MENU

CANADA'S FOODSERVICE MAGAZINE

INSIDE:

The Canadian Spirits Report



RE SURVIVAL

GETTING FROM SURVIVAL TO REVIVAL

Restaurants Canada President & CEO Todd Barclay on the work to be done

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Restaurants Canada

The voice of foodservice | La voix des services alimentaires

Here we are - eighteen months into a pandemic, the end of which cannot yet be accurately forecasted. Our battles against the pandemic were interrupted by an election that no one needed - one that produced a federal government not unlike the previous one. So we remain locked in battles for survival with all levels of government in all areas of the country - battles we must win for the survival of the industry.

The next six months do not look encouraging. Just as many restaurants were beginning to gain traction with successful patio businesses, the approaching fall and winter weather will likely put an end to those advances. Our *2021 Foodservice Facts Preview* presented by our Senior Economist, Chris Elliott, shows that almost 10 per cent of our guests won't return to indoor dining at quick-service restaurants or table-service restaurants until sometime in 2022. This portion of our customer base continues to believe, or accept, the unsupported propaganda of both levels of government, to the effect that restaurants and bars continue to be unsafe places.

Fortunately, many of our former customers continue to support their local restaurants as best they can, although still reluctant to dine in. They even help us more by driving through, or picking up their orders, rather than availing themselves of the various delivery services available. This is good news because the costs of those delivery services cut deeply into profit margins. But the sad fact remains that indoor traffic is being negatively impacted by the vaccination passport/proof of vaccination. For many of our struggling members, takeout and delivery are not enough to offset the drop off in indoor dining. Clearly, we must continue to press the governments, particularly the federal government, to continue and even extend most of the support programs now slated to be wound down either in late fall or early spring.

The somewhat good news here is that most of the federal government representatives that we have been dealing with have been re-elected, so we will not have to "re-educate" them. On the other hand, they have not so far acceded to our demands and now they no longer require our support at the ballot box. We must come up with a new strategy and a new approach to persuade or put pressure on them. I am confident that our hard-working staff and tenacious government affairs specialists will dedicate the necessary energies and resources to win this critical battle.

I am also confident that many of the members of our Board of Directors can, and will, join this battle on their own in their home ridings across the country. Before everything stopped for the election, our government relations team was working with representatives of the Federal Government to develop a "restaurant revival" program. It should be relatively easy to 'revive this revival' and launch the program, along with pressure to continue the various subsidies as long as they are needed.

Following on the theme of "revival", or return to normal, I am excited to be able to report that we will be hosting the RC Show in person, from February 27 to March 1, 2022. You can learn more about this event and what we are doing to keep you safe in this edition of our magazine, MENU. I hope that as many of you members as possible can join us at the show, virtually, or in person.

Furthermore, in this edition, we encourage you to explore the data in our "2021 Canadian Spirits Report". This report provides an in-depth examination of the spirits sector of the industry through research provided by our partners at CGA. Also, well-known Canadian chef, Suzanne Barr, is the guest contributor in this issue; her piece is, as usual, well worth the read. And, finally, you can hear from Restaurants Canada's President and CEO, Todd Barclay, as he describes the state of the industry today.

I am sure that each one of you will find this material interesting, informative and entertaining. I thank you for your continued support.



Cindy Simpson

Cindy Simpson
Chair, Board of Directors

Fall 2021
Volume 6 Number 4

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.

6.4

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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In Memoriam: Remembering Kevin Gallagher

Toronto's hospitality community is in mourning the recent passing of Henry Kevin Gallagher, co-owner and partner at Mildred's Temple Kitchen with his wife, Donna Dooher.

Kevin was a 40-year veteran of the industry whose culinary career began in London in the mid seventies. After spending time in both France and Italy, he returned home to take on a position as a waiter with the Hayloft Restaurants in Ottawa. In 1987 he went to work with Donna, and they opened Mildred Pierce in 1989. Together, they operated Mildred Pierce for eighteen years, closing in 2007. In October 2008, they opened Mildred's Temple Kitchen, which has remained an icon in the city ever since. He will be remembered as an active member of his community who mentored those who worked alongside him with patience, kindness and often a quick wit.

Gallagher is survived by his wife Donna Dooher, and their children Maeve and Rory.

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SPEAKING UP FOR CHANGE:

BY CHEF SUZANNE BARR

Social Advocacy in the Restaurant Industry

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

For centuries, food has been an incredible way of uniting people. In our houses, the kitchen is often viewed as the heart of the home—the place where we gather around the table to eat and connect with our families after a long day. When we dine out at restaurants, we're able to savour a meal in the company of loved ones and celebrate life's precious moments. Restaurants are veterans of serving their communities and, as restaurateurs, we're in the business of building relationships through food.

When the COVID-19 pandemic turned the world turned upside down in 2020, the ripple effects on the hospitality industry looked and felt more like violent whitecaps in the ocean.

Many chefs, myself included, were forced to make difficult decisions about our way of life. Sadly, my Toronto-based restaurant, True True Diner, closed its doors in 2020. At its very core, True True Diner embodied a sense of community and the type of change I hope our industry fully embraces one day. It honoured the role of the diner at the heart of civil rights movements in

> “TRUST THE JOURNEY YOU’RE ON. IF WHAT YOU’RE DOING PUTS A SMILE ON YOUR FACE, YOU KNOW YOU’RE DOING THE RIGHT THING.

Canada and the U.S. It was a place where culinary students and chefs from all walks of life could be mentored and learn from more experienced professionals. It celebrated front- and back-of-house staff with compensation above minimum wage and equal tipping. It was a place where the BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities felt like they belonged. While the memories of True True Diner still tug at my heartstrings, its unexpected closure led me down a different path.

