or cheese is made with Canadian milk? Check for the blue cow label.

"[The foodservice] sector was keen to recognize consumer awareness of the logo, what it stands for and the value (it holds) with their customers," said Luc Chabot, Dairy Farmers of Canada's (DFC's) director of business stakeholder relations.

The blue cow logo has a consumer awareness score of 88 per cent; "In fact, today it is recognized as one of the top three most influential and trusted certification logos in Canada," Chabot added.

The effectiveness and awareness of the blue cow has helped the dairy industry relay important messaging to consumers about product safety and farmers' best management practices.

Chabot added, "The pandemic has propelled us towards an even greater sense of wellbeing [...]. Consumers are looking for functional products that have added benefits, and, as we know, dairy has exceptional nutritional value."

Chicken Farmers of Canada:

'Raised by a Canadian Farmer'

Lisa Bishop-Spencer, Chicken Farmers of Canada's (CFC's) director of brand and communications, said that following years of consumer research, more and more consumers were concerned about where their chicken was coming from.

As a result, CFC developed a brand that resonates with consumers and raises awareness about the quality assurance efforts that go into raising Canadian chicken. Indeed, "91 per cent of Canadians actively look for Canadian meat products in their restaurants and at the retail level," Bishop-Spencer explained.

The *Raised by a Canadian Farmer* brand encapsulates three main pillars of quality assurance when it comes to chicken production: animal care, sustainability and food safety.

Bishop-Spencer added that through its brand, CFC "reinforces consumers' healthy image of chicken and the fact that it's raised by Canadian farmers who they can trust.".

CFC has an extensive marketing plan with quarterly campaigns that include TV advertising, print advertising and national contests. The organization also leverages the networks of brand ambassadors and influencers through various social media platforms.

Egg Farmers of Canada:

made-in-Canada a priority

Egg Farmers of Canada (EFC) represents 1,200 egg farming families in all 10 provinces and the Northwest Territories. Farmers who care for laying chickens participate in a national animal care program consisting of five building blocks including the *Code of Practice*, which is a national understanding of animal care requirements and recommended practices, verification, auditing, continuous improvement and farmer commitment, EFC's website says.

As part of the local food movement and farmers' commitment to animal care, food safety and sustainability, "there is a strong interest in made-in-Canada food, with the vast majority of Canadians (93 per cent) saying that it's important to them that their eggs come from Canada," says Christine Anawati, director of corporate and public affairs at EFC.

EFC connects with consumers through various online platforms, including their *Get Cracking*, *It's Worth It* and *Eggs Anytime* marketing campaigns. Foodservice industry stakeholders play a huge role in promoting local food and showing consumers how eggs can be incorporated into any meal.

UP-AND-COMING CANADIAN TALENT

With such upheaval in our industry (restaurants closing, diversifying offerings, and changes in consumer habits), the future may seem uncertain. However, one thing that is certain, is that Canada will continue to foster our talents. This up-and-coming talent feature takes a look at the recent winners of the Beyond the Rail and Garland Canada Culinary Competitions at RC Show 2021, and a special curated list by Chefs Canada.



Josh Mellet, Toronto First Place Winner | Beyond the Rail Competition (2021)

Josh Mellet is a hospitality professional with more than 10 years' experience dedicated to his passion behind the bar. This year Josh took home first place in the Beyond the Rail Competition at RC Show 2021, with his cocktail to-go kit, "My Cacao Famous".



Josh is also responsible for this cocktail on the cover of this edition of MENU. You can find the full recipe for his "Tea Collins" cocktail at MENUMag.ca.

MM How do you leverage Canadian ingredients in your bar menu?

Canada is a beautiful country that produces high quality ingredients for bartenders and chefs to use in their respective creations. Understanding what's available year-round is the first step. Apples, pears, beets, carrots and leeks are just a few, and even though this may seem limited, for chefs and bartenders in Canada, it presents an opportunity to get creative and apply different culinary techniques to alter those ingredients. Syrups, cordials, shrubs, sodas, foams, bitters, infusions and macerations are just a few ways to enhance or alter those ingredients.

MM What is your favourite 'Canadian' ingredient to use in your bartending?

My favourite Canadian ingredient to use is the McIntosh apple. It is sweet, tart and has a unique aftertaste to it. I have made many fantastic and complex bar ingredients with it such as syrups, shrubs, cordials and foams, to name a few. It is very versatile and easy to work with. Most importantly, it pairs well with many other dry botanicals and fresh herbs, so you're never short on drink ideas.

MM Can you speak to what "Canadian cuisine" means to you?

Being from Canada, I am grateful and proud to be in one of the most diverse countries in the world. People from all over have influenced the bar and culinary scene with unique food and beverage products from their respective countries and backgrounds. Collaborating Canadian food products with different flavours, ingredients and techniques from all over the world is what makes Canada one of the best places for food and beverage.

MM What's next for Canadian cuisine worldwide?

I believe that in order to develop momentum in the Canadian bar/culinary scene, industry leaders need to encourage more bartenders to compete in high level competitions. Competitions are a great way for bartenders to get their name out in the public eye, network with people inside and outside of the industry, develop their own skills and connect themselves to different brands and sponsors. Every day, more talented chefs and bartenders are emerging from the scene. New flavours, techniques and ideas are constantly coming to light, and I look forward to seeing what happens next.

MM What drink are you most proud of?

The drink I'm most proud of is a twist on a martini using a homemade brine that incorporated leeks as the main flavour component. The drink consists of homemade charred leek brine, citrus bitters, dry vermouth or sherry, and London dry gin (or vodka) garnished with a lemon zest and served with pickled leeks on the side. The final result is a dry, savoury and spirit-forward twist on a beloved classic.

MM If you could change anything about the Canadian foodservice industry, what would it be?

The only thing I would like to see change in the hospitality industry is the divide between front of house workers vs back of house workers. I think it would be nice for both sides to switch with each other for one day just so they can appreciate what work goes into each position. Appreciating your peers and their efforts is one step closer to creating a truly great space to work in.



Daniel Kim, Vancouver First Place Winner | Garland Canada Culinary Competition (2021)

Daniel Kim, Sous Chef at Boulevard Kitchen & Oyster Bar in Vancouver took home First Place in the Garland Canada Culinary Competition at RC Show 2021 with his "Stuffed Canadian Chicken Breast, Black Kale & Red Quinoa Fricassee, Roasted Cauliflower, Ontario Taleggio Mustard Sauce".

MM How do you leverage Canadian ingredients in your cuisine?

It's easier to showcase Canadian ingredients by not doing too much to them—letting the natural product speak for itself. Canada is surrounded by beautiful oceans, forests, farms and agriculture; we should be proud of what we produce and choose to serve on a plate.

MM What is your favourite 'Canadian' ingredient to use in your cooking?

My personal favourite ingredient would be the different seafood/shellfish that the Canadian oceans produce. Growing up on the West Coast and being exposed to the Pacific Ocean is what really motivates me and what I believe can still be a future in the culinary scene, when done properly.

Can you speak to what "Canadian cuisine" means to you?

Canada is such a vast and varied country that I believe “Canadian cuisine” can mean anything from chefs who use Canadian products/ingredients in their dishes, to cooking outside in the wild, land or forest. Just being true to who you are and what you believe in within this great country.

What’s next for Canadian cuisine worldwide?

I believe that we will gain more attention with the spread of awareness and marketing of the great products, farms, mountains, scenery and culture we have in the great North. Letting the farms keep producing beautiful produce and livestock. Letting the world know the beauty of Canada from the west all the way to the east and what it has to offer to the world.

What dish are you most proud of?

I am my own worst critic and I continually strive to do better than what I put out last, so I don’t know if I have a dish that I am most proud of right now. I push myself to do better, keep going, and consider new ways of doing things. I am still young, and I still have a lot of growing and learning to do. But the fire in my belly is what motivates me and pushes me in the right direction for my future.

If you could change anything about the Canadian foodservice industry, what would it be?

The one thing I would change in the Canadian foodservice industry is to place a bigger effort on showcasing the world what Canada has to offer in the food scene. Canada produces some of the world’s best products and I believe the world should be exposed to more knowledge and information. Also, allowing smaller farms and businesses to grow and helping the Canadian economy. Allowing more job opportunities for people who are in need—showing Canada is one of the best countries in the world.

CHEFS CANADA'S RISING STARS OF 2021

BY BRIGITTE FOISY, VICE-PRESIDENT, CHEFS CANADA

If the past year had you ordering from the same restaurants, get ready to switch things up! Chefs Canada is on a mission to make Canadian discover the richness of our Canadian culinary scene by bringing some of our favourite rising stars to the spotlight.

CHEF FRANCIS BLAIS: The first Quebecer to win *Top Chef Canada*, Francis made his way from being a sous-chef at Montreal’s Maison Boulud and Le Mousso, to co-owning the NEW Menu Extra (menuextra.ca). The pop-up concept stole the show last summer with its fine dining take on comfort food, offering luxurious take-out dishes as well as gourmet items. Francis is a graduate of Montreal’s ITHQ. **IG: @frankyyblaize**

CHEF JENNY KANG: The engineering student’s career took a dramatic turn when she discovered her passion for food. After graduating from SAIT she took the helm of Bow Valley Ranch and then of Shokunin Izakaya. Jenny has drawn from her love for French and Italian cuisine as well as from her Korean heritage to create an inventive menu filled with multicultural flavours for her restaurant, Orchard, in Calgary (orchardyyc.com). Having grown up on a farm, she understands the origin of high quality ingredients and has re-invented some of the signature dishes of the Rockies including game meats. **IG: @chefjennykang**

CHEF SIMON MATHIS: Though he won the hearts of foodies all over Montreal at Accords and Manitoba, everyone in the city thought Mathis had gone mad when he announced the opening of his new restaurant on Facebook on November 3rd—in the middle of the pandemic. Mastard has since become a hidden gem in Rosemont-La-Petite-Patrie’s effervescent restaurant scene. Devoted to incorporating foraged herbs and berries, Mastard offers a hyper local-focused menu, executed with artistry. Previously, Mathis worked with renowned Montreal chef Daniel Vezina in Quebec City as well as with Gilles Herzog, coach for the 2022 Bocuse d’Or Team Canada. **IG: @simonmathys**

CHEF ROGER MA: Executive chef at Boulevard Kitchen & Oyster Bar in Vancouver (boulevardvancouver.ca), Roger is already on his way to becoming one of the country’s cream of the crop. A well-known name among Vancity gourmets, the pupil of ex-Bocuse Canada contender Alex Chen began his career at the Four Seasons hotel in Whistler. He then rose in the ranks at Daniel Boulud’s and won every competition there is including the title of 2020 Canadian Culinary champion of the *Great Kitchen Party*. **IG: @chefrogerma**

Chef Jeremy Austin: A graduate of George Brown College’s Italian Program where he studied under Chef Massimo Spigaroli, Jeremy gained his experience in Shanghai and Hong Kong where he worked as an executive Chef. Opened in the summer of 2020 in Collingwood, The Pine (thepinecollingwood.ca) is the embodiment of Jeremy’s life, merging traditions and cultures, Asia and Italy, along with local ingredients. The revolving tasting menu features 20 courses inspired by the seasons. **IG: @jercard**

Gus Stieffenhofer-Brandson: Born and raised in Winnipeg, Gus learned his craft at Michelin star restaurant Hotel Atrium in Germany, subsequently honing it while working at some of Canada’s top kitchens including Chef Scott Jaeger’s The Pear Tree and at Hawksworth Restaurant in Vancouver. He recently opened Published on Main (publishedonmain.com), a place where the world is a global culinary playground and each dish is executed using local, sustainable, in-season ingredients. But, if you ask us, it’s art on a plate. **IG @muchogustos**

Brigitte Foisy *is the Vice-President of Chefs Canada, an organization that works to shine the spotlight on Canadian cuisine and chefs, as well as their national culinary teams including Bocuse d’Or Team Canada. She has also been working with some of the world’s biggest food & beverage brands for over 25 years.*

THE MARKETPLACE

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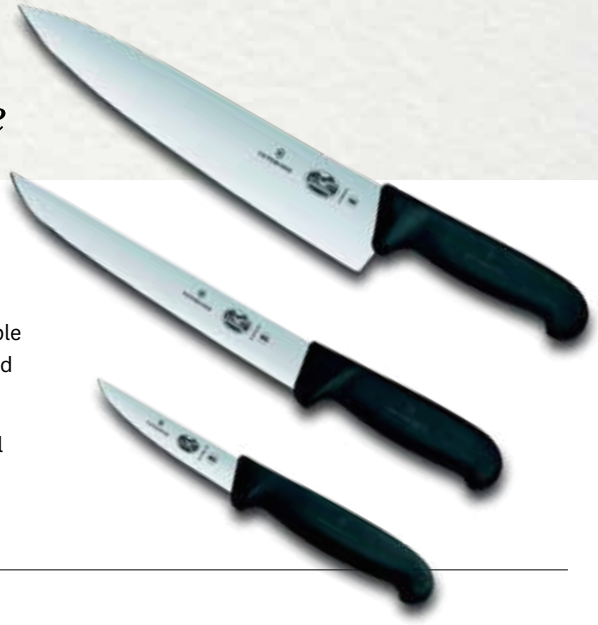
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UNLIMITED POTENTIAL:

Harnessing Canadian Opportunities For Expansion and Growth

BY KIM LEUNG



The Canadian restaurant scene is one of variety, diversity and choice. Most major cities play host to a bevy of international flavours. Smaller towns serve up innovative concepts alongside familiar favourites. For hospitality brands looking to expand, Canada is considered a top choice.

While COVID-19 has dealt a shock to the industry, Canada continues to be an attractive place to do business. Even though Canada is a smaller market given its population size, it's seen as a healthy one, with opportunities for concepts that want to increase their footprint. "Over the past decade, the foodservice industry was the fastest-growing sector of the economy, outpacing both the financial industry and housing market," says Chris Elliott, senior economist with Restaurants Canada. In Canada, consumers spend approximately 36 per cent of food sales at restaurants, while in the U.S., consumers spend closer to 50 per cent. A significant opportunity exists for restaurants to expand their share of the pie.

The Greater Toronto Area is considered a particularly appealing option for chains to start a Canadian rollout. Its multicultural makeup, dense population and strong record of monetary performance are all elements that make it a top contender. In addition, the Greater Golden Horseshoe (a term coined for the cluster of cities that border Lake Ontario) is home to the second-largest food processing industry in North America. "This provides access to a wide range of international food supplies and reduces barriers to obtaining authentic ingredients," explains Mark Parmegiani, director of commercial sales and leasing with CHI Real Estate Group. "You don't notice it when you live here, but the level of multiculturalism in the GTA is only rivalled by a few other cities in the world, and this translates into an incredibly dynamic hospitality industry and customer base that you wouldn't easily find elsewhere." In fact, Parmegiani believes that brands can't afford to stay out of the Canadian market.