In the middle of the pandemic, I packed up my family and accepted a new job in my hometown, Miami. I have fond memories of this incredible city because my family emigrated from Jamaica in the 1980s, so it felt like a homecoming in many ways. Being back in Miami as an adult has been nostalgic. I’m witnessing how things have transformed over the past few decades, and I’m able to share it with my partner and son. Here, I’ve been immersed in an exciting new restaurant project. Although I couldn’t have predicted this path for myself, I truly believe that everything happens for a reason and I’m grateful to be on this journey.

The pandemic forced us to slow down and take it all in. While there has been no shortage of challenges over the past 18 months. It’s been a monstrous period of self-reflection, especially when it comes to social advocacy. We know that, fundamentally, the hospitality industry is rooted in archaic thinking when it comes to labour laws, wages and gender equity, diversity and inclusion, and more. This difficult period has urged our industry to place a greater emphasis on social advocacy efforts so that change can happen, one step at a time.

I’ve used this time to learn how I can do better every day. After all, learning is a life-long journey. As I embark on opening a new restaurant, investing in our future team and challenging systemic imbalances will continue to be a priority so we can continue to evoke change. I’m a strong advocate for people of colour, mental wellness, equal pay for equal work, LGBTQ+ communities, nutrition literacy and food source sustainability. Some of the questions that have been on my mind include: What does it mean to introduce health benefits and offer childcare support? How can we champion mental health within the industry? How can we offer English-as-a-Second Language classes for newcomers who are fresh out of culinary school? Most importantly, how can we create a space that nurtures our team so they can feel their best at work? Addressing these issues can start to dissolve archaic ways of thinking and lead to greater outcomes in the long run.

Now, more than ever, it’s important to highlight individuals who are putting in the work and using their voices to fight for change. I admire many people within the hospitality industry who are advocating for more inclusive, equitable spaces. People such as Ashtin Berry, a change maker with a mission to reinvent the hospitality industry through her collective, Radical Xchange, and Michael W. Twitty, a culinary historian and educator. To say they’re inspirational is an understatement.

At the end of the day, we all have a role to play in social advocacy. When others ask me what they can do, I say: start small in your direct actions. For example, when you purchase food, are you giving opportunities to BIPOC community businesses instead of large corporations? Are you creating a tipping system or abolishing it completely? People often think that advocacy has to be on a large scale, but it starts with you, your thoughts, and your actions.

I want to thank Restaurants Canada for honouring me as the recipient of the Social Advocacy Award at the 2021 Restaurants Canada Show. It’s always wonderful to be recognized for our work, and it affirms that the value of our voices cannot be underestimated.

With all the ups and downs over the past while, if there’s one piece of advice I can provide, it’s: Trust the journey you’re on. If what you’re doing puts a smile on your face, you know you’re doing the right thing.

UPCOMING PROJECTS

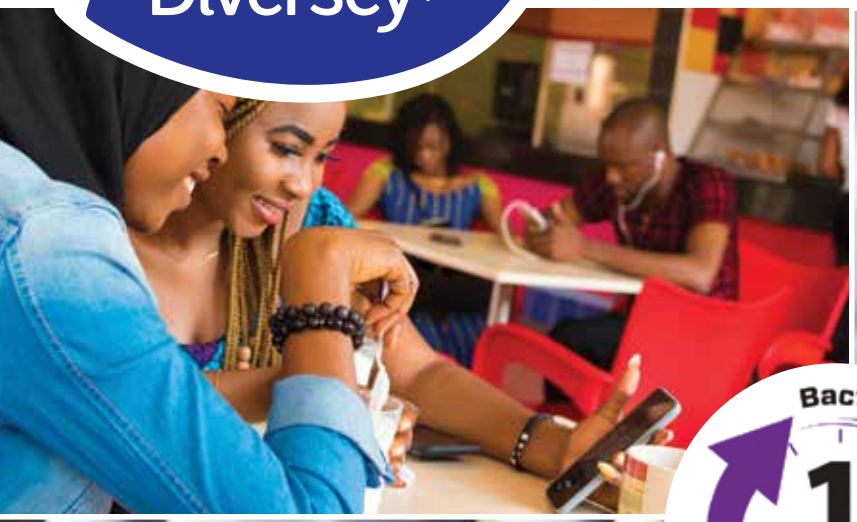
To say there are some exciting projects on the horizon for Chef Suzanne Barr is an understatement.

In April 2022, her book, ***My Ackee Tree: A Chef’s Memoir of Family, Food and Discovery*** is set to hit the shelves. It highlights her journey of becoming a chef, finding love, restaurant openings and closings, being a woman of colour in the industry and how Caribbean cuisine has influenced her life.

Barr is also launching several prepared foods, including a chip brand, a line of sauces and marinades named after her mother, and a frozen product line of classic southern diner food, appropriately named The Dinette.

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GETTING FROM SURVIVAL TO REVIVAL

OPEN LETTER FROM RESTAURANTS CANADA PRESIDENT & CEO TODD BARCLAY



The fight for restaurant survival has been an ongoing process since my appointment as President and CEO of Restaurants Canada just over one year ago. And, as I reflect while writing this, I think about how the COVID-19 pandemic decimated our sector. At least ten thousand establishments have closed their doors due to the pandemic and its aftermath. That means lost jobs, lost incomes and lost livelihoods.

Since the onset of the pandemic, Restaurants Canada has been at the table advocating on behalf of the industry to get the support it deserves. We have consistently voiced that restaurants should not be forced to close their doors without the necessary data to support the claims. We have continued to bring attention and awareness about the issues facing businesses in our industry on an ongoing basis. Your support in continuing to raise our collective voice as an industry and share these messages through grassroots efforts like our #RestaurantsAreFamily campaign makes a difference.

Now, following the recent election, many of you have questions about what this means for the restaurant industry and the work that Restaurants Canada will be doing on your behalf. Let me assure you that our advocacy will continue.

The minority status of the re-elected Liberal government will present some challenges as well as opportunities as our hardest-hit industry continues to pull through and recover from the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. With the same party in power, the federal government should be able to get back to work after a minimal transition period (which should be at the time of publication). This means work that was previously underway on issues of importance to the foodservice sector can resume without significant delays.

However, given their minority status, the Liberals will need the support of other parties to advance their agenda. Alliances might need to be sought before progress can be made on certain issues.

Letters were sent shortly after the election to the leader of each federal party highlighting the importance and significance our sector plays in the overall Canadian economy:

- $95 billion industry prior to the pandemic
- Directly employing 1.2 million people
- Canada's fourth-largest source of private sector jobs

With most foodservice businesses still struggling to survive in the wake of COVID-19, we continue to focus on advocating for government action in the following areas:

- Restaurant Survival Support
- Restaurant Relaunch Measures
- Labour Development
- A "Do No Harm" Approach to Taxes, Fees & Red Tape

The reopening of restaurant doors has required many things, but perhaps most importantly, restaurants need policies that facilitate business continuity so they can make plans as they continue to navigate the road from survival. There is an opportunity to work together with the re-elected government to ensure that restaurants can continue doing what they do best — delivering great food and experiences while making a positive impact on their communities.

While definitive data has yet to be released from Statistics Canada on all permanent foodservice business closures in the wake of this crisis to date, we estimate that at least 10% of Canadian foodservice operations (roughly 10,000 establishments) permanently shut down following the initial lockdowns in 2020 — this estimate is based on Restaurants Canada survey data and information shared with us from industry suppliers.

We have recently begun working with Unified Data Labs Inc. to help us collect additional data on restaurant closures and gather further foodservice industry insights. Based on data they have been collecting for us since December 2020, we estimate that at least another 2,000 foodservice business locations have permanently closed between December 2020 and August 2021 due to the ongoing public health and economic crisis created by COVID-19.



The total number of restaurant closures to date would certainly have been much higher it weren't for all levels of government stepping up to support small businesses over the course of the pandemic, especially with programs and policies aimed at our hardest-hit sector, and the federal rent and wage subsidies in particular.

After sharing our recommendations during the election campaign period, we were encouraged to see platform commitments from all the main federal parties responding to a number of our key asks. Restaurants Canada will be working to ensure that all the policy pledges they put forward to help our hardest-hit sector will remain on the table for the newly re-elected government and continue to urge the federal government to extend both the rent and wage subsidies through to April 2022, as most of our members have told us they will likely take that long — or longer — to return to their pre-pandemic level of operations.

The COVID-19 crisis is not over. Restaurants are still facing incredible pressures and many continue to close their doors. The impact is being felt by all Canadians as we lose more local jobs and iconic establishments.

While commercial foodservice sales rose to nearly $6 billion in early summer, thanks to warm weather enticing guests to enjoy patio season across the country, restaurant traffic is likely to dampen now that the summer months are behind us. And, the fourth wave of the pandemic is hitting some parts of Canada particularly hard. Combined with the closure of patios in the fall, we will likely see a moderation in foodservice sales over the remainder of 2021.

According to the latest data from our quarterly Restaurant Outlook Survey (our most recent survey for Q2 2021 was conducted in July):

- 8 out of 10 foodservice businesses have been losing money or barely scraping by throughout the entire pandemic, and have taken on debt due to the ongoing crisis.
- At least a quarter of restaurant operators struggling with debt from the pandemic say their business will not be able to recover unless current conditions change.

Our hard-hit restaurants continue to count on government support and we will continue to urge decision-makers at all levels of government to support Canada's restaurant industry and its employees so they can keep contributing to jobs, economic growth and vibrant neighbourhoods across the country.

I am proud of the work our industry has done in coming together to advocate for stronger support. Restaurant owners, operators and staff are real people with real stories who deeply care about their families and the communities they serve. Their livelihoods depend on continued advocacy and support to ensure that government policies do not harm them during this difficult time. There's strength in numbers—let's continue to work together to raise our voice and have our industry heard.

Pandemic **Profiles**

Hit hard and fast by the sudden closure of businesses in March 2020, the restaurant industry has since weathered unprecedented waves of openings and closings, of changing guidelines and of new and costly protocols that have made even the most dedicated restauranteurs weary. We spoke to six operators from across the country who told us their stories of adapting, evolving and surviving. Their beliefs are steadfast. They are part of their communities. They love what they do and the people who work with them. They love being part of their communities. And, for as long as they can, they are here to stay.

It's clear that what the industry needs in the wake of COVID-19 protocols and guidelines, a staffing shortage and rising cost of food is support. Restaurants Canada will continue to lobby and work with the federal and provincial governments to try to find ways to ease the burden of COVID-19. We will continue to work for what's fair and what's best for our industry.

Pandemic Profile #1: Robusta Café and Lounge



Robusta Café and Lounge in Guelph, Ontario opened in 2016 and was purchased by husband-and-wife team Danielle and Wessel Davidson in early 2020, relaunching in March 2020—right before the pandemic. Working in Guelph for the last six years, Danielle and Wessel wanted to provide a gathering place for the lively community. "We were attracted to Robusta because it's exactly the kind of spot I've dreamed of owning – café and bar hybrid with great charcuterie boards and a focus on local products," says Danielle. Located in the downtown core, the neighbourhood café prioritizes local by leveraging fresh ingredients from the surrounding area to create dishes for guests in a comfortable and welcoming environment.