CANADA: A TOP PICK FOR INTERNATIONAL EXPANSION

It was these factors that influenced Eataly's move into the Canadian market in late 2019. The diverse makeup of the people, coupled with a significant Italian population, made it a natural choice. "To us, the thriving food scene in Toronto was a good sign that interest would be high for an Italian marketplace like Eataly," says Nico Dagnino, managing director of Eataly Canada. "We had an awareness that this market knows and appreciates quality Italian food." The impressive depth of culinary offerings in the area also allowed Eataly to tap local vendors, like Sheldon Creek Dairy, Quality Cheese and Diana's Seafood, to partner in their operations. Dagnino and his team's work to understand the Toronto market has paid off handsomely, in optimized relationships with many local businesses that have continued to flourish during the pandemic.

Italy is Europe's top exporter of fine food and wine to Canada, due to its well-known cuisine and regional products. The Italian Trade Commission has been at the forefront of the promotion of 'Italian Authentic' products, partnering with large-scale retailers and facilitating trade and partnership between Canadian and Italian companies. "We are joining Restaurants Canada in relaunching the entire food service industry. 'Tutto Food' and 'Host Milano '21' are going on line and we want to take the opportunity to relaunch both the Italian food trade along with equipment and machinery for the catering and hospitality industry," says Matteo Picariello, Italian Trade Commissioner to Canada.

In a similar example, after opening several locations in the U.S., Jollibee, a Filipino restaurant famous for their fried chicken, decided to look north of the 49th parallel for their next opportunity. "Our initial success in the U.S. illuminated the growth potential for Jollibee in Canada, a country where there is an underserved consumer base and where chicken is one of the fastest-growing categories," states Maribeth Dela Cruz, President of Jollibee Foods Corporation, North America, Philippine Brands.

In a twist, Jollibee chose to enter the Canadian market in 2016 via Winnipeg. With a large percentage of residents of Filipino descent in the city, the company was betting on its brand familiarity and the nostalgic factor to help make its launch in Canada a success. It soon found that its product had an appeal that crossed cultural borders. When Jollibee later opened Toronto-area locations, they sparked regular lineups, with some even willing to wait several hours for a taste of their crispy chicken.





Jollibee relies on a multidisciplinary leadership team to research prospective locations, looking into demographics and local demand before securing real estate in desirable areas to ensure the success of every new store. Jollibee aims to position its restaurants near or within popular shopping destinations, to increase the visibility of its niche brand to the general public.

Today, Jollibee has 17 locations in Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario and Saskatchewan, with plans to open nine more restaurants in Canada in 2021.

A RECIPE FOR (DOMESTIC) SUCCESS

Beloved by Canadian west coasters, the B.C.-based restaurant chain White Spot and its quick-serve counterpart, Triple O's, have a solid and devoted following. Known for delicious, dill-topped burgers, the company has received inquiries from all over the country about its expansion plans. For years, White Spot and Triple O's locations were found only in B.C. and Alberta and, in a somewhat unusual development, overseas. "Our expansion into Asia was very serendipitous," Warren Erhart, CEO of White Spot says. With a significant number of B.C. residents with strong ties to Hong Kong, he found that there was already existing brand awareness in these areas. So. when he was approached by a family who was passionate about the brand, knowledgeable about the Asian market, and interested in the franchise rights to expand overseas, it seemed like a natural fit.

But the White Spot team was always aware of the opportunities available in the rest of the country. Detailed research and modelling yielded several locations that would likely be successful, particularly in southern Ontario. As echoed by Dagnino and Parmigiani, Erhart's team saw the province as an attractive market for expansion due to its large and diverse population and a general trend of strong economic growth.

However, to efficiently replicate the concept, the company decided against testing the waters by opening a single store. "What we didn't want was to roll out an orphan restaurant to a new market," says Erhart. Even in its Asian rollout,

Chains and stand-alones alike express their faith in the industry through their willingness to grow, expand, and innovate within Canada, seizing opportunities as they come to turn things around.





the franchise agreement involved opening six locations over approximately three years. White Spot prides itself on cultivating long-lasting partnerships with local suppliers and was interested in building a similar network of suppliers for their Ontario operations. While some items will be shipped in from B.C. in the short-term, Erhart says they've already found quality, local suppliers to produce the patties and buns to the exact specifications of their western operations.

The plan was to start with Triple O's, a casual, quick service spinoff of the original White Spot with a smaller menu of burgers, shakes and fries. Initially set to roll out in the fall of 2020, the arrival of the first Ontario Triple O's location in Mississauga was delayed due to COVID-19, finally opening March 2021. Another site in Vaughan opened about a month later.

Even with a toned-down marketing effort to mindful of COVID-19 restrictions, interest in the chain remains steady and continues to grow. In general, drive-thrus and quick service restaurants have been relatively prosperous during the pandemic due to their fast, convenient and physically distanced services. Erhart remains optimistic about White Spot and Triple O's future, with plans to open 30 more locations in Ontario within the next five years.

THERE IS A FUTURE IN FOOD

Despite the disruption of COVID-19, there are still opportunities for the hospitality sector to thrive. Consumer demand for the restaurant experience has been artificially curbed by public health measures and is expected to bounce back once restrictions are eased. There's no denying that the pandemic has been long and painful for businesses. Still, a combination of public health measures, vaccinations and better healthcare strategies mean that the end is in sight. Some experts have predicted a flurry of social activity once some semblance of pre-COVID-19 normalcy is restored.

If takeout trends are any indication, stay-at-home orders and COVID-19 restrictions have not dampened Canadians' desire for freshly prepared, restaurant-quality food. In a recent Restaurants Canada and Angus Reid survey, 71 per cent said that "they got takeout from a traditional table-service or fast food restaurant" in the last two weeks. Furthermore, 24 per cent said that they "felt comfortable right now" visiting a table-service restaurant with friends or family on a regular basis.

Restaurant operators with an eye to the future are making moves to position themselves for success in this not-too-distant future. Chains and stand-alones alike express their faith in the industry through their willingness to grow, expand, and innovate within Canada, seizing opportunities as they come to turn things around.

It's a testament to the ingenuity of those working in the industry—finding ways to succeed and persevere during one of the most significant slowdowns in the sector. Thanks to these restaurateurs and industry leaders, a rich and vibrant dining experience is waiting for us around the corner.

2021 Coffee& TeaReport

Restaurants Canada
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TEA & HERBAL ASSOCIATION OF CANADA / ASSOCIATION DU THÉ ET DES TISANES DU CANADA

Coffee, tea and tap water are the most-consumed beverages in Canada. In spite of the pandemic, the global coffee and tea industry is expected to grow 9 per cent annually, from about $150 billion to a staggering $191 billion in 2023.* These projections are, in part, driven by a foundational change in expectation and approach to the beverage market and the rise of a new consumer culture spurred by a radical shift in the lifestyle priorities and spending habits of the Millennial and Gen Z consumer.

Less disposable income doesn't necessarily mean that younger consumers aren't spending. In fact, trends indicate that emerging consumers are being highly selective in their purchasing behaviours, rewarding brands and venues that offer the new value trifecta: integrity, wellness and discovery. Tea and coffee—and arguably the beverage market in totality—are uniquely positioned to benefit from all three high level value points.

Bean transparency and ethical sourcing are no longer just ideals, but core brand selection criteria. Boosted or better-for-you products offering a range of wellness-enhancing ingredients are tracking to become as important as older vectors like flavour and convenience. But perhaps the notion of "discovery", in terms of the beverage preparation, education and experience, is the area with the greatest potential to reset beverage margins and drive preference in the highly competitive restaurant sector.

TREND HUNTER INSIGHTS: TRENDS IN COFFEE & TEA

Mishal Omar, Trend Hunter's Managing Insights Editor, shares several new ways brands are producing coffee and tea as well as innovative trends that speak to how the industry is adapting to consumers' needs.

TRENDHUNTER CREATE THE FUTURE

COFFEE TRENDS

BEAN TRANSPARENCY

As more consumers demand socially and ecologically ethical products and services, traceability technologies for coffee beans are being used by both QSR and CPG brands to offer more transparency about the sourcing of their products.

CHECK OUT: Starbucks' 'Trace Your Coffee' feature, where consumers can scan the brand's coffee products' batch codes to learn about the item's journey.

CAFFEINATED CALM

Though consumers are still reliant on the energy boost that caffeine gives them, they're also more aware of how it might negatively affect them when consumed in high doses. This has brought on a slew of beverages that promise both caffeinated boosts and ingredients that promise stress-reduction, allowing consumers the best of both worlds when it comes to consuming coffee and other caffeinated beverages.

CHECK OUT: Taika's canned coffees are an example of this trend, with the brand offering adaptogen-infused coffees that tout their mental clarity and calm-inducing qualities.

TEA TRENDS

DIY BOBA

Taiwanese bubble tea's popularity in North America and Asia has grown in recent years, and now fans of this popular and flexible drink are increasingly testing at-home recipes with the help of brands.

CHECK OUT: Tru Bubble Tea in Toronto, which is helping customers enjoy bubble tea in the comfort of their own home by selling its various bubble tea flavours in bulk.

BOOSTED TEA

The health benefits of steeped teas are already known by people all over the world, and some brands are now elevating their offerings in the midst of excessive competition in this industry. Steeped teas that are infused with additional nutrients are becoming increasingly common as consumers seek out unique products in this space.

CHECK OUT: Canadian brand Everie, which offers various steeped teas infused with CBD—a chemical compound of cannabis. The brand offers different flavours and offers the soothing and anti-inflammatory benefits of CBD.

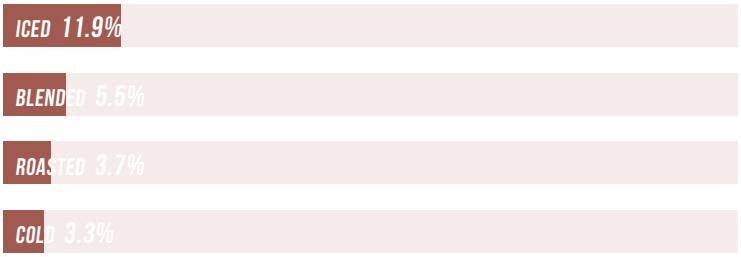
Coffee Report

COFFEE IS THE MOST-CONSUMED BEVERAGE IN CANADA, WITH 71% OF CANADIANS ENJOYING IT DAILY*, AND NOT JUST FOR A MORNING KICKSTART.

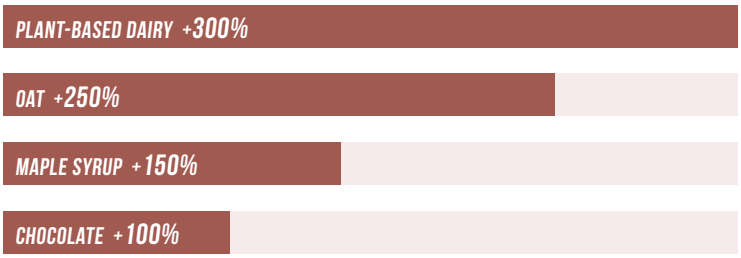
TOP COFFEE INGREDIENTS**



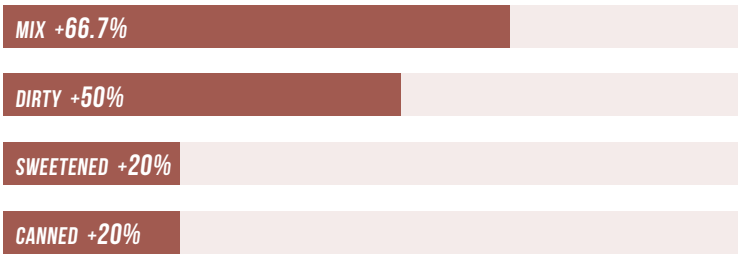
TOP COFFEE PREPARATIONS**



FASTEST GROWING COFFEE INGREDIENTS**



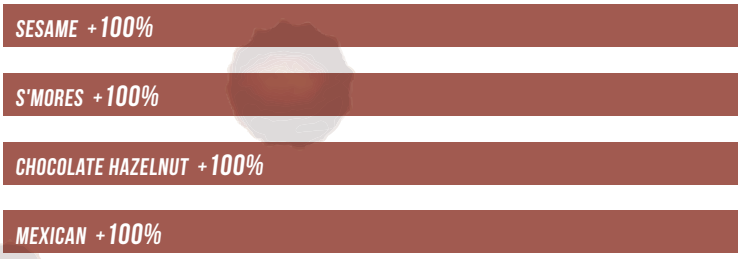
FASTEST GROWING COFFEE PREPARATIONS**



TOP COFFEE FLAVOURS**

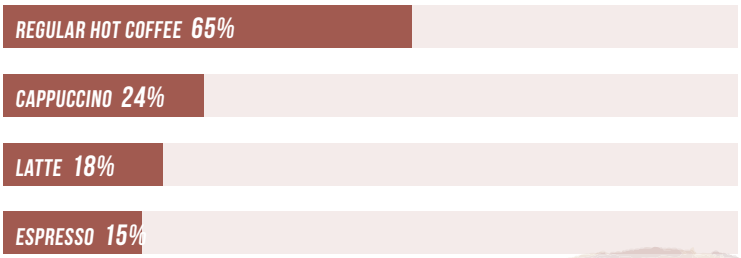


FASTEST GROWING COFFEE FLAVOURS**



HOT COFFEE TYPES CONSUMED WITHIN MONTHLY PERIOD***

Technomic survey data shows that younger demographics consume elevated hot coffee beverages more frequently than consumers aged 35+.



COLD COFFEE TYPES CONSUMED WITHIN MONTHLY PERIOD***

Technomic survey data shows that overall, cold coffees are distant rivals to hot coffee. Again, younger demographics consume top-ranked cold coffee beverages more frequently than consumers aged 35+.



THE COFFEE OPPORTUNITY FOR CANADIAN OPERATORS



With work-from-home orders in place, it shouldn't surprise anyone that on-premises coffee sales declined during the pandemic.

That said, prospects for return are favourable. Technomic's perspective on recovery and future growth is confident. Prior to the pandemic, coffee shops enjoyed a frequency of return traffic unheard of in traditional restaurant operations. Growing consumer interest in and demand for elevated coffee experiences and products is an opportunity for all operators—but particularly those in the upscale casual and fine dining spaces. The favourable margin on on-trend coffee preparations and growing coffee habit across all dayparts are particularly attractive. "Cold/iced or blended coffee has continued to boom in popularity among consumers, especially at coffee cafes and other limited-service restaurants," observes Kevin Thacker, Technomic Research Analyst. "According to Technomic's 2020 Canadian Beverage Consumer Trend Report, 23 per cent of consumers reported ordering iced coffee from a café in the past month (up from 17 per cent in 2018), and 15 per cent ordered it from a limited-service restaurant in the past month (up from 9 per cent in 2019. Hot coffee is primarily a morning drink, so some individuals have found it easier to prepare at home during the pandemic now that they are not longer commuting to work. While hot coffee remains the more popular beverage choice, the growth of cold/iced coffee bodes well for operators because it can be consumed at any time of the day, including as a snack."