Opening right before the pandemic created an unstable present and uncertain future for the café. Since the beginning of 2020, Robusta has had indoor dining closed for roughly half the time and has only been able to offer outdoor dining for 50 days.

While they were able to rely on takeout, the constantly changing guidelines and having to reopen or shut down at a second's notice have been difficult to deal with—professionally and personally. "That was our strategy for the second and third lockdowns as well," says Danielle. "We gave ourselves a day to be upset and react to the orders and then got back to work!"

Robusta was lucky to take advantage of government programs like the rent and wage subsidies, Ontario small business grant and local grants, but Danielle points out that, "We do not qualify for CEBA because as a new business, we do not have 2019 or 2018 tax returns. We were also not able to receive the full amount for the Ontario small business grant because they required us to file as a new business instead of allowing us to use the numbers from April 2019 under the previous owners."

Despite some positives, the team admits that they are nervous for what the future holds for them as the federal government's rent and wage subsidies end later this fall. Danielle explains, "These subsidies have kept my doors open and my staff employed. Without them I would be closed already. The pandemic is not over, and the subsidies should not be either. The rent and wage subsidies should be extended to April 2022. These programs are already designed to phase out businesses that reach pre-pandemic levels so we will slowly stop qualifying as our businesses recover."

Danielle continues, "The Ontario small business support grant is not sufficient for what we have been put through. They covered roughly two weeks of expenses and revenue losses for us while we were locked down for 16 weeks."

Danielle details how the support restaurants see from the government and consumers goes back into the community, benefitting the neighbourhood and creating a healthier local economy. "The money we earn goes straight back into the economy. We keep very little, if any, of our revenue for ourselves. We purchase supplies and inventory from approximately 30 local suppliers including farmers, breweries, wineries and specialty shops."

Not only are restaurants essential for the growth of the economy, but the well-being of those who depend on them to safely share a meal with loved ones. "Our patio has become a place for people to gather who haven't seen each other in over a year," says Danielle. "We've seen joyful tears and long hugs as friends and family reunite. That is what restaurants are all about: gathering and sharing a meal."

Pandemic Profile #2: Silver Heights Restaurant & Lounge



Known for having the "Best BBQ ribs in Winnipeg," Silver Heights Restaurant & Lounge was established in 1956 by Tony Siwicki Sr. and since then has become a local institution. Often referred to as the 'Cheers of Winnipeg,' the Siwicki family has owned and operated the family business that is Winnipeg's longest-running family restaurant.

The impact on such an established community watering hole has been devastating. "When the pandemic began, we had no idea what was in store for our industry, never mind our family business," says Tony. "We shut the doors, canceled most of the subscriptions, filled all our staff's fridges and freezers with our produce and meat and condiments—not knowing what the future would be for them or if we would be able to offer takeout."

As the world settled into the new reality of COVID-19, so did the Silver Heights team. "We needed a long-term solution; we couldn't survive without customers," explains Tony. "To pivot, we cut the menus down, shortened our hours, upgraded our takeout containers, and drastically altered our way of doing business as we knew it."

Silver Heights' indoor dining was closed for 234 days, though thankfully they were able to depend on outdoor dining for 230 days, and of course, delivery. "We slowly hired some of the kitchen staff back to prep, clean and cook, etc.," says Tony. "We were able to give our front staff each a couple of days a week as hosts, bag packers, order takers and drivers for our newly adapted delivery system."

Silver Heights has only been able to hire back 18 of the previous 41 staff they once employed. "We cannot hire all of our staff due to limited capacity," clarifies Tony. Even if Siwicki was able to bring back all his employees, he's doubtful he would even be able to, citing several labour shortage challenges he's seen and experienced. "With the continuous opening and closing, some staff cannot rely on restaurants for stable employment and have moved industries altogether."

Fortunately, the Silver Heights team was able to take advantage of a few government programs that helped to keep the operation afloat. "We were able to leverage CEBA, Bridge Grants, Delivery Recovery from MRFA. CEWS provided the most benefit for us," says Tony.

The scaling back of these programs that have been so critical to the business is concerning. "They need to continue this support into 2022. We're one of the only industries that have worked so tirelessly to ensure that our staff, family and customers are protected and safe—at our own expense, out of our own pocket," says Tony.

He would appreciate seeing PPE subsidies for the foodservice industry. "We need funding to all who have invested in PPE including dividers, air purifiers and moving of furniture and fixtures, etc." Additionally, he believes that the government needs to do all that it can to get the public back in restaurant seats. He says he would like to see "marketing from the province to encourage a return to dine-in and help for restaurants with marketing subsidies."

Tony ends by highlighting how supporting restaurants means supporting the community. "We are a local restaurant, and we support local businesses. The protein, produce, dry goods, takeout containers, our mechanics, plumbers, electricians, cleaners, and even our linens, are all sourced locally. Our touch expands beyond the confines of our wall. If we are affected, the neighbourhood is affected."

Pandemic Profile #3: Tomasso's Italian Grille



Tomasso's Italian Grille is an upscale-casual, family-owned and operated restaurant located on the banks of the famous Trent River in the heart of downtown Trenton, Ontario. Since 1999, Tomasso's has been a meeting place for local residents and a destination for people visiting the Bay of Quinte region. Tomasso's also has a takeout and delivery division—Jim's Pizzeria was founded in 1970 and is a Trenton institution.

Built across four properties for multi-level seating with soaring ceilings, touches of wood and steel and a waterfront patio, the setting is a perfect combination of contemporary urban style and rustic Mediterranean comfort. The Italian influenced menu showcases traditional classics with a modern flair.

Due to COVID-19, indoor dining was closed for nearly a year at Tomasso's. "We were able to open for a little less than three months for outdoor service," says Andrew Kotsovos, partner at Tomasso's.

For the team at Tomasso's, the closure, while incredibly difficult, was worthwhile to ensure that their employees and customers were safe. "Our family is proud of the level of responsiveness our restaurant undertook and continues to take because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The health and safety of our staff, and everyone we serve, is the primary driver for the changes we have implemented, like contactless delivery. We strive to be a leader by exceeding Ontario's new guidelines for restaurants," states Kotsovos.

However, if there is any silver lining, Kotsovos believes it's that it forced them to refocus on their roots—the take-out and delivery divisions of their restaurant. Additionally, Tomasso's saw incredible support from the community. "We largely communicate with our customers through social media. Being in a small community, word of mouth travels fast and we are thankful for all of our local support," Andrew explains.

Thankfully, Tomasso's was also able to take advantage of government support to stay afloat. "We are very appreciative of the government support and used the following programs: CEBA, CECRA, CEWS and the Ontario Small Business Grant," says Kotsovos. "The combination of programs allowed us to keep team members employed and our dining room operating when we have been allowed to open."

In fact, with patio dining reopened, Tomasso's was able to bring back almost all of their 60 staff members. Nevertheless, the scaling back of the government support programs creates an uncertain future. "These programs are essential for restaurants to continue to survive until we truly come out the other side of this pandemic," Kotsovos says. He continues,

"I think it is essential for our industry that all levels of government continue to work closely with Restaurants Canada to implement the recommendations the organization brings to the table."

Kotsovos emphasizes the importance of keeping the foodservice industry alive in Canada by explaining the far-reaching effects of food-service on the economy: “This is a quote from a Restaurants Canada article that I read and feel it says it best. Most Canadians don’t realize that at least 95 cents of every dollar we spend at a restaurant usually goes directly back into our communities. That’s because even during the best of times, a typical Canadian restaurant has a pre-tax profit margin of less than 5 per cent.”

"No other sector keeps so little in profit and returns so much to our economy. Ninety-five per cent of all restaurant revenue typically goes toward local jobs, purchases from Canadian farmers, food and beverage producers and other foodservice industry suppliers, contributions to charity and more.”

Pandemic Profile #4: Sydney Street Pub



Saskia Geerts came to Canada from the Netherlands as a backpacker in 2004. On a tour of Quebec and Ontario, she met Claude Perreault, her tour guide. Eighteen short months later, the tour guide and the tourist married, and in 2007, moved to Digby, Nova Scotia.

In 2015 they began the process of restoring and renovating a historic building to create a local watering hole. “The property was built in 1903 as a church,” says Geerts. “We restored things slowly while modernizing and adding a full commercial kitchen.”

After two and a half years of work, the Sydney Street Pub was ready to open. “We believe in adding to our community, building value and supporting local by hiring local musicians, using locally-sourced food and ingredients, and offering a space where people can come together,” explains Geerts.

Like many businesses, in March 2020, the Sydney Street Pub shut down. With food insecurity becoming an even larger issue during the pandemic, Geerts volunteered by delivering meals to those who couldn’t leave their homes. She developed a deeper understanding of the need facing her community.

Geerts started a community fridge on the porch of the restaurant providing free or pay-what-you-can meals. The donation box collected roughly $10 a meal, paying for the cost of ingredients and labour. Geerts explains, “At the peak, we were preparing 80 to 100 meals a week. I was on site every day to restock the fridge.”

Sydney Street Pub eventually reopened, with a few adjustments. “We reduced our menu and shifted to a blackboard feature to add some variety,” Geerts elaborates, “We also shifted to a small core staff and reduced our hours.”

Geerts also points out the difficulties of operating during a pandemic in a smaller market. “During the last lockdown, we closed as takeout wasn’t worth it. We tried adding delivery, but it’s not really viable in a small town with no third-party providers. Doing $150 in takeout on a Friday night doesn’t cover staffing and food costs.”

Fortunately, Sydney Street Pub was able to take advantage of government programs. “The wage and rent subsidy programs made the biggest impact on us being able to operate and keep people employed while working at half capacity and with the restrictions. Without these programs, we would not exist today,” she explains.

While these programs have been a lifeline, they are still facing many challenges. “I have now fallen behind further, with more debt,” Geerts explains. “As long as we don’t have tourists coming through and we don’t have our usual seating capacity, I’m not sure how I’m supposed to keep afloat.”

Geerts goes into further detail, “Expenses are higher too. My insurance has increased, my food costs have gone up drastically, my staffing hours have increased due to all the extra measures taken like cleaning, sanitizing, keeping track of customer contacts, to name a few things, and my business is still at half capacity. It feels like getting dropped and left behind 50 yards before the finish line.”

“We are not out of the woods once this pandemic is over,” says Geerts. “Businesses have added significant debt loads that will add a significant burden in the years to come.”

The importance of keeping local restaurants open cannot be understated. “We offer a place for the community to get together, for people to meet, a place to relax and enjoy good company,” says Geerts. “We add a liveliness to downtown. We support our community by buying our meats locally, our vegetables from nearby farmers, our fish from neighbourhood suppliers and even hire local talent. Communities need spaces to get together.”