Coffee shops offer distinctive customer experiences geared around convenience, culture and community. While coffee is traditionally considered to be more of a commuter commodity than a linger-worthy centrepiece of a traditional restaurant offering, that is changing. Boutique and independent coffee shops are increasingly embracing the long serve, inviting guests in for a full experience. This new focus on experiential offerings, driven by younger consumer demographics, makes specialized coffee preparations a more natural—and lucrative—menu and margin booster. Kim Cunningham, Chief Commercial Officer at Mother Parker's Tea and Coffee, highlights the shift in coffee consumption behaviour: "The 'new' generation may have grown up in households that brought the proliferation of single-cup brewers to the home. The making of coffee for the most part remains a mystery, and coffee is its own culture when consumed out-of-home. This is great news for the out-of-home market. For the same reason, the new generation has been the driver of RTD growth. It will be interesting to see what's shifted or been learned over the past year, and how quickly a younger generation pivots to a life stage of consuming coffee as part of a different routine."

No longer seen as an optional post-meal add-on, Canadian consumers are looking for a greater connection with their coffee, driven by a growing demand for product knowledge. Consumers understand that not all beans are equally sustainable, and they are putting pressure on operators to share the origin story of the ingredients they use. Ethical sourcing practices and bean transparency can often result in higher price points, but consumers—particularly younger coffee enthusiasts—are willing to pay more in return for confidence in their purchase.

REOPENING COFFEE MENU ESSENTIALS

The data shows that restaurants that offer diversified and elevated coffee products and preparations are aligned with consumer demand. According to Thacker, "A variety of espresso-based drinks like lattes and cappuccinos are necessary for any operator looking to grow a specialty coffee business. Limited-time and seasonal offerings are a great way to refresh the menu and drive visits. While regular hot coffee dominates the morning daypart as a functional beverage used to wake customers up, specialty coffee can be positioned as more of a snack that can be consumed throughout the day. In July 2020, 42 per cent of consumers stated that they have ordered hot specialty coffee as a between-meal snack or beverage in the last month, compared to 26 per cent of consumers for regular hot coffee."

Cunningham agrees. "As much as coffee serves a functional benefit, which has been helpful to the category with off-premises consumption over the past year, coffee is also a very social occasion. We know that people are eager to get back to cafés and restaurants for social coffee occasions and as part of their daily ritual. I think you'll see the afternoon coffee occasion bounce back more quickly and for this reason, operators should anticipate consumers who want to linger with a latte or cappuccino. There could even be an uptick in decaf consumption as a result of the afternoon coffee occasion. More than 60 per cent of brewed coffee is consumed in the morning daypart – we won't fully see on-premises coffee consumption bounce back until we can all enjoy on-premises breakfast with friends again."

The operator opportunity, in its essence, is about offering coffee options that recognize and respond to consumer need states, across all dayparts. Owner of Cortado Tasting Room, Sine Coffee Labs, Java Blend Coffee and Coastal Distribution, Alex Lee has interests and experience that capture the full spectrum of the coffee business. He predicts that on-trend coffee recipes will dominate a portion of the market. Lee cites Dalgona coffee—the whipped coffee with the distinction of being the most-searched coffee globally during

the pandemic—as an example of the trend toward unique coffee preparation recipes promoted on social media that are extending the recipe creation trend to the coffee category and finding their way onto menus. Following online trends and customizing the recipes on premises is a great way to harness free media opportunities from third parties to refresh your offering and draw in new customers.

Lee also offers a projection for the future of coffee on restaurant menus. "Other than short-term, trending coffees, I think we will see the results of recent years of specialty coffees' growth reflected in consumers searching for more experimental products. This doesn't have to mean a 10-minute-plus wait for a pourover for $15 each time. This may simply mean more affinity towards coffees that clearly communicate the value of the coffee other than roast level, price and country of origin. I hope to see consumers turning to specific coffees, not just because of the brand name, but because they respect and appreciate that work of farmers, roasters and many others!"

INGREDIENTS AS HIGH-VALUE ADD-ONS

While the rise in popularity of plant-based products echos the notion that younger demographics are prepared to pay a little more for choice and selection, Lee feels much of the new opportunity will be stem from the pandemic-related increase in home brewing. "As more and more people are investing in brewers at home (from simple French press or pourover kits, all the way to setups that rival commercial shops), consumers seem to be having lots of fun experimenting with ingredients. I am seeing a lot of existing sweet snacks being blended up as toppings, lots of natural sweeteners (different types of honeys, etc.), coffee cocktails and, now that we are going into the warmer season, lots of blended, shaken and stirred iced drinks!"

The takeaway is that, even with basic equipment, there is an opportunity for all operators to harness the potential of bespoke, creative coffee menu items as revenue builders. Cunningham agrees, but highlights that much of the innovation activity is focused on ingredients and preparations, not the beans or roasts themselves. "I think what's important here is that these are all additives to coffee after or during preparation, not additives to the roasted coffee or packaged roast and ground coffee itself. Butter and maple syrup are good examples of how health and wellness are beginning to play into the functional use of coffee. There are some at-home brands that sell a series of additives alongside their roast and ground product – everything from mushrooms to Vitamin D to CBD. We're seeing this in tea as well, where the raw materials come with an inherent health and wellness benefit. Coffee can be a ton of fun with flavours, and definitely plays a role in both in-home and out-of-home consumption. Anything with chocolate is a certain win—it pairs well with the natural flavours of just about any coffee from any origin, and hits on the indulgence that a coffee occasion can provide. We're seeing more demand for local relevance than international flavours. We saw this before the pandemic, and even more so through the pandemic. I think it also links to sustainability—people feel like the ingredients are from their own backyard."

READY-TO-DRINK (RTD) COFFEE

Convenience is a consistent winner, and RTD coffees are coming of age in terms of quality and experience. "I strongly believe that RTD coffees will grow exponentially over the next while," says Lee, "Innovation allows for better and better RTD products (quality, design, shelf life, etc.). We are naturally going to head toward more convenient products. RTD product sales—in-café—could be a significant new thing in the next few years; however, I think it's going to be a battle between grocers and cafes to really grab hold of this market share." Lee is not convinced, however, that RTD formats will replace elevated preparations. "I need to ask though, no matter how good a canned wine is, wouldn't you still order a beautiful looking bottle over a can when you are enjoying fine dining?"

"Ready-to-drink is an incredibly exciting space for coffee," Cunningham agrees, "It's an opportunity to gain more of the share of throat that has been left to other bottled beverages like water, soda, juices and iced tea. Ready-to-drink is not taking away from other on-premises occasions—there's only upside for coffee. It's smart for operators who are more about food than beverages, and who won't have the volume to invest in labour and equipment for beverage offerings like iced and cold brew. The types of coffee beverages that are available in RTD are also generally associated with a higher price, and therefore a higher margin. A smart operator in FSR is going to think about how they serve this, and recognize the cost of ice. You can't lose by adding RTD to your menu and you can win with the execution."

Smart operators will balance the needs of their customers against the RTD opportunity by occasion and daypart, with consideration to delivery method. Takeout and delivery are clear opportunities to plus up with an RTD coffee offering, which can be paired with key menu items and complementary meal occasions, taking advantage of the simplicity and high margin without the added costs of packaging as well as dairy and other additives.

During the pandemic, growth in consumer confidence in visiting coffee shops outpaced willingness to return to other experiences, rising from 38 per cent in April 2020 to 62 per cent in November 2020*. This is a positive indicator of consumer perception of coffee shops as lifestyle essentials.

While it remains to be seen whether the popularity of drive-through, curbside pick-up and delivery options is an opportunity driven by provision or one that will endure, there's little question that many Canadians have adopted alternatives to in-venue service to get their java fix during the pandemic, with anywhere from 2 to 9 per cent of Canadians ordering their coffee for pick up or delivery at least once per week, and 27 to 34 per cent using drive-throughs*.

Interestingly, some cafés and coffee businesses have been so successful in capturing their customers' at-home coffee business with delivery and specialty kits, they are now faced with the task of luring them back into their brick and mortar. Cunningham speaks to the challenge and offers some insight: "As with so many others, [Mother Parker's Tea and Coffee] learned to pivot quickly and help our customers pivot equally as fast. Enabling digital ordering has been a big part of life for everyone over the past year, and coffee under-indexes in delivery across dayparts, which has been a challenge for everyone in the space. We've also seen consumers replace their out-of-home favorites with at-home replacements, so innovation in flavours and beverages that are more difficult to replicate at home will be critical."



Minna Van

CÀ PHÊ VIETNAMESE COFFEE HOUSE: INTENTIONAL, PROFITABLE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

Cà Phê Vietnamese Coffee House in Vancouver is proof that an intentional, diversified approach to a social enterprise is no vanity project; it can be a profitable business strategy. Founder Minna Van's roots in the technology sector and passion focus on social enterprise have combined to create a thriving, sustainable business that supports the community around it.

"Our business is very distinct and unique," says Minna, "We're not one of those companies people associate with their commute, etc. We attract people who are more adventurous, younger and have a little more disposable income, and we intentionally chose this market, our branding and our storytelling. In the tech sector, the margin is between 100 and 300 per cent. When I first looked at the coffee business, margin was between three and 15 per cent. I was appalled. We didn't want to enter into the $3-$4 market. Our margin is probably about three times that of a regular coffee shop."

Cà Phê famously started as a pop-up using the personal stash of robusta coffee Minna brought back home from a trip to Vietnam. Now a permanent and successful business, it's clear that their marketing and attraction plan draws inspiration and success from both the tech and digital worlds. "We're making sure we're staying on top of trends, constantly innovating, having a seasonal drink—not the Starbucks unicorn— but incorporating culture and techniques. The trends aren't coming from industry anymore, they're coming from TikTok. We are constantly watching to see what new coffee recipes are coming out and the number of views is insane. There's a lot of great recipes and experimentation coming from Asia and Southeast Asia that are driving coffee culture around the world. Two of my staff are Latin American, and they scour social media from Latin America. Two other staff scour Vietnam and the Philippines. If I had the chance and the time, I'd love to create 'As seen on TikTok and Instagram'—come to our place and we'll make it for you!"

The operation's branding is simple, strong and iconic, and their marketing dollars are efficiently spent on photography for social media. "We spend our money on TikTok, Instagram and influencers. This cuts our marketing and research costs significantly. We only have a four-item menu, which translates to very lean and simple overhead. There are common ingredients between all menu items, which gives us negotiating power."

Minna's smart, entrepreneurial view, 'no-waste' approach and quick pivots made a difference to the business during the pandemic, when they introducing facial scrubs and at-home brewing kits. Now, their customers are more or less equally comprised of Vancouver Vietnamese expats, the local community and a growing group of people from across Canada and around the world. "During the pandemic, we had 10-15 people from Toronto coming in to pick up kits to bring home. Because we were all locked down, social media shrank the world a little bit. Discovery becomes a lot easier."

Sources:
**CAC 2020 Canadian Coffee Drinking Study **Technomic's Ignite Menu data platform ***Technomic 2020 Canadian Beverage Consumer Trend Report*

Tea Report

ON-TREND AND ON THE RISE WITH YOUNGER DEMOGRAPHICS, TEA IS THE THIRD MOST POPULAR BEVERAGE IN CANADA, WITH 48% CONSUMING IT DAILY*.



55% OF CANADIANS SAY THEY DRANK MORE TEA FOR ITS FEEL GOOD, COMFORT AND RELAXATION QUALITIES*

71% OF THE CANADIAN TEA SEGMENT SPEND WILL BE ATTRIBUTABLE TO OUT-OF-HOME BY 2025***



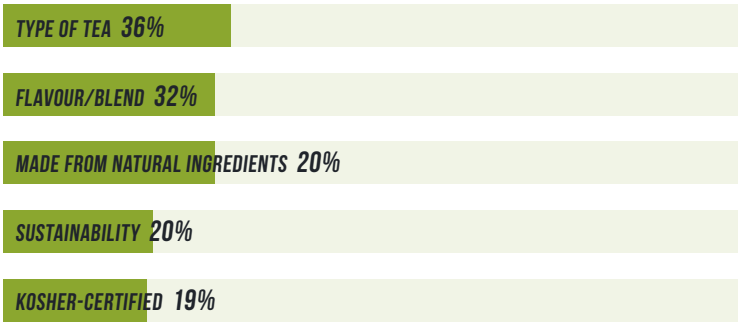


12% OF CANADIAN TEA VOLUME CONSUMPTION IS EXPECTED TO BE ATTRIBUTABLE TO OUT-OF-HOME BY 2025****

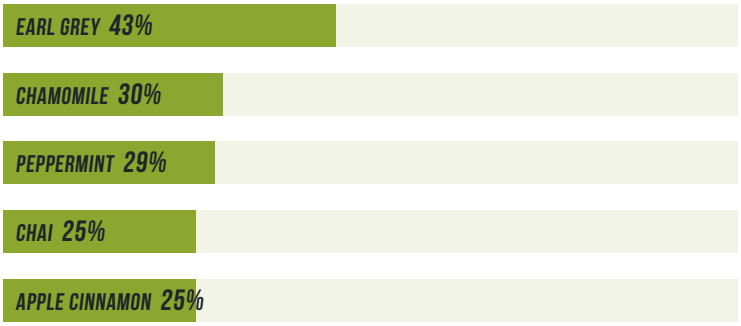
THE AVERAGE TEA DRINKER CONSUMES 4.5 CUPS/WEEK*



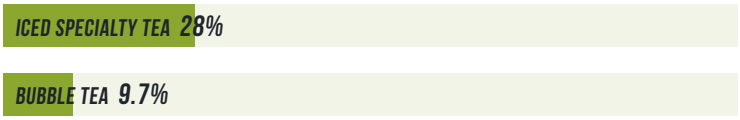
FIRST-RANKED ATTRIBUTES TEA DRINKERS LOOK FOR*



TOP 5 MOST-ENJOYED TEA FLAVOURS*



LEADERS IN MENU OFFERINGS OVER THE PAST YEAR**





THE DARK HORSE WINS THE RACE

Tea is at the heart of so many connections and social moments around the world, we almost don't think about it at all. A quick look at restaurant menus proves the point, with many offering just a couple of bagged options. Now, with consumer demand for better-for-you, low calorie and wellness enhancing beverages increasing and showing real staying power, and people beginning to venture outside to reconnect, it may finally be tea time.

In 2019, tea in Canada was positioned to finally break into the habit-driven coffee market. Though restaurant restrictions and closures slowed the anticipated growth of tea in the on-trade, there were clear gains in consumer interest and spend as people continued to explore the joy of tea at home. It could be said that the collective period of experimentation caused by the suspension of social activities as we sought comforts at home did the work of priming the market for a tea renaissance that's long overdue.

Tea is a scalable offering that has built-in brand equity in the wellness space. Kevin Thacker, Research Analyst at Technomic, identifies health and wellness properties as built-in success factors driving the popularity of tea. "Looking at kombucha, customers love it not only for its taste, but also its wide range of health benefits, which include improving digestion to boosting immunity. While some have turned to comfort food and beverages during the pandemic, others have sought out immunity-boosting ingredients to keep themselves healthy."

Shabnam Weber, President of The Tea and Herbal Association of Canada, acknowledges the natural fit between tea and consumer interest in wellness enhancing foods and beverages, but is already looking around the corner at what's coming next. "Health and wellness have definitely been the two big drivers for the tea industry, but I think we've grown beyond that. We now have an entire generation of consumers who inherently know that tea is good for you; it simply isn't news to them. We are now in a place where people are embracing tea for comfort, to feel good—lifestyle choices—and that is a great next level to be at."

The potential of tea is not limited to tradition and provision. The enchantment with the most commonly consumed beverage in the world has captured the fancy of chefs and tastemakers who are using tea to develop new flavours on the plate. Weber sees near-unlimited potential for tea. "Innovation will be key for tea—providing consumers with an experience and creating something memorable. With everyone confined in their homes for so long, we are all craving creativity and stimulation—using tea outside its traditional use—in cocktails, mocktails, tinctures and syrups; ingredients in food, both sweet and savoury."

BEYOND ORANGE PEKOE

Innovations in tea flavours, preparations and experiences are in a class of their own. The potential of tea as a stand-alone, artisanal experience at par with a craft cocktail is relatively new and catching fire with mixologists and the health conscious alike, which is driving flavour experimentation. Older Canadians prefer black tea," shares Weber. "We see the trend toward a much larger variety of tea types with younger drinkers and that will continue. Earl Grey is always a favourite, as are flavoured Green teas like lemon, fruit and ginger. I think that botanicals will continue to grow in the Canadian market as they have over the past years. Flavours such as lemon and berries and ginger are always popular, and I don't see that changing. But flavours that provide additional functions—like turmeric or ashwaganda—I think will continue to see growth."

Matcha has been growing in popularity for a while now, and other Asian tea varieties like kombucha are quickly catching on as well," says Kevin Thacker, Research Analyst at Technomic. "Chai tea is one of the fastest-growing beverages menued at coffee cafes and other limited-service restaurants, aligning with rising consumer preference. Chai tea's sweet taste and immunity-boosting properties are driving this success. Two other tea varieties to keep an eye on are oolong and sencha, which continue to emerge within the tea category. Operators are also staring to use more floral flavours like hibiscus, lavender and rose to create fresh flavour profiles."

Beyond a differentiated offering of tea flavours and products, Weber urges operators to consider unique, delicious and memorable preparations to wow their customers. "I would love to see tea preparation move beyond teapot + hot water + mug.

And that means putting tea in your blender, making ice cubes for your drinks with tea, pouring it into a martini glass, etc."

READY-TO-DRINK (RTD) TEA

While the global tea supply chain was strained during the pandemic, RTD teas continued their growth trajectory, albeit at a slower pace in comparison to the pre-COVID-19 market, with Technomic reporting 28% growth in specialty iced teas on Canadian restaurant menus.

RTD teas are positioned to benefit from alignment with several key consumer trends, among them the rising demand for better-for-you products, personalization and convenience. More than ever, consumers are sensitive to the value of the brands they support and consume, with many viewing their choice of beverage as part of their social identity. Both established and start-up beverage companies are drilling down on this personalization trend, focusing on strong social media marketing and paying close attention to packaging and ingredient differentiation. Innovative and appealing packaging design and ingredient profiles are furthering the trend and proving effective in bridging the gap between the accessibility and convenience of RTD beverages and the higher price point of specialty RTD teas, making them a low-effort, high-margin delivery offering with the potential to enhance the takeout or delivery experience.

The big iced tea brands remain the clear leaders in the RTD tea category, winning on well-developed brand recognition, broad distribution and generalized consumer perception of iced teas as more natural beverages. Patrick Tremblay, Director of Marketing – PLP, NACP and Energy of PepsiCo Canada sees a natural opportunity in RTD teas for operators. "While consumers reach for iced tea for its taste, refreshment and generally, a better-for-you label, it is most consumed during food occasions as consumers see iced tea as the perfect complement to a meal."

Growth in RTD hard iced teas provides further potential for operators to experiment with RTDs on bar and cocktail menus, with many brands stepping up with new products and flavours.

THE BUBBLE TEA RENAISSANCE

Some of us may remember the first wave of bubble tea or boba mania that swept into the North American market in the mid 2000s. Bubble tea shops and stalls seemed to bloom overnight, then quietly recede in much the same way as concept cupcake shops and slider menus. This time around, the boba trend feels different.

Roxanne Tsui, Head of Marketing & Branding for Kevito Group (Chatime Canada) offers a holistic perspective. "Bubble tea started as a niche offering but is definitely becoming more popular and mainstream as Canadians become more open and accepting of diverse food cultures. Bubble tea has always been a staple item to many Asian cultures and was never really just a trend."

Chatime, the Taiwanese franchise teahouse chain opened its first Canadian store a decade ago with growth propelled in part by its authenticity. "What we are seeing that's different now, is that more people are embracing it and loving it!" says Tsui. "Prior to our entry to market, bubble tea was primarily made with powders. We brought upon the 'second wave' of the bubble tea evolution with authentic fresh tea beverages and our entry to market ultimately pioneered the path for many other international brands to make a footing in this space. We now have over 85 locations across Canada and this growth is not just a testament to our continued brand leadership, but also a direct reflection of the market demand for bubble tea as product offering."

While many limited-service operations saw huge declines in consumer traffic during the pandemic, Chatime retained much of their in-store business and grew their pick-up and delivery business exponentially. "We believe and expect to see many of our patrons return to our stores for that on-premise experience as people, now more than ever, crave to reconnect with friends and family", says Tsui. "Even amidst the pandemic, over 50 per cent of our current customers still chose to visit us in-store to grab their favourite drinks. We have introduced new digital channels (order.chatime.com) to enable them to order ahead for pick-up and our customers are really loving that option. In 2020, we experienced over 600 per cent growth in digital sales. So yes, we do believe bubble tea is here to stay!"

GENUINE TEA: FULL SPECTRUM TEA EXPERIENCES

Genuine Tea was launched five years ago when co-founders Sarah Wilcox and Dave O'Connor returned to Toronto from Taiwan following an immersive education in hand-crafted, artisan teas. They saw clear similarities between the tea, coffee and wine industries, which prioritize and promote regional origin and terroir as well as sustainable farming and labour practices. "We started working with independent shops and coffee roasters that were interested in elevating their tea game," says Wilcox. "We approached the market with expanded offerings and imagination to reach new consumers."

The Genuine Tea product lineup ranges from ethically sourced loose leaf teas, matcha and latte blends to biodegradable pyramid tea bags and hand-crafted Genuine Sparkling Iced Teas, available in three delicious flavours with better for you ingredients and no added sugar - Organic Elderberry Hibiscus, Lemon Ginger Sencha & Peach Turmeric Ceylon. These unique tea, flavour and ingredient combinations are perfectly aligned with consumer trends and increasing interest in boutique tea experiences 'to-go'.

Elevated tea experiences are clear priorities for cafes, and tea entrepreneurs like Sarah and Dave see exciting new potential for their brand and for all restaurants.

Full spectrum tea brands like Genuine Tea are working with restaurants to expose their products to select customer segments in the on-premises, while helping operators realize better beverage margins for in-venue, takeout and delivery offerings. "Restaurants are integral to the growth of Genuine Tea. One of our goals is to encourage influential restaurants and cafes to introduce consumers to our products", shares Wilcox. "Our restaurant programs encompass a core tea range—black, green, etc.—with specialties like tea lattes and fun and exciting iced tea recipes. Turmeric lattes were something we introduced to the tea market a few years ago, along with a line of microground teas. Adaptogens are all the rage now—we have detox, anti-inflammatory and immune boosting teas. There's demand for these better-for-you products, and they just taste better when someone makes it for you."

Elevated tea experiences are not the sole domain of cafes and fine dining. Wilcox believes that the tea revolution can deliver value for all operation styles: "Even family-style, multi-units need to think about non-alcoholic, better-for-you options for their millennial clientele. If they want to keep their beverage sales up, they need to be looking at craft tea cocktails, lattes and other specialty preparations."



Sources:

**The Tea and Herbal Association of Canada **Technomic's Ignite Menu data platform ***Technomic 2020 Canadian Beverage Consumer Trend Report ****Statista Tea Report 2020 (Canada)*



BUNN has embraced sophisticated new technology to meet the changing needs of customers while remaining committed to delivering the highest possible quality beverage in each cup for every occasion. The equipment portfolio includes a home brewer collection and a full line of dispensed beverage commercial solutions including coffee and iced tea brewers for multi-cup and single-cup use; superautomatic espresso machines; coffee bean grinding systems; dispensers for exceptional tasting cold or hot beverages such as juice, lemonade, hot chocolate, cappuccino and iced coffee; liquid coffee dispensers; gourmet ice systems; precise temperature water systems; water quality systems; paper filters and more.

For more information, visit: www.bunn.com



Genuine Tea's hand-crafted sparkling iced teas are made with ethically-sourced whole leaf tea, superfoods and a splash of real organic fruit juice! They come in three delicious and approachable flavours, all with better-for-you ingredients and no added sugar. Lemon Ginger Sencha is the ultimate detox tea, Peach Turmeric Ceylon is a powerful anti-inflammatory and Organic Elderberry Hibiscus is an effective immune booster.

Now available in convenient and beautifully designed 4-packs, these hand-crafted sparkling iced teas are a great non-alcoholic option or the perfect cocktail mixer!

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COMBATTING COVID-19 CHALLENGES:

LABOUR & STAFFING

As the COVID-19 regulations begin to ease across Canada and establishments will be allowed once again to welcome customers, hiring and staffing will go into overdrive. In an industry where finding a replacement has traditionally caused much angst amongst business owners, in a post-COVID-19 world, owners now have the added layer of difficulty of ensuring employees feel safe and supported enough to return to the industry. With the uncertainty around the industry and ever-changing guidelines, many operators are anticipating a challenge when it comes to rehiring. Not to mention that labour is a huge cost for operators in a time when sales are already lower than normal.

The importance of the right staff should not be understated. As restaurants prep to hit the ground running upon reopening, they need to ensure their team is performing at their best to bolster consumer confidence and provide excellent customer service to increase customer loyalty.

This leads restaurant owners to really look at who they should hire and consider all tools at their disposal in order to cut costs—but not corners.

We spoke with Gareth Berg of Gordon Food Service™, Business Solutions Specialist, about the importance of hiring the right team during the current climate, and products and services that restaurants can use to save on costs and provide a more seamless customer experience.

Speaking with Berg, an idea that really stood out was that “all jobs in hospitality can be taught and mastered; all it takes is time and practice.” And this is something to think about when looking for the right fit for your team.

Social distancing, changing vocations for stability and safety concerns come into play when hiring staff, which means there are less people available to work. This leads to smarter hiring of a reduced staff that can still run a restaurant. This affects the operations and, in turn, the bottom line, which is a key aspect, especially after the last year's forced closures. Restaurants will have to look for solutions to make up for the reduced staff while still turning out the same amount of quality food.

“A fully staffed, fully trained team is not realistic right now with the labour market,” says Berg, "but there are plenty of ways to save." As Berg points out, Gordon Food Service carries a plethora of portioned and ready-to-use products that are versatile and save on both labour costs and training, “all while allowing [operators] to maintain the integrity of their concept, brand, recipes and ingredients.”

For example, portioned proteins like chicken, fish, beef and pork, as well as a vast line up of ready-to-use produce items and blends, deliver a 100 per cent yield. With no need to worry about properly washing, cutting, trimming or breaking down from whole product, these products lend themselves to an operation with a reduced staff who may not have the proper skill set to perform these tasks.

Some restaurants are even cutting down their menu to focus on fewer dishes which helps with reduced costs and staff. Restaurants still have to pay the higher costs of food due to the pandemic, even though their income has been significantly reduced over the last year. Using these products is low-risk in the sense that there is no waste in the prep, and with a reduced staff, it saves time and money.

Berg notes that introducing portioned and ready-to-use products into your operations in no way means compromising on quality. These products, which are easy to assemble, can be used to save time and money which can, in turn, be invested in training your staff in other roles. Many of these products can also be used to complement current menus, allowing staff to focus on more labour-intensive items.

“Hospitality staff have always been known to be migratory or nomadic, and now they have plenty of opportunity to find what best suits them,” says Berg. Making sure you hire someone who will stick around is important, and offering them opportunities to be promoted, to be involved, and to be listened to go a long way in building your team.

The current pandemic has certainly turned things upside down for the hospitality industry across Canada. However, businesses will slowly rebound by working with a smaller staff who are committed, implementing useful tools such as portioned and ready-to-use foods, and with a better appreciation of how to treat the customer.

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SUMMER SELTZERS ARE BUBBLING UP ACROSS CANADA





BY SHANNON MURPHY

When White Claw® launched in Canada in February 2020, the event at the LCBO flagship store in Toronto looked more like an exclusive tech launch, with hundreds of thirsty fans lined up around the block in the freezing cold to be the first in Canada to taste the beverage. Prior to the launch, more than 17,000 Canadians reached out over social media to the Mark Anthony Group, who manufactures the product, to request the product be sold in Canada and thousands more traveled to the U.S. for the sole purpose of securing a White Claw haul.

The rise of hard seltzers has propelled the ready-to-drink (RTD) category to the fastest-growing alcohol category, reaching triple digit growth year-on year since 2015, according to a report by Bell Flavour and Fragrances. A February 2021 study by RBC Capital Markets predicts the hard seltzer category could grow ~150% from expected 2020 levels.