Pandemic Profile #5: Bluebird Café and Grill



In 2019, husband and wife duo Michelle and Rick Arsenault, longtime hospitality professionals, purchased The Bluebird Café and Grill in Orangeville, Ontario largely because of the sentimental value it held. Michelle and Rick moved to Orangeville in 2006 and the establish-ment had been the couple’s favourite spot. Taking ownership of Bluebird allowed them to continue its standing traditions while bringing it to a new level.

During the lockdown of March 2020, they shut down for three weeks before they were even mandated to. “Everything at that point was so unknown and we wanted to do our part,” explains Michelle. “When we realized this crisis wasn’t going away any time soon, we opened back up for takeout with limited staff, and reduced hours and menu.”

In a time when many operators are facing labour shortages, the team at Bluebird was able to circumvent the issue by keeping on as much staff as they could. “We didn’t need all of our staff but we didn’t want them to have financial strain if we could avoid it. We also wanted to keep them employed so they didn’t have to look for

employment and we would have them when we reopened," explains Michelle.

With steady staffing levels taking care of the Bluebird, Michelle and Rick focused on the café's operations. "We spent time implementing online ordering, redoing our website, upgrading our POS systems, changing our gift card and business cards," says Michelle. "We also took the time to create takeout 'experiences'," says Michelle. "Many of us hit a pandemic wall during lockdown and we were bored. We did at-home paint nights, virtual wine tastings, and a virtual dinner theatre with the Orangeville theatre."

Michelle and Rick also made sure their team was focused on delivering an excellent, personalized customer experience. "Though we couldn't connect directly with customers, we trained our takeout team to create 'in-house hospitality'," describes Michelle. "We started writing personalized notes on every bag, we offered curbside service, we started walking guests to their vehicles. We had to ensure a competitive advantage and keep our 'takeout game' above everyone else because everyone else was now doing takeout!"

Michelle and Rick looked to social media to reach customers. "We changed the focus of our social media and also joined TikTok," says Michelle. "Being in hospitality, we are always on stage and entertaining our guests. This was our only way of connecting. It has really grown much bigger than we imagined. Check us out on TikTok - @bluebirdcafeandgrill."

To stay afloat, Bluebird took advantage of several government programs including wage subsidies, PPE grants, digital marketing grants, HASCAP loan, energy rebate grants and CEBA.

"As long as we can stay open, we'll be ok," admits Michelle. "It would be nice to get a little more time to recoup some income before they reduce grants." Michelle also points out the government support on tourism promotions, and ongoing development of programs to assist with hiring and more consistent restrictions would go a long way for the survival of their business.

"The Bluebird has been a staple in the Orangeville community for so long and means so much to us on a personal level," says Michelle. "We always try to give back and support local whenever possible. We have such a loyal following and it is important for us to get through this for everyone who supports us. We made a vow to our team, to our community and to each other that we would come out of this pandemic stronger than when we went in."

Pandemic Profile #6: Black Sheep Restaurant Group



The Black Sheep Restaurant Group was founded by owner Brad Fileul in 2013. Their three concepts: Cantina Del Centro, Yum Son and Broken Hill are located in Nelson and Kelowna, British Columbia.

In March 2020, Black Sheep made the difficult decision to shut down all operations for two months. They gradually re-opened in May and June 2020 with a roll out of takeout options, family style menus and delivery options. "We also re-engineered and streamlined menus to minimize costs and streamline operations," explains Executive Chef for Cantina Del Centro, Yum Son, Broken Hill, Simon Vine.

Chef Vine estimates that indoor dining was shut down for the restaurant group for over 100 days and during this time, they were only able to offer outdoor dining for roughly 50 days. He indicates that the restaurant group was able to survive in part due to government programs like the rent and wage subsidies, BC Recovery Grant and the Circuit Breaker Business Relief Grant.

In response to the ongoing advocacy efforts of Restaurants Canada, the federal government announced the extension of the eligibility period for the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy, the Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy and Lockdown Support until Oct. 23, 2021. Chef Vine points out the importance of this announcement saying that, "I have spoken with other colleagues and friends in the industry whose businesses will not survive without the continued support from the federal and provincial governments."

Going forward, Chef Vine highlights how challenges with the labour shortage will need to be addressed by the government. "I would like to see more programs and initiatives to address the labour shortages in our industry," states Chef Simon.

Luckily, the Black Sheep group was able to bring back the majority of their staff. They're currently employing roughly 120 staff across all concepts. Although Chef Vine says that, "some didn't return if they had already found other employment opportunities and some employees left the industry altogether." He wants to emphasize the difficulty of finding new staff due to the labour shortage, and the fact that many people are unwilling to return, too nervous to return, or are generally apprehensive due to the uncertainty caused by COVID-19.

Things seemed to have evened out for the time being in British Columbia, and Black Sheep is taking advantage of this. "We are mostly back to business as usual, although we continually have to adapt to rapidly changing conditions regarding COVID-19. We continue to inform our customers through marketing and social media channels of any changes in policies or practices as related to COVID-19" says Chef Simon.

Many of the changes made during the height of the pandemic still remain. The team continues to leverage QR codes in place of paper or plastic menus, they continue to offer delivery, and still ensure that both employees and guests are aware of and practicing proper health and sanitation policies.

With brighter days on the horizon, for Chef Vine the pandemic only reinforces how important restaurants are to our communities. "Restaurants are one of the foundational elements of culture in the places we live," he points out. "They provide employment and business opportunities for local residents and small businesses, gathering places for the public, community events, charity sponsorships, and memorable experiences for our patrons and staff."



We'll Keep the Pace

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Gordon® FOOD SERVICE

Restaurants Canada is proud to share this special section presented by Transparent Kitchen in support of the real people and real stories behind it.

THE LAST : SERVICE

The last sip of wine, the last bite of a shared dessert, the last chit printed in the back. The restaurant business has always been physically and mentally demanding, but now it feels as if each day could be the last. The current climate brings new tolls, but many issues plaguing restaurants have been kept under wraps for a long time. By creating scenes that depict the day-to-day struggles, we are able to glimpse the challenges — and gain new respect for what it takes to be a chef and support them before it's truly their last service.

Written by **Zachary Resnick** | Photos by **Sarah Farmer**

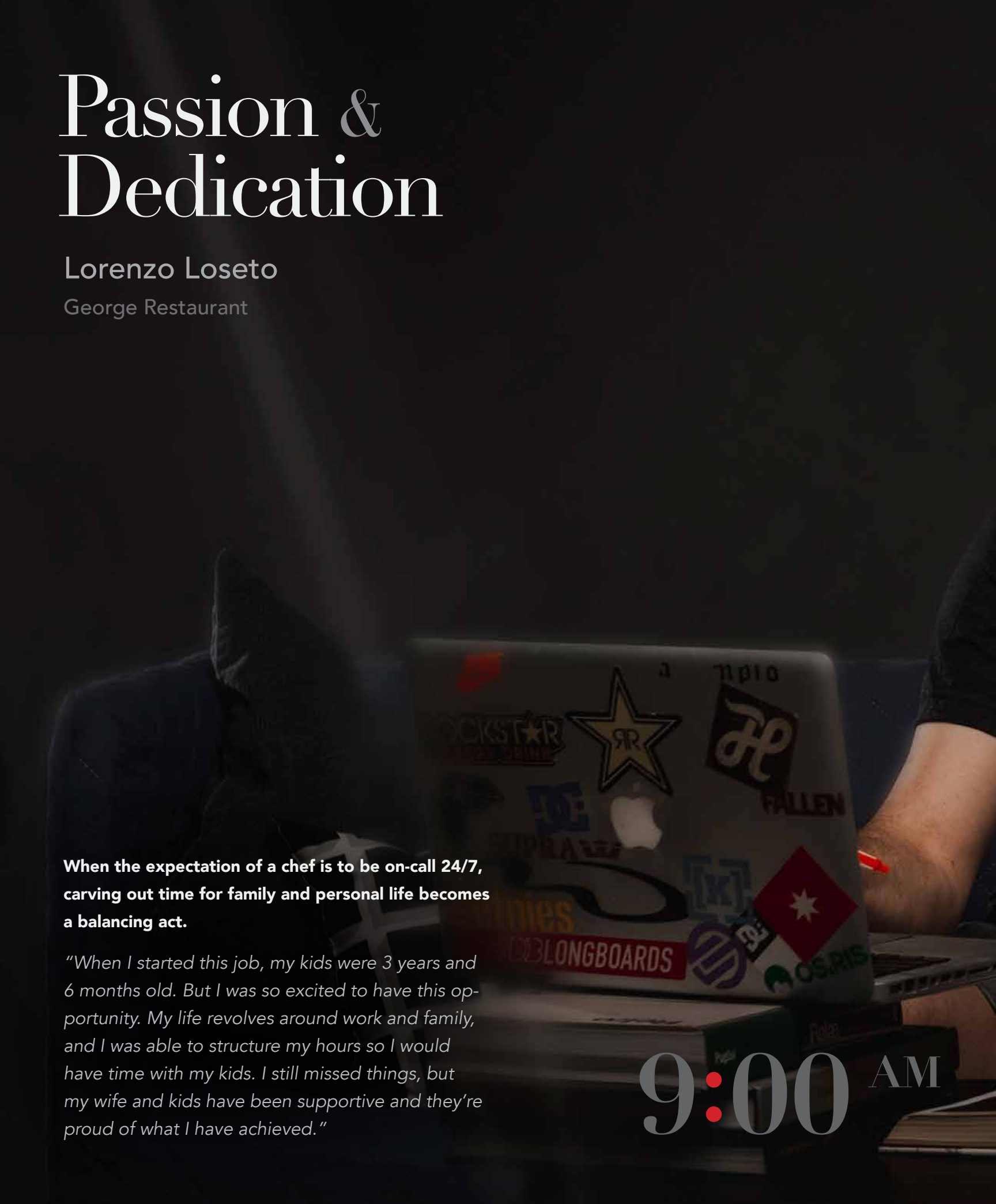
Presented by

TransparentKitchen

Passion & Dedication

Lorenzo Loseto

George Restaurant



When the expectation of a chef is to be on-call 24/7, carving out time for family and personal life becomes a balancing act.

"When I started this job, my kids were 3 years and 6 months old. But I was so excited to have this opportunity. My life revolves around work and family, and I was able to structure my hours so I would have time with my kids. I still missed things, but my wife and kids have been supportive and they're proud of what I have achieved."

9:00 AM


VEGAS

Sourcing Ingredients

John Morris

360 Restaurant, CN Tower



Is it even more difficult to use primarily local produce in a large, high-volume operation?

"I've heard that argument myself, but I don't agree with it. You just have to take the time and be extra-organized, then everyone reaps the rewards; you, your team and, of course, the guests. Right now, I'd say we're at 80% local fruits and veg. All of our lamb, chicken, and pork is local. I love to feature Ontario lake trout, shrimp, and pickerel on my menus. I think 100% local is entirely possible."

10:00 AM

Restaurant Economics

Donna Dooher

Mildred's Temple Kitchen



Everyone knows that it's hard for restaurants to make money. But why is that the case?