The hard seltzer category is still relatively young, only emerging onto the Canadian market in 2016. Driven by factors such as wellness, cocktail culture, quality ingredients, premiumization and daytime and outdoor consumption, RTDs have evolved to capture key consumer trends. "Hard seltzers quantified what consumers were looking for—a low carb, low sugar, low calorie alternative to wine or beer. Seltzers are a manifestation of a general push to overall healthiness in a way that was really easy for consumers to understand," says John Robinson, Head of Marketing and Sales for the Georgian Bay Spirit Co. A local Collingwood distillery, the Georgian Bay Spirit Co. produces a wide range of award-winning, locally crafted, craft cocktails in a can such as the extremely popular Original Georgian Bay Gin Smash™ and the most recently launched Georgian Bay Half Smash™, a citrus based beverage with half the alcohol and only 100 calories.

Julius Makarewicz is the Founder and CEO at Nude® Beverages, a small start-up alcoholic beverage company based out of British Colombia, created with a mission to develop a healthier alternatives that are both sugar and sweetener-free including vodka sodas, gin sodas, tequila sodas and iced teas. He feels that there are three main reasons why consumers are so ready to adopt hard seltzers. "First, the taste—consumers are flocking to this segment because of how refreshing these types of beverages are. Next, people are actively trying to cut down on their sugar intake, so the last place they want to consume it is by drinking it. Lastly, it's trendy—taking care of yourself and making better choices is in right now and seltzers naturally fit in."

Not only are consumer tastes changing, but there has been a massive shift in who is consuming hard seltzers. While traditionally Millennials/Generation Z females have driven the category's growth, companies are seeing the category explode because it does appeal to a large range of consumers. "The Georgian Bay Gin Smash was originally designed for females aged 35+ with a sophisticated palate, but now we have a wonderful, broad demographic ranging from 19 year-old females at colleges and universities to 65 year-old men on the golf course" says Robinson.

Brian Kuhn, VP of Beyond Beer at Labatt Breweries of Canada, echoes those sentiments. "Overall the seltzer category is very co-ed which allows us to appeal to a wide range of consumers on different occasions." In 2016, Labatt added Nütrl™ to their portfolio; a vodka soda with no carbs, no sugar, no sweetener, no preservatives and no additives. Recently they added Nütrl™ Juic'd, a classic vodka soda with a splash of real fruit juice. In March 2021, after thousands

Hard seltzers are built around experiences and occasions, with a large portion of hard seltzers consumed during social gatherings. Given the challenges restaurants and bars have faced during COVID-19, finding the right occasion can be tricky, but as restaurants and bars look to re-open over the summer, making hard seltzers part of the offering is essential to support the demand of consumers.





of requests flooded Bud Light Canada's social channels, the brand announced the arrival of its newest innovation, Bud Light Seltzer. Targeting the general population with a character called "Seltzy", the life-sized can of Bud Light Black Cherry Seltzer was required to quarantine for the mandated 14 days upon arrival in Canada in a glass box located on top of the 49 Spadina Avenue LCBO in Toronto. “We wanted to appeal to the masses and bring a new population into the discussion. Our goal is to build a portfolio that offers different experiences to lots of different consumers,” says Kuhn.

Hard seltzers are built around experiences and occasions, with a large portion of hard seltzers consumed during social gatherings. Given the challenges restaurants and bars have faced during COVID-19, finding the right occasion can be tricky, but as restaurants and bars look to re-open over the summer, making hard seltzers part of the offering is essential to support the demand of consumers.

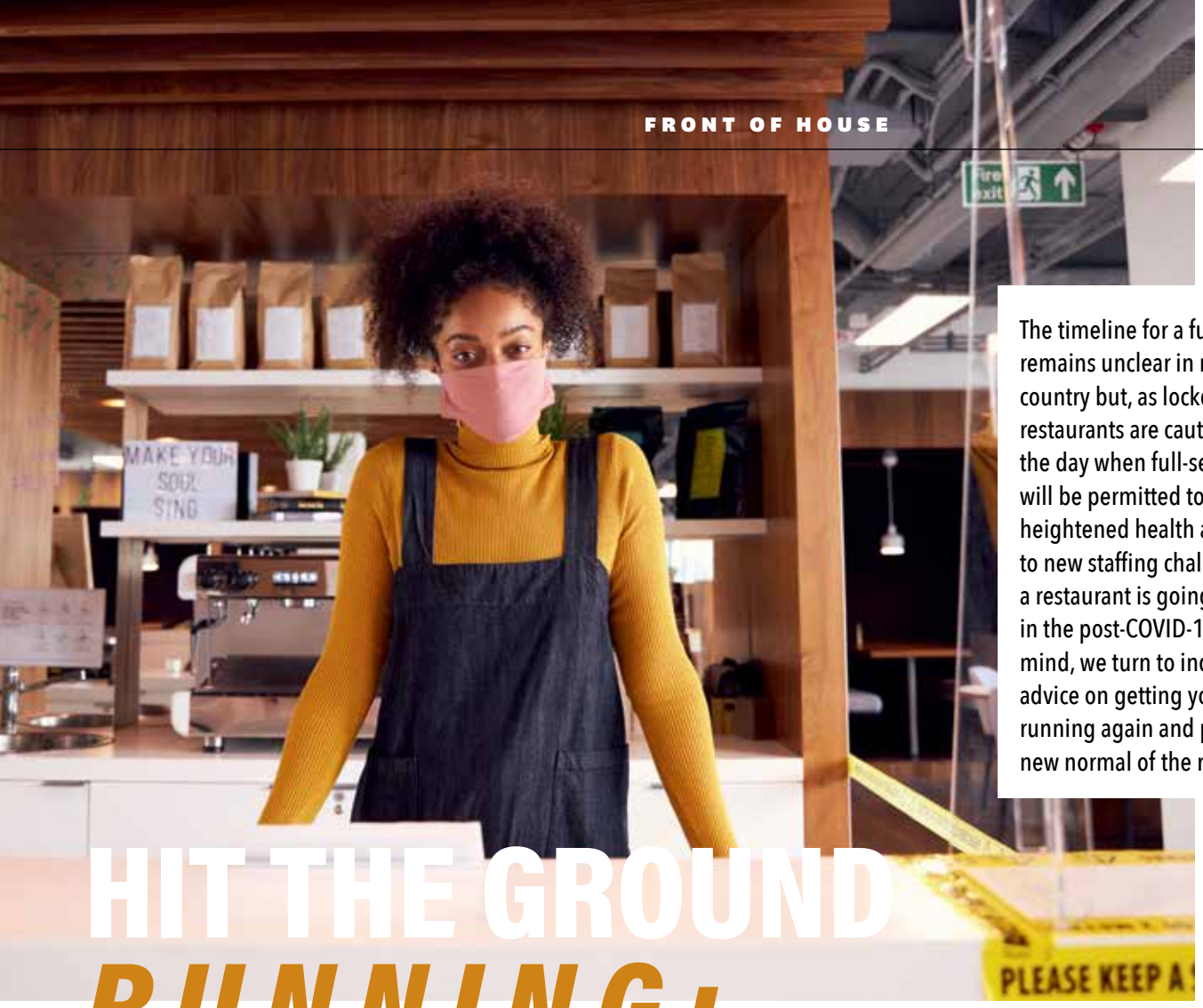
“Consumers are continuing to look for beverages that offer both refreshment and better-for-you benefits as they take advantage of the summer weather and restrictions continue to lift across the country,” says Scott Walton, President, Mark Anthony Wine & Spirits at Mark Anthony Group. “Our expectation is that patios will see significant traffic this summer as people are looking to get outside and socialize after another winter cooped up at home.”

As part of a bar program, hard seltzers offer operators much more than simply satisfying consumer demand. Staff restrictions and ease of service will be a big focus this summer and hard seltzers offer a convenient option for operators as they prepare to open. “The product is easy to store, so you don't need expensive equipment like draft lines or big expensive wine fridges,” says Robinson. There is also the potential for high-margin, high-volume capabilities. “I would encourage operators to talk to their customers and ask what they are looking for in a menu offering. it’s a great way to make consumers happy with choice and ease of execution.”

From a takeout/delivery perspective, hard seltzers can fit nicely into an operator's strategy. “In support of small businesses and larger operators alike, our team has worked closely with these businesses to offer White Claw, Lemon Life and Freed Earth as takeout and delivery options,” says Walton. “Bundle promotions and food and drink pairings have been a great way to encourage consumers to add hard seltzers to their orders.”

Many companies are also working with bar and restaurant owners to ensure that hard seltzers are much more than a seasonal drink, developing flavours that extend into the fall months. Georgian Bay Spirit Co. has taken this one step further. “We call it 'deseasonalizing the seltzer category',” says Robinson. “We've created something we call "Smashology', where we combine mixology with our hard seltzers. It’s a gateway to mixology and spirits and therefore you can take something like a hard seltzer and translate that into winter months.”

It’s obvious that no other category demonstrates as much local market innovation as RTDs. From flavour to function, the RTD category is growing as consumer demand for the product increases. “It’s important to give customers what they want,” says Kuhn. “It’s trending, consumers are looking to try new things and want more choice. These products offer the ability for consumers to come in and engage with your menu. It benefits everyone.”



The timeline for a full reopening remains unclear in many parts of the country but, as lockdowns gradually lift, restaurants are cautiously preparing for the day when full-service operations will be permitted to resume. From heightened health and safety protocols to new staffing challenges, running a restaurant is going to look different in the post-COVID-19 era. With that in mind, we turn to industry experts for advice on getting your business up and running again and preparing for the new normal of the restaurant industry.

HIT THE GROUND RUNNING: PREPPING FOR REOPENING

HOW TO MANAGE HEALTH AND SAFETY

Jack Minacs, Senior Account Manager for Workplace Safety & Prevention Services (WSPS), suggests that reviewing and revising your COVID-19 safety plan is a key starting point for operators getting ready to safely reopen their dine-in service. Although restaurants that have remained open for takeout already have some protocols in place, Minacs notes that updating this strategy regularly is essential in order to maintain health and safety.

"When you do your COVID safety plan, that doesn't mean it's done forever," he says. "A big part of operating safely during this time is revisiting your plan on a regular basis and communicating those changes to your workers." He recommends operators identify potential gaps and areas for improvement by comparing their existing plan to the guidelines outlined by their province, their local public health unit and the Ministry of Labour.

Mark Ambler, Infection Prevention Specialist at Diversey, recommends that operators consider four basic questions when building or revising their cleaning and disinfection strategy: "What is going to be cleaned? How is it going to be cleaned? Who is going to do it? And when and how often will it happen?"

Ambler says skipping the cleaning step when disinfecting surfaces is a common error to watch out for. "We know that sanitizers and disinfectants work more effectively on pre-cleaned surfaces, especially greasy or heavily soiled surfaces," he explains. "If we don't clean them first and remove that soil, we don't give the sanitizer and disinfectant the chance to get out the germs that are on that surface."

After cleaning, Ambler says it's important to follow-up with products that disinfect rather than simply sanitize. "Disinfecting and sanitizing are actually two very different things," he says. "Sanitizers typically only address bacteria, whereas



disinfection addresses the bacteria and viruses and fungus as well."

With many Canadians likely feeling hesitant about the safety of returning to restaurants, operators should also consider how best to communicate their health and safety protocols with their customers to enhance their comfort and peace of mind.

Ambler suggests that restaurants be "explicit in their demonstrations and communication of the specific measures they're undertaking to prioritize guests." This might include having signage throughout the space or allowing customers to review in-depth information about the restaurant's health and safety strategies via QR codes displayed that the tables. "So I can hit that with my phone and then it takes me to a broader explanation of how this table was cleaned or specific protocols that we have in place at this facility," he explains.

Diversey is set to roll out its Diversey Shield program in Canada, which can also provide added reassurance for customers by demonstrating that the restaurant's health and safety protocols have been verified by an independent third party. "Our team is going to be able to give a restaurant sort of a stamp of approval to say they've gone through a basic auditing process with a Diversey representative," says Ambler.

Even as restrictions continue to relax, Ambler predicts that the pandemic has permanently changed the way customers view their safety when dining out and they will continue to hold restaurants to a higher standard of cleanliness than ever before. "The challenge really now is that COVID has brought this heightened awareness and with it a heightened expectation from guests that you are prioritizing their safety," he says. "People are going to be a lot less forgiving about any outbreak — COVID or not."

STRATEGIES FOR STAFFING

Ongoing lockdowns and dining restrictions continue to leave many foodservice workers unemployed, yet Adam Morrison, president and CEO of the Ontario Tourism Education Corporation (OTEC) warns that a labour shortage is likely as restaurants begin to reopen.

According to a recent survey of displaced hospitality workers conducted by OTEC, only 42 per cent of respondents reported they intend to return to the industry with the remainder reporting they're seeking work in other sectors.

Morrison suggests operators strive to keep in touch with former employees they hope to rehire. "We see great examples of businesses that have been sharing updates, sharing what they know about the guidelines, making sure people are okay. And even, in some cases, trying to get them access to whatever support and professional development they can get," he says. "We were very conscious early on that people would begin to drift away if they didn't feel that they were engaged with the business."

Jody Palubiski, CEO of Charcoal Group, says that maintaining communication with staff has been a top priority for his team throughout the pandemic. "We've kept our management team focused and onboard the entire time and had them communicating with the team on a weekly basis, reaching out and touching base, and being there to support them," he says. "I can't think of anything more important than coming out of the gate with a team that understands what made you successful before COVID; those people that can welcome the guests back because they know them, they have a connection with your business, and with your guests."

Morrison suggests that ramping up retraining as soon as possible can be a strategic way to keep staff connected to your business while also taking advantage of downtime created by the gradual reopening process. "You double ROI in that you keep the workforce engaged, but also you're not interrupting the business with training and other kinds of operational pieces when you get the chance to open," he explains.

WSPS's Minacs suggests operators begin by orienting new and returning staff with a formal training session and then continue to reinforce protocols regularly at pre-shift meetings. "You integrate health and safety strategies into the way that you normally operate your business," he says. "It might be at that pre-dinner meeting: 'here are the specials' and then also include some



safety in those messages. That way, it's more effective and more efficient."

Minacs adds that consideration of your staff's mental health will be essential as the industry rebounds. "In this climate of COVID-19, mental health issues and violence and harassment have really risen to a high level of importance," he says. "They should be treated just like any other workplace health and safety hazard. It's really about opening up the dialogue and having those conversations, and moving the culture forward so that these issues are addressed."

In addition to turning more attention to your team's mental health, Morrison says it's important to consider the reasons why former staff might be leaving the industry. "Look at the other industries in your community or in your market that might be trying to lure your workers away and try and understand what they're offering," he suggests. "Sometimes that's flexible shifts, sometimes that's more stability, or more and more it varies depending on the persona of that employee."

Ultimately, when it comes to re-attracting staff and rebuilding your team, Palubiski says that creating open communication channels with your employees is key. "I think they [staff] need to walk into scenarios where they feel comfortable, where they feel safe and where they feel valued. It's going to be about showing patience, understanding and positivity."

OPTIMIZING OPERATIONS

Samir Zabaneh, chairman and CEO of TouchBistro, suggests there are a number of ways operators can optimize the efficiency and safety of their patio set-ups when preparing to reopen.

He recommends starting by mapping out the movement of diners through the restaurant. "If possible, adjust flows for guests to go in a single direction to and from restrooms, order or pickup counters, sanitation stations, and into or out of the patio and restaurant," he says, adding that signs delineating these directions can be helpful in maintaining physical distancing and simplifying navigation for diners.

If space permits, another option for promoting physical distancing is to set up serving stations at each table. "This eliminates servers reaching across the table, close to the guests, when delivering the food or clearing the table," says Zabaneh.



Operators that have previously opened for outdoor dining know how much rain can impede service. "For patios that are not covered, retractable awnings and large umbrellas are great options to provide shade when the sun is too intense and to protect guests from rain," says Zabaneh, noting these solutions can shelter guests when needed but can also be easily removed to allow diners to enjoy the full sunshine on pleasant days. "Big umbrellas open on the patio is another way to let locals know it is now open," he adds.

Implementing the right technology can enhance staff and guest safety as well as streamline service. "A reservations app can be a tremendous help in managing maximum allowed patio seating, informing guests of table availability and wait times, and ensuring social distancing," says Zabaneh. This system can increase table turns while also reducing the number of diners congregating around the restaurant, waiting for a table. "Ideally, the app allows guests to make reservations online and receive text notifications when their table is ready," he says.

QR codes that diners can use to view the menu on their own devices are a simple step operators can take towards contact-free ordering. "Many restaurants use a POS that allows servers to take a tablet tableside to enter orders that are sent directly to the kitchen and to process payments. This speeds up order delivery and payment processing while cutting down on order entry errors," Zabaneh adds. "A mobile POS also helps to reduce server congestion going back and forth to the kitchen or around a server station or payment terminal and has proven to increase table turns."

Amid managing operational adjustments, Palubiski says it's important not to lose sight of the reasons why diners are excited to return to their favourite restaurants. "If you're doing your job right and practicing all the right protocols, they [diners] are quickly just letting themselves be taken care of," he says. "There's a fine line between informing and making them aware but at the same time letting them know they can just enjoy themselves."

Zabaneh suggests that bringing back favourite menu items can be a great way to foster a sense of welcome and familiarity. "While a summer or patio special offering can be inviting, it's a good idea to help guests feel a sense of comfort by providing something as close to the pre-pandemic restaurant experience as possible," he says. "For example, feature your most-loved menu items or daily specials on your website and social media, including those drinks or dishes that could not be packaged for takeout or delivery."

Ultimately, the key to success in the post-COVID-19 era is balancing new protocols and priorities with the timeless art of hospitality. "For those that are worried and for those that have questions, we want to answer them effectively and professionally," says Palubiski. "But for those that want to sink in, we just want to take care of them and make sure that they are safe but let them have a great time."


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MAXIMIZING PATIO PROFITABILITY IN 2021

WE CAN'T RECALL A PATIO SEASON THAT WILL BE MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE SUMMER OF 2021.

Patrons have been cooped up for months, enduring seemingly endless waves of the COVID-19 pandemic, while restaurants have continuously pivoted, flipped and remained agile to stay afloat.

All to get to this point: when people can safely enjoy some sunshine-soaked food and drinks, and restaurants can have a chance to finally earn some revenue and help recoup a year's worth of loss.

That means restaurants need to flawlessly execute their patios, and we've got some valuable tips to help you maximize your profits and start the road to recovery this summer.

THE DOLLARS ARE IN THE (MENU) DETAILS

The first thing you think of when you think of restaurants is food, so it makes sense that the first step to a successful patio season is having a menu designed for success. That goes beyond having fun, unique and good quality items; it means having a menu constructed so it sets up your kitchen for success.

David Hopkins, President of the Fifteen Group, says that the biggest thing he is discussing with his clients is efficiency and speed of execution.

Patios will be busy, so it's important to maximize the return on investment from every seat on your patio.

"A lot of people don't necessarily realize that almost 50 per cent of every incremental dollar that you sell on a patio goes toward your bottom line," says Hopkins. "If you've got an 80-seat patio, and you can turn 40 more people per day just because you're efficient, that will probably amount to about 100-120k more profit over the course of the summer — not revenue, bottom-line profit."

Avoid having too many items from the same area of a kitchen to avoid bottlenecks, minimize lengthy cook time items and have some dishes that can be served almost immediately.

"If you have people waiting for 40 minutes to get their food, you could say "that's OK because they're going to order another drink', but I'd much rather have a whole other table come through... ordering more food, drinks and everything," says Hopkins.

Steve Baert, the Director of Operations at Toronto-based Honeycomb Hospitality, echoes Hopkins' speed sentiment.

One of Honeycomb's venues, Baro is home to one of Toronto's most popular rooftop patios, and Baert says improving kitchen efficiency can also be done by doing as much pre-service prep work as possible and minimizing transport time from kitchen to table.

"I strongly suggest keeping the food coming from the same floor you're serving on," says Baert. "You'll have a more productive and profitable service, plus your customer and staff retention will be higher."

As for the actual items, both Baert and Justin Tisdall, owner of BeetBox, Juke Chicken and the Chickadee Room in Vancouver, say to focus on two key areas: fresh and shareable.

Baert notes that food with strong flavours, such as fresh-charred BBQ proteins, ceviches, and salads really resonate well with patio guests.

Many customers move away from ordering one or two large items in the summer, opting for multiple smaller, tapas-style dishes and maximizing variety.

Tisdall says that guests enjoying drinks out in the sun tend to enjoy foods that are salty, refreshing and light.

"We kind of pattern our food and drink programs in the same manner—nothing is going to be super rich or super heavy," said Tisdall. "Everything is approachable, refreshing and helps you beat the heat in the best way possible."

IF IT DOESN'T MAKE DOLLARS, IT CAN STILL MAKE SENSE

Instead of the traditional "30 per cent markup" style of setting prices for food items, Hopkins suggests to use margin menu pricing, which is a more strategic and results-driven method to determine how to price your menu.

Focus on evalutating your menu items based on the profit they return and their volume of sales. Then, isolate the items that truly shine, instead of a blanket approach to looking at your menu.

Hopkins encourages restaurants to raise their prices anywhere from seven to 15 per cent, but only on those strategically-targeted items.

"So many people don't realize that if you take this approach and do it strategically, you can increase your average margin by 10-15 per cent — and guests won't even notice it," says Hopkins. "You've put some prices up by a buck or two, but others have gone down by a buck. If you put an item that you barely sell down by a dollar, it doesn't really cost you anything... but the value perception on the menu is very noticeable."

There are other factors to consider when setting menu prices as well. Certain parts of a kitchen line often bottleneck during quick-service periods. Lowering prices during these times on some items from other areas of the kitchen can help increase their sales, alleviate bottlenecks and improve service.

Hopkins also suggests slightly lowering prices on items that pair well with other items. For example, many restaurants will take a lower margin on chicken wings because it draws extra beer sales—an item with a significantly better margin.

Hopkins recommends reviewing a new menu after four weeks, and then reviewing your pricing model every three months to help identify menu margin pricing opportunities.

YOUR PEOPLE MATTER

Food may be important, but a restaurant can't thrive without good staff representing your brand.

The overwhelming sentiment this summer is "the more staff, the better", to give customers the best possible experience as we welcome them back to our venues for the first time in months.

But having more staff doesn't necessarily equate to better customer service; they need the right tools for success, starting with proper training.

"You will have a waitlist if you have a great spot, so the biggest problem is managing volume," says Baert. "You need to be organized, you need to be transparent, and having a well-coached and diligent support staff and management team that can manage a waitlist is critical."

Baert tries to avoid having his staff work longer than six-hours on a patio, and he also avoids scheduling any of his staff more than three days in a row outside.

"There's a wear and tear that comes from being in the heat. Restaurants are fast-paced, and there's an expectation of service that we don't want to jeopardize," says Baert. "It's like a line change in hockey: you have to keep it fresh and energetic and we protect each other."

WHAT WORKS BEST ON A PATIO?

Choosing your patio materials can make or break your space — but what works best for what type of venues?

- Goddard recommends bright colours for themed restaurants and more subdued greys and blacks for sports pubs.
- Aim for UV-resistant and durable fabrics: it may cost most than standard fabrics but it is essential.
- Soften railings with decorative elements like planters and wood posts for restaurants while traditional pubs and sports bars can use more steel, glass and brick.
- Scifo notes using neutral furniture allows plenty of flexibility, as you can change the look of your patio (via pillows, plants and accessories) to fit your theme, adjust as the seasons change or even plan events around specific dates and holidays.
- We're also seeing restaurants use less boxwoods in spaces, opting instead for more organic-looking plants, different hanging elements and this that create and eclectic and unique guest experience.

A WELCOMING SITE

Not all patios are created equal, but they all need to be well thought out.

Tifany Scifo, the Director of Design & Marketing at Juiceworks, says that the flow of foot traffic is extremely important. With COVID-19 precautions still very real, setting how patrons and the staff circulate, dictating access to shared facilities such as restrooms and the hostess stand, and minimizing face-to-face interactions between guests coming in and out are things that need to be considered.

Scifo notes there's more emphasis on experience and the feeling that guests have when visiting a space. Restaurants should give them a more immersive and shareworthy experience.

"We have one client who is doing a hybrid live/digital wall, along a pedestrian walkway, which acts as a shared experience for people while they're waiting at the hostess stand to enter into the space," says Scifo. "Extra sanitation and cleaning means it takes a little longer to get into places now, so this is a fun way to keep them interested."

Scifo also says that "pop-up" items—such as bars, visiting guest chefs and pickup service windows—are very trendy. They help guests feel that they're in a space that's special and catered to them, and can be reskinned for different scenes, themes and locations.

"Another trend we're noticing is guests having a clear line of sight to food prep," adds Scifo. "Guests seeing how their food is prepared and the freshness of the ingredients makes them feel like they're part of the experience."

The first thing a guest usually sees is the patio, and having a cold, unwelcoming space —or a patio that clashes with your restaurant's theme—can sour a guest's experience.

Nick Goddard, President of Portage Design Group, notes that it starts by having some connection between the interior and exterior appearance.

"For example, a sports pub should take advantage of the context of a sporting event," says Goddard. "And not look like an Italian rustic village setting."

There's always the question of balancing aesthetics with efficiency, and Goddard stresses form before function.

"If the layout doesn't work, the patio will fail," says Goddard, "but that doesn't mean a well-planned patio can't be both beautiful AND efficient."

Scifo reinforces that notion, reminding restaurants that there needs to be a synergy between the two spaces and they need to have the same vibe. But that doesn't mean you can't have different furniture or a different design aesthetic in your accessories.

You can also create the finishing touches with lighting. There are simple, effective, ways to light a patio so that it is truly memorable, yet cost efficient.

Tisdall took this approach when designing his 16-seat shared patio for Juke and the Chickadee Room. The space emulates the vibe of the Chickadee Room—80s themes and colours, retro vinyl and plexiglass dividers with neon pink and wood trim.

"In a time when everyone is being extremely serious," says Tisdall, "we're doing our best to find some moments of levity."

This summer's focus should be on creating an atmosphere that makes people feel excited, welcomed, safe and comfortable.

"It's not just throwing tables and chairs and putting people outside — everyone likes being outside, especially after being cooped up for a year," says Baert. "But what's super important is making it warm and welcoming and having people feel like 'I'm here and I feel like this is something special'."

PATIO SEASON DOESN'T END WITH SUMMER

As summer—and the hot temperatures—wind down, that doesn't mean patios need to close up shop, especially in 2021.

Restaurants need to maximize every minute of their outdoor dining, and that includes extending the season by weeks —or even months!

Last year, Juiceworks President Jonathan Auger noted there was a mad rush for tents and structures to put up ASAP and extend outdoor dining. This year, with more time to plan, Auger expects many restaurants to utilize custom installations to keep guest comfortable into the fall.

For restaurants without the space or budget, Goddard recommends simply utilizing patio heaters, awnings or umbrellas along with demountable walls as effective methods of extending your patio's life this year.

REDEFINING A PATIO

Some patios are rooftops, some are sidewalks, some are even parking lots. Patios can be created from many different creative spaces..

Iori Kataoka, co-owner of Yuwa Japanese Cuisine in Vancouver, turned the beautiful brick parking lot in front of her restaurant into a patio at the onset of the pandemic in 2020. This added 16 seats to Yuwa's 28-seat dining room, setting the bar for temporary patios.

"We were lucky that our parking lot was set in off the street a little bit, so it feels more connected with our dining room," says Kataoka. "We really took advantage of the greenery that was already around us and it looked like it was always a patio — so much that first-time visitors ask if this was always here and regulars said it's one of the best temporary patios they've ever seen!"

While Yuwa did a great job of pivoting on the fly, many restaurants don't have the luxury of nearby outdoor spaces available to build a patio.

Thankfully for them, projects like CafeTO exist to give venues a chance to get a piece of the patio dining pie.

Developed by the City of Toronto, the CafeTO program allows restaurants to open a new patio or expand their current patio either on the adjacent sidewalk or on applicable streets.

The program waives all fees for permits and only applies to public property, but the program supported 801 restaurants with new outdoor space permits in 2020. Of these restaurants 616 didn't have a patio before and more than 1,000 participants are expected in 2021.

"We did a survey of 2020 CafeTO participants, and 66 per cent said that without CafeTO, their restaurants would not have been financially viable," said Tobiah Abramson, CafeTO's Project Manager. "We're glad that we were able to help so many restaurants that had capacity restrictions."

While there are a number of bylaws that need to be adhered to, such as sidewalk clearance, traffic interruptions and having cane-detectable and colour-contrasted barriers, the program was made as inclusive as possible—and the online application can take as little as 10 minutes.

Similar programs exist in major cities across North America, but there wasn't a lot of time last summer for information sharing as the situation unfolded so rapidly. With the program now in its second year, there's more time to share and learn from other programs.

"We had an opportunity to provide a lifeline to an industry that was impacted by the pandemic and we really came together to get this done, said Jodi Callan, a Project Manager with Toronto's Transportation Services Policy & Innovation Unit. "What's exciting now is that there is more time to talk to our partners in other Canadian and American cities and develop our best practices."

Once things return to some version of normal, Callan doesn't envision the CafeTO program disappearing. Toronto city council expressed interest in investigating whether the program can continue post COVID-19 as public surveys conducted about the program were favourable.

"We had a high positivity rate, as far as people's experience with the program itself and how it changed their perspective of their neighbourhood," said Callan. "And how it made them feel to help their local small businesses and keep their nearby main streets vibrant."

Because, at the end of the day, that's what patio season is all about: the community supporting each other, together, outside.





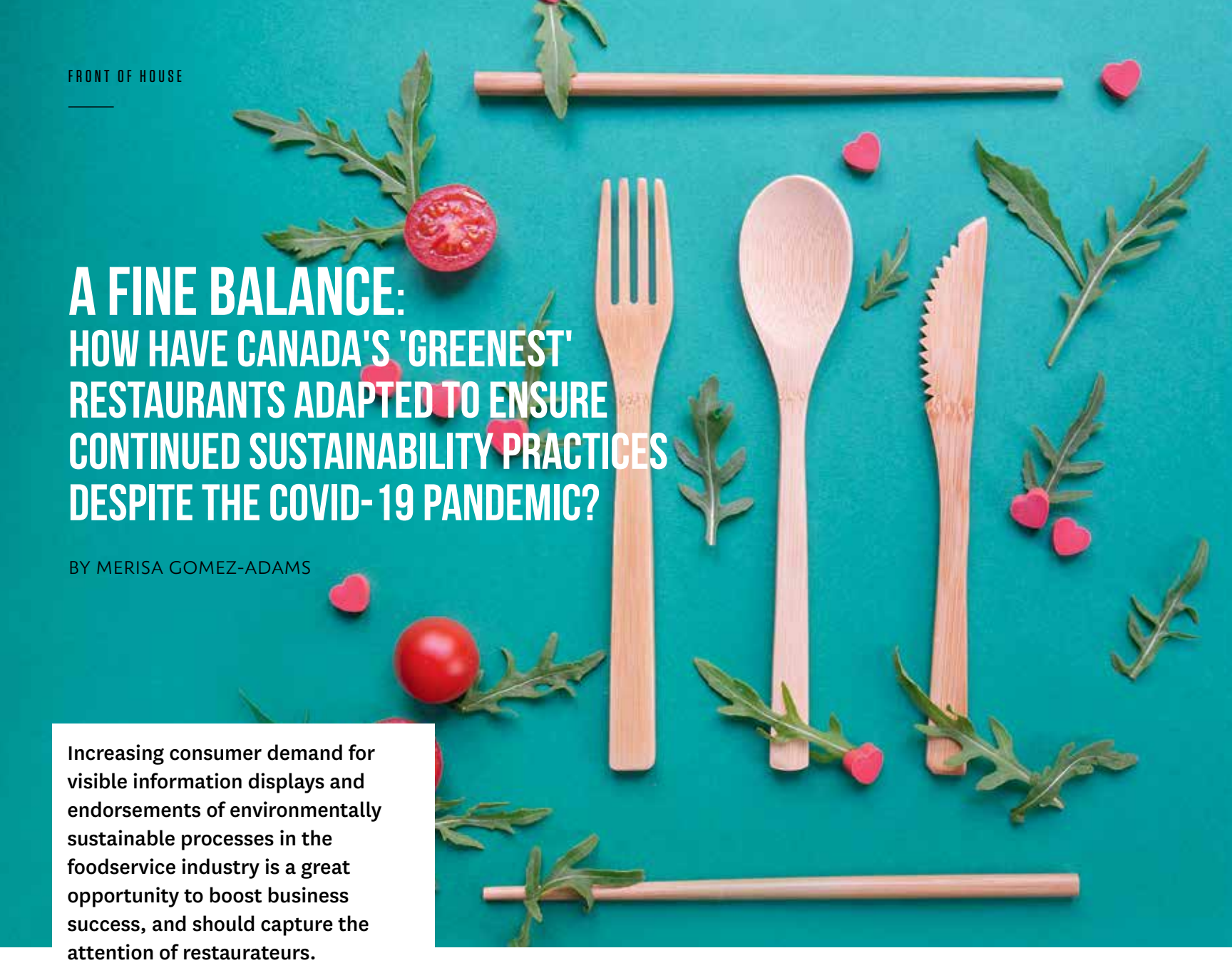
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A FINE BALANCE:
HOW HAVE CANADA'S 'GREENEST' RESTAURANTS ADAPTED TO ENSURE CONTINUED SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES DESPITE THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?

BY MERISA GOMEZ-ADAMS

Increasing consumer demand for visible information displays and endorsements of environmentally sustainable processes in the foodservice industry is a great opportunity to boost business success, and should capture the attention of restaurateurs.

Responses gathered by Restaurants Canada as part of their quarterly Restaurant Outlook Survey, found that 82 per cent of respondents reported that, “environmental sustainability was moderately to very important” to the success of their business. A further 92 per cent proposed improving (or at the very least, continuing) their sustainable operations over the course of the next three years.

While the value of sustainability investments is clear, training staff, the limited availability of environmentally friendly products and implementation costs are seen as barriers to improving the sustainability of the foodservice industry.

In 2019, Catherine McKenna, Canada’s Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, unveiled two programs to help eligible small and medium-sized businesses be more energy-efficient, save money and contribute to national targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Understanding how some of Canada’s “greenest” restaurants have maintained their sustainability efforts and navigated the precarious nature of the pandemic is worth exploring.

“When COVID hit, it hit hard and fast,” said Leaders in Environmentally Accountable Foodservice (LEAF) Founder and President, Janine Windsor. “The initial devastation led to the undoing of a number of restaurant sustainable practices.” An ongoing example is the significant increase in the number of single-use containers, cutlery and other items, in a bid to gain consumer confidence in food safety and, in some cases, to cut down on what has become an unaffordable labour expense.

However, Windsor was also able to highlight several sustainable adjustments that operators had to make in order to survive. “Lessening the number of menu items to achieve the ultimate goal of reducing food waste is just one of the changes that have been implemented,” she explained.

As the national Canadian leader in sustainable foodservice standards, LEAF's expertise lies in determining what truly qualifies a restaurant as “green.” As defined by the organization, “a ‘green’ or sustainable restaurant is one that considers its relationship with the environment in everything it does, from the day-to-day operations to the larger business decisions".

More holistically, certification also considers the welfare of the people restaurants employ, as well as the community, which is directly inter-

twined with the financial sustainability of the business and local economy."

To qualify for a coveted place on the LEAF list, operators participate in an evaluation process that takes into account what is achievable for their business. Operators work with an auditor to establish where they currently are in their sustainability journey and discuss what needs to be done to become level one, two or three LEAF certified. Every application is reviewed by the LEAF volunteer advisory board and certified businesses must have a site visit every three years thereafter.

Becoming LEAF certified not only heightens public appeal by virtue of being a facility committed to reducing environmental impact, it lowers costs and positions businesses as industry leaders with the power to attract like-minded employees and customers.

Despite the unpredictability, some of Canada's "greenest" restaurants have continued to adapt to the multiple challenges the pandemic has posed to their sustainability efforts. Windsor shares that the results of a survey conducted by LEAF supports the notion that for members, "It wasn't a case of sustainability falling down the list of priorities, it was that the focus had shifted to establishing new and creative ways—such as using recycled windows for partitions—to remain committed to the sustainability cause."

"Consumers and staff alike want to work for and support businesses that continue to make the effort," says Windsor, "...so there is an expectancy that, as businesses get back on their feet and work towards some sense of normalcy, their recognition of the business case for sustainability and that reducing waste, water and energy increases profitability, will resurface as the priority."

Of the restaurants the LEAF team surveyed, 90 per cent said they planned to reinstate previous practices as soon as possible and when businesses are ready, the LEAF organization will be there to help them achieve their sustainability goals.

For those looking to learn more about restaurant sustainability, please check out LEAF's online Sustainable Foodservice Professional course at: sfpcertificate.ca

Several Canadian LEAF certified members have come forward to discuss how they've remained intact with their commitment to sustainability whilst navigating the obstacles of the pandemic.



CHIC ALORS

Hugues Philippin, owner of the *Chic Alors!* restaurant located in the Cap-Rouge sector of Quebec City, had been looking for official recognition for the restaurant's continued sustainability efforts and was interested in establishing goals to work toward. "As it turned out," he said enthusiastically, "we got Level Three certification at our first audit!" Level Three is the highest certification level and reinforced Philippin's belief that a high-volume, modern and comfortable restaurant didn't have to compromise when it came to sustainability. "Sustainability means the whole business process has been analyzed and that everything wasteful has been corrected. To me, sustainability means profits."

In saying this however, he understands that during the pandemic, "Most restaurants went into survival mode and didn't think it would be a good time to invest time or what little money was left into sustainable practices. We were thankfully able to upkeep the recycling and sorting of compostable material and our 100 per cent electric delivery fleet."



CAFÉ BELONG

For the past decade, Café Belong has embodied the circle of sustainability, and for chef and owner Brad Long the pandemic provided some perspective. "When the fog of anxiety and frustration cleared, we had to explore alternatives. I have, without a doubt, seen my priorities somewhat rearranged, though safety and striving to meet customer needs has remained the foundational aspect of our operation." Long explained, "Though a lot of what we've learned isn't so much applicable to the day-to-day ops, we've done quite a bit of homework on technological changes, especially as we've had to adapt to being cut off from our team and our guests."



LOCALS RESTAURANTS

"Rather than trying to resist the challenges that the pandemic presented, we decided to lean into it," says owner Tricia St. Pierre of *Locals Restaurant*, based in Comox Valley on the east coast of Vancouver Island. "The fact that there is more than one way to do things has been reinforced and we've needed to be more creative, resourceful and flexible. We've had to learn to tighten our belts and streamline processes, which we think will ultimately have long-term benefits."

There is also a clear alignment on how patient and understanding guests have been with regard to the various challenges, with Philippin mentioning that "In our case, no customers complained about single use placemats, menus and masks— I think they understand it's temporary." St. Pierre reinforces how "the public have been very supportive of all efforts to remain green."



NOT A LUXURY

BY CHRIS SZEGO

In a crisis, survival is the goal. We trim expenses to the bone, and streamline into the most efficient and agile versions of ourselves. But there are some aspects of foodservice that are not luxuries, like sustainability. "There's a perception that sustainability comes at an additional cost," says Josh Prigge, founder of Sustridge Sustainability Consulting. "In reality, sustainability adds long-term business value."

Prigge's recommendation? Start by tracking your actual numbers. "Water use, energy use, waste: what are the numbers and costs? That will show you where to start." It can also focus your efforts where the most immediate payback can be found. The next step is to develop an overarching strategy. "Each restaurant has different priorities: one might work on energy conservation, another on local food supply. A comprehensive approach embeds sustainability into the culture of the organization." The best way to do that is to engage all your stakeholders in the process: customers, suppliers and above all, employees. "Employees want to work for a company that shares their values and beliefs. Sustainability can be a lens to drive innovation."

When it comes to sustainability, energy is often overlooked, and it shouldn't be. "Foodservice is the most energy intensive commercial business per square foot," says Robert Edwards, Business Advisor, Private Sector IESO. "As restaurants begin to rebound, it's going to be all about the bottom line. Rent, the cost of food, of labour, these will only go up. So you want to reduce the costs that are under your control, like energy."

The first thing to do? "Get started. Invest some time in understanding how and when your restaurant uses energy." Then reach out to your local utilities for no- and low-cost solutions. Edwards strongly encourages operators to take advantage of the energy-saving programs offered across the country by all levels of government. "Save on Energy has Direct Install programs available in Ontario, including one called Small

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>
> – Robert Edwards, Business Advisor, Private Sector IESO

Business Lighting. They'll send a third party to survey and consult with you and will install up to $2000 of LED lighting for free." They're currently working on adding refrigeration and HVAC measures to the Small Business Lighting Program and anticipate them being available in the fall. These are programs worth taking advantage of.

And they come with ancillary benefits. "When you have a pleasantly lit environment, it may lead to customers lingering to enjoy another drink, or coffee and dessert," Edwards explains. When things are more comfortable, people stay longer. That's true for both your front and back of house. "Direct Control Kitchen Ventilation (DCKV) controls temperatures for employee comfort, and since it's not as noisy, it's also good for guests."

Kitchens have made great strides in recent years when it comes to eliminating food waste. What seems like a strictly environmental choice can also be a sound financial decision. Reducing waste not only cuts costs but can also increase revenue. Kent Wallace from Greenspace Waste Solutions, who helps companies reduce both the amount and cost of their waste, shares that customers prefer to dine in restaurants that share their values and beliefs.

Like Prigge, Wallace suggests the first step is to really measure your waste. "What are you throwing out that you shouldn't be?" Breaking down all cardboard for recycling can be time-consuming, but it can significantly reduce waste pickup costs. His next recommendation is to improve your organics program. "Food is 70-90 per cent water: when it decomposes in landfill, it can end up in our water table. Programs that divert organics from landfill also reduce carbon dioxide and methane, two main greenhouse gases." Composters are a good choice for operators with green space, or who grow their own ingredients. Larger operations might consider getting their own biodigester, a worthwhile investment on both the sustainability and profitability fronts. "After two years, it eliminates all food waste costs."

"Everyone wants to go green," Wallace says, "But no one wants to add extra jobs or costs." The key to that is education for operators, for employees and for customers. "You're doing it for the next generation, and to remain in the public eye. Doing the right thing will build your business. What's good for the environment and the world is good for your bottom line."

"There's a misconception that being more sustainable is costly," says Sean Kavenagh, a board member with LEAF (Leaders in Environmentally Accountable Foodservice). He encourages operators to start with no-cost measures, like reassessing dishwashing practices to save energy and water, controlling food waste and reaching out to others in the industry. "Talk to your suppliers. Chances are they're trying to be more sustainable too!"

Kavenagh advises pursuing no- and low-cost avenues first because it can be easier to find savings than new revenue. "If you're typically operating at about a 5 per cent profit margin, then $1,000 in savings can be equivalent to $20,000 in new revenue." Though new revenue is not out of reach. "According to a Technomic survey, 79 per cent of consumers report that they would prefer to dine at Certified Green restaurants."

Sustainability can also help with staff retention. "According to another Technomic survey, 78 per cent of employees report that they would be more excited to work at a Certified Green restaurant." Which, as the industry faces a notable staffing shortage, makes sustainability initiatives a bonus when attracting employees. "Make it part of their role and responsibilities to regularly brainstorm sustainable initiatives."

Everyone agrees that a collective approach is the best way forward. "It's too much for one person," says Prigge. "Activate your staff, get them involved." Edwards also recommends reaching out to your local BIA. Kavenagh suggests connecting with other restaurant operators. "You might be surprised to see just how collaborative they are!" And there are many companies, like Wallace's Greenspace, that offer free consultations.

Above all, communication is key. "Even when you fall short of targets," Prigge says, "People care that you have a plan and are working towards it. People want to know that you're being proactive and trying."

SUSTRIDGE CONSULTING helps businesses plan and enact sustainability measures.
www.sustridge.com

SAVE ON ENERGY offers education, programs and incentives to help foodservice operators reduce their energy use and cost.
www.saveonenergy.ca

GREENSPACE WASTE SOLUTIONS, a Restaurants Canada affiliate partner, helps foodservice operators reduce the cost and amount of waste streams.
www.gswaste.com

LEAF'S mission is to help foodservice operators reach improved sustainability standards.
www.leafme.org

Using financial data and cash flow analysis to support a successful restaurant reopening



Restaurants have faced a tumultuous time and still face many challenges. You may be overwhelmed trying to rebuild your restaurant after more than a year of continually altered operations. There are many factors to consider from restocking your inventory to managing a smaller restaurant capacity, while trying to find your way back to financial health.

The following financial advice will guide restaurants as they begin rebuilding.

COMPREHENSIVE FINANCIAL DATA

It is vital for restaurant owners to maintain timely and precise financial data. Ensure financial data is accurate and can be used to drive important decisions. Consider the following:

- Maintain accurate, timely, and current books
  - Monthly, even weekly reports will be key in accessing any continued government funding and managing cash flow
- Evaluate how operational changes will impact finances
- Based on cash flow analysis, review how much staff should be rehired or retained.

DEVELOP CASH FLOW FORECASTS

One key aspect of rebuilding is developing cash flow forecasts. Involve advisors, including your accountant, banker, and investors in developing forecasts. Our accounting, bookkeeping, and payroll professionals help clients develop forecasts while considering:

- Capacity constraints
- 3, 6, or 12 month forecasts in anticipating future cash flows
- Deferred payments coming due, such as taxes, rent, royalties, and loan payments
- Ability to take advantage of or extend vendor payment terms
- Options for covering shortfalls

HOW CAN RESTAURANTS IMPROVE CASH FLOW?

BDO advisors regularly work with our clients on managing and improving cash flow. For example, after doing a cash flow analysis with one of our restaurant clients, we recommended the following:

- They needed to review cost of labour and expenses compared to revenue on an hourly versus daily basis to hone in on periods where they were spending more than they were earning. The need to minimize idle resources is critical, especially during these intense periods of change.
- We looked at whether takeout operations were competing with patio and dine-in service once reopened.
- We then analyzed how rent deferrals and other deferred payments would affect cash flows. Managing working capital with consideration to both additional payments and deferred payments is essential to restaurant cash flow.
- Finally, tracking and reviewing inventory levels on a frequent basis has never been more crucial, or challenging for restaurants. They implemented regular reviews of inventory levels. They also re-negotiated payment terms and lead-time with suppliers where possible. By re-assessing inventory levels and paring back menu items, they were able to adjust inventory requirements as needed to manage a tight cash flow.

BDO CAN HELP

If you are struggling to manage your cash during a successful reopening, BDO can help manage the rebuilding phase so you can focus on restaurant operations. To find out more, contact BDO.

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Restaurants Canada

Board Member Roundtable



MARK FINDLAY
CEO, Lone Star Texas Grill
ONTARIO

As the "voice of foodservice," Restaurants Canada strives to ensure that the composition of its board reflects the variety of establishments it represents. From smaller independents to nationwide chains, the board pulls from every aspect of our sector to ensure that all voices are heard. COVID-19 continues to impact the industry, making diversified representation even more pivotal as Restaurants Canada fights for sector-specific support from the government.

We caught up with three of the host of new board members recently welcomed by the organization for a roundtable to discuss current industry challenges and what work they are looking to accomplish with Restaurants Canada: **Mark Findlay** of Lone Star Texas Grill, **Lacey Sellinger** of Odla Restaurant and Market, and **Ibrahim (Obby) Khan** of Shawarma Khan Inc.; Green Carrot Juice Company; Goodlocal.ca (Winnipeg)



LACEY SELLINGER
Co-owner and GM,
Odla Restaurant and Market
SASKATCHEWAN

MM Where are you located, and can you describe your establishment or operation for us?

Mark Findlay: Lone Star is a 35-year-old, full service Tex-Mex restaurant that started in Ottawa, Ontario. We have 22 locations (with #23 and #24 on the horizon) across Ontario from Windsor to Ottawa. We specialize in authentic Tex-Mex with our signature sizzling fajitas, margaritas and of course ice cold Corona.

Lacey Sellinger: Odla is a farm-driven restaurant and market located on Broadway Ave in Saskatoon. Our partners and co-owners at Farm One Forty grow the pasture raised pork and grass-fed beef and lamb for Odla on their 140 acres of holistically managed land. Our honey comes from their apiary and they are working toward growing as much of the vegetables and grains for Odla as possible.

Ibrahim Khan: All of my stores are located throughout Winnipeg, Manitoba. There are three Shawarma Khans, one in the heart of the Exchange District, one downtown and one on Pembina, with three pop-up restaurants in the Bomber stadium. Green Carrot is located in Osborne, Corydon and if you are in the Winnipeg Airport, we have a location there as well! Shawarma Khan is a Middle Eastern restaurant with incredible vegan, vegetarian and meat options, something for everyone if you are looking for comfort or healthy food. Green Carrot offers cold pressed, never pasteurized or heated juices and whole foods for healthy living.

MM What was your first job in foodservice?

MF: My first job in foodservice was washing dishes in a small hotel kitchen just outside of Cambridge named Langdon Hall.

LS: My first job in foodservice was at the Swift Current Golf Course Clubhouse when I was 15 years old.

IK: As funny as this sounds, my first job in foodservice was actually opening my first Shawarma Khan location in 2013.

MM What attracted you to the industry?

MF: I've been in the industry since that first dishwashing job when I was 14… so 32 years now! Yikes! I first got into the industry as a kid looking to make some extra cash (like most kids are) in



IBRAHIM (OBBY) KHAN
Founder and CEO, Shawarma Khan Inc.,
Green Carrot Juice Company,
Goodlocal.ca
MANITOBA

order to buy my first pair of Nike running shoes! As time went on, I started to fall in love with all aspects of the business from food to service, but what really kept me in the industry was the amazing people that I have had the privilege to work alongside every day.

LS: I immediately fell in love with the hustle and bustle of the industry. The speed, efficiency and multi-tasking abilities required to succeed were right up my alley. I loved (and still love) that no two days are ever the same!

IK: I loved the idea of making something that people would love and that they would come back to time and time again. I wanted to make something that was healthy, fresh and a great value for the money people were spending. I also wanted to create something I could scale without me having to be at every location working the line or making the recipes.

MM Can you give us an overview of your career path so far?

MF: I've been fortunate to have some great mentors and teams to work with over the years. I have worked with some incredibly talented people who have helped progress my career. In my early years as I started out in the kitchen, I worked my way through different roles in both the kitchen and front of house.

Through university I ended up bartending to pay my way through school and upon graduation took a management position with Jack Astor's. From there I progressed to GM and learned a ton about operations from the folks at SIRCORP. I then took a leap into multi-unit management around 2007 with CARA Operations (Now Recipe Unlimited) and ended up progressing through various senior management roles all the way up to running a few of their largest full-service brands as COO (Kelsey's, Montana's and Milestones). After leaving Recipe, I was offered the opportunity to run the Lone Star business and it's been an incredible four years so far!

LS: I worked as a server all through high school and then moved to Saskatoon where I got a job serving at a pub while I completed my Honours Psychology BA at the University of Saskatchewan. After graduating and working on campus in a research lab, I decided that the world of academia was not for me and felt pulled back to the industry. I was hired as the GM of The Hollows & Primal Pasta where I met Chef Scott Dicks, my current business partner. In 2019 Scott and I, together with the owners of Farm One Forty, opened Odla restaurant.

IK: I started as a professional football player in the CFL (from 2004 – 2012) and then I went right into the kitchen, and I haven't left. I have opened one new store almost every year and now we have three Shawarma Khan locations, with an additional three Shawarma Khan locations at the Winnipeg Blue Bomber Stadium, and three Green Carrot Juice Company locations with a fourth one on its way once this pandemic is over.

MM How has COVID-19 affected your operation?

MF: COVID-19 has been very tough on our people. The constant opening and closing, wave after wave, was not easy to manage. We were very fortunate to have great people leading the restaurants who adapted to the new world, working on the front lines and frankly did everything we asked of them and more. Sadly, like many other restaurants, we were forced to lay off over 2,000 employees last year. I think the single biggest impact to our industry has been the human element and whether we can inspire those great people to come back to us after the yo-yo effect of last year.

LS: COVID-19 has forced us to be more creative and adaptive than I would have ever thought possible. In March 2020 we created an online store where people could purchase market and grocery items, take-home meal packages and cocktail kits. We continue to come up with new options in an effort to keep our guests engaged, interested and coming back on a regular basis.

IK: Covid-19 has forced us to look at the way we staff our stores, consider our operational hours and compelled us to tweak our menu. In the end, all of the changes we have made have netted us a positive result as far as operations and profitability go. We took a hard, and at times scary, situation and turned it around to make the best out of it.

MM In your opinion, what is the biggest challenge facing operators right now?

MF: It would be difficult to pick just one. But in particular for the full-service restaurant industry, I feel that people will be the biggest hurdle we have to overcome. While we have kept as many people employed as possible, to reopen we will need twice the amount of staff. Staffing, re-hiring, re-training, inspiring people to come back to such a great industry after everything that we have been through is going to be difficult. Especially when everyone is trying to reopen at once.

LS: The uncertainty! Uncertainty around upcoming government restrictions (or scaling back of restrictions) and the comfort level of our guests when it comes to dining out. It is very difficult to plan for the coming months when we are just not sure how things will play out.

IK: The uncertainty of when things will get back to normal - if ever. It would be amazing to give staff the hours that they had beforehand. It's also a challenge not knowing when the government support will stop and what the future of the hospitality industry may look like.

MM In your opinion, what does the industry need right now from the government to survive and thrive?

MF: I think government has done a reasonable job in the support to date, however they have treated everyone with a one-size-fits-all approach. Industry specific support for a business that is already running on razor thin margins would be appreciated by all. They should listen to the hospitality industry leaders with a little more consideration for our specific needs and to ensure that the programs don't just turn off because the road to recovery is long.

LS: Our industry requires continued government support in the form of rent and wage subsidies. Scaling back of support at this time for many businesses would be devastating, and would negate all of the support that has got us this far. We need to be consulted on plans and procedures moving forward. Finally, as plans to reopen things continue, we need the government to invest in messaging to customers that it is not only safe to come back to restaurants, but necessary if neighbourhood businesses are to survive.

IK: In my opinion, the government needs to continue to have the stakeholders in our industry at the table having discussions with them. Making sure that decisions are made with proper consultation to make unilateral decisions for what they think is best for our industry. Providing a little more transparency on what is happening, and what is coming down the pipeline; this would help the industry plan, survive and thrive.

MM Why did you decide to join Restaurants Canada? What made you decide to become a board member?

MF: I was thrilled to be nominated to join the board. I just want to be able to help the recovery of all restaurants big and small. The industry has been very kind to me and it's a way for me to give back to it.

LS: Restaurants Canada is an organization that is advocating for Canadian restaurants during a time when we need our voices to be heard more than ever. I decided to join in order to represent Saskatchewan and help advocate for all of the amazing local businesses in this province.

IK: I wanted to join Restaurants Canada because of the network of amazing owners and operators. The work Restaurants Canada has done to advocate for businesses like mine is incredible and I wanted to be part of that. I am honoured to have a voice within the community.

MM What is one of the issues you want to tackle with Restaurants Canada as part of the board?

MF: I think being able to be a voice for the little guy and to help them navigate the recovery and thrive. I personally feel that Restaurants Canada should be the industry's single source of truth and resources across Canada. After being a part of some very large organizations, I always had countless resources to draw upon. When you're an independent restaurant, many times you are relying on yourself to do everything from washing the dishes to balancing the books. I think RC can help support the industry at all levels and we need all restaurants to thrive to make sure the industry thrives!

LS: Government control over alcohol. Right now, the SLGA's mark up on alcohol is well beyond our neighbouring provinces. This means that a wine that might be $24 in Alberta often costs nearly double that here in Saskatchewan. Their markup often has the SLGA making more money off of a product than the producers themselves! I would love to see this reduced to a more fair percentage that is more in line with our neighbouring provinces. This would allow us to offer more exciting products to our clientele at a more reasonable price.

IK: The issue that comes to mind right away, would be creating a more unified voice across Canada, and to do so having diverse representation within each province.

MM What does the future hold for the future of the industry?

MF: The future is bright! If I've learned (or have been reminded of) one thing from COVID, restaurateurs, staff and anyone in the industry is incredibly resilient, resourceful and [they're] some of the most passionate people I know. That is why I believe restaurants will recover and thrive.

LS: This industry is filled with the most hard working and creative people around! Although we are not out of the woods yet, and many will require continued government support to help us make it through, we will continue to adapt and persevere.

IK: I see an optimistic future. I think all entrepreneurs think this way, if we didn't, we wouldn't be where we are today. Adversity always brings out new ways of thinking, new ways of implementing, new friendships, partnerships and fresh outlooks. Always onwards and upwards.

MM What are some of your favourite local restaurants?

MF: So many choices! I love food and living in Toronto there's so many great choices and I make a point of trying as many as I can. From Descendent Pizza in Leslieville to my new go-to Revolver Pizza in Mimico, Gio Ranas (a.k.a. The Nose) in the east end, to a culinary and service adventure from Patrick Kriss at Alo.

My best friend runs some fantastic restaurants in Ottawa (Beckta, Play and Gezellig) so whenever I'm in town I'm sure to hit one of those. I've also been known to crush a fajita and some queso at Lone Star from time to time. Big or small, chain or independent I have a true appreciation for food, service and all the things that go into it.

LS: We have some amazing spots here in Saskatoon. Some of my favourite places for dinner are The Odd Couple, Calories, Taverna & Amigos Cantina. For coffee I love Citizen Café, Venn & Darkside Donuts. My favorite place for a pint is the Yard & Flagon!

IK: Of course, other than Shawarma Khan and Green Carrot, I would have to say East India Company, Wall Street Slice, De Luca's, Merchant Kitchen and Wasabi.

MM If you could change something about the foodservice industry, what would it be and why?

MF: I've always felt that we need to legitimize the business. For those that are in it…it's a labour of love and something that many of us do not for the massive profits(that are razor thin at best) but for the love of it. I feel like our industry doesn't make the headlines enough and it's often (as COVID has shown) the first to take it's lumps and the last to reap the rewards. We need to change that. The industry employs hundreds of thousands of women and men across this country. We are a huge industry and we need a bigger voice so we can continue to attract talent to it, and continue to grow the industry.

IK: Food costs, food costs, food costs! When this changes, we can create more accessible pricing for all, both as a restaurant owner and from a consumer perspective.


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