"In a nutshell, here in North America, it's predominately the attitude towards how much we value food and drink monetarily. For example, consumers go to the cheapest price point, while we as purveyors can't buy liquor at cost in Ontario from the LCBO! The cost of maintaining a wine cellar is something that most guests don't really understand. To cellar all these wines, to serve them, the glassware, I assure you we're not marking them up a cent higher than we have to. And that's just one of the many moving parts in restaurant finances."

12:00 PM


MARCH

Cooking in a COVID World

Jerome Robinson

The Heartbreak Chef



Your doors opened just as COVID closed them again. What kind of changes did that force you to make on the fly?

"It was like starting from scratch. We were only open one week before the first lockdown. We had a following because of the caterings we had done, but it was scary to think whether or not people would come for take-out. We hadn't had the chance to establish ourselves yet, but we got lucky. We're in a great neighborhood with lots of support, yet we had to change things around. We needed to switch the kitchen to flow with take-out. We had to expand the front, so people waiting for their orders weren't bunched together. These are things that you never could have planned for in advance."

Raining Chits

Romain Avril



How different is the Canadian consumers relationship with food compared to the French?

"To me, it is night and day, but the food culture in Canada is still young. In France, so much of our economy is based on food tourism; people coming to eat. The French government is very involved and supportive because this inflow benefits all other economies. And yet, somehow dining out in Toronto is more expensive than many places in the world. In France, you get a 4-course tasting menu for 39€, all local product! The culture needs to change, people need to be educated. People will spend $20 to have a burger delivered, but not $18 for a beautiful tuna salad from a nicer restaurant? With government support and education, Canadian cooking could easily be considered world class."

6:00 PM

Is Fine Dining Dead?

Jeff Kang

Après Wine Bar / IKUNE



The restaurant industry has been hit hard by the pandemic. Its future is uncertain. Is the era of fine dining over?

"It's so hard to say right now. Good food will always be good food; the product is still important. The service is what has changed most over the course of this, I think. Fine dining relies heavily on tourism, and that's one thing that is going to be affected for a long while. I think more closures are coming, both new and old restaurants. Socio-economically, it's hardest for fine dining. You've lost easily 20% of your covers, but your other costs are still fixed."

7:30 PM

The Smoking Gun

Chris Locke & Karen Davidson

Cloak Bar & Marben



A fleeting conversation over a cigarette between orders is often the only real time to create bonds.

"While neither of us smoke, we're well aware of the trend: if you don't smoke you don't really get a break otherwise. Smoking is so prevalent in the industry because of this. It comes down to culture: if you're on the clock, you're working. Labour is so finite, there's no time to not be doing something valuable. But there is value in bonding. Our industry is behind compared to leading industries that invest in teamwork and relationships."

9:15 PM

A Recipe for Burnout

Eimear De La Rosa-Brazil
Ascari Hospitality Group



Restaurant staff by nature care for others, so why not themselves?

"I think cooks, especially younger ones, unknowingly devalue themselves by not cooking for themselves and enjoying the process. It can be hard. You get so used to batch cooking, making enough for dozens of people, that you almost forget how to cook for one or two. To add to that, a lot of line cooks suffer from anxiety because of the demanding nature of the work. They don't want to bring that home. So, they don't cook for themselves and they eat garbage. It's beyond me how so many restaurants won't offer a healthy staff meal to their employees who obviously need it."

10:30 PM

Addicted to the Industry

Ariel Coplan & Nick Liu
Distrikt 461 & DaiLo



Substance abuse in the restaurant industry is one of its most pressing issues.

Ariel: "People often use it as the reward for a hard day's work, and a remedy for a bad day. Not everyone who uses substances is challenged with addiction. It's important to start looking at a harm-reduction approach to substance use; we can look at what our employees are consuming and how they consume it. Can they savour a glass of wine or a well-prepared cocktail to get a different sense of satisfaction? We can practice mindful drinking and education around the product we are consuming. Our goal is to limit the binge culture that hides in the shadows of our industry. It's important to remember that stigma can be very dangerous, which is why people suffer in silence."



Does the life of a chef make them prone to addiction?

Nick: "It's a slippery slope. Cooks are prone to having addictive personalities and it starts with work. You can get addicted to the rush of service: the feeling of working harder and longer than anyone else you know. But that lifestyle can also breed loneliness and isolation, which can lead you further down the slope. Then there's the older generation of chefs and the media, glorifying the fringe rock-star lifestyle. The media knows people eat that up. But if you're the one using and partying, you may not know that there's a problem because of how it's normalized. You think it's expected of you. But it's dangerous. I've known people who were on the road to greatness, but they lost themselves."

11:00 PM

86'D

Miriam Echeverria
Dimensions Healing



The day is over; the chef finally heads home. What awaits them in the dead of night?

"My whole energy, my whole focus, is always about being a chef. I focus so much on the aspects of the business I'm passionate about. My partner and I stay involved in each others' projects, so usually before bed - way after the rest of the world is in bed- we have a chat about our days. But if she didn't work in the industry, I don't know how we'd find the time."

1:00 AM


I ♥
LAS VEGAS

The Last Service is dedicated to our colleagues, friends, and families who work in the restaurant industry. Although this has been an exceptionally trying year, The Last Service transcends the issues posed by just the pandemic. In addition to the very real obstacles and challenges illustrated by the chefs in their tableaus, our local economies and communities are under siege.

Restaurants can bring people together. In dining rooms, across crowded bars, and in kitchens. No matter what the restaurant industry becomes, community will always be a part of it. To understand a day in the life of any chef is to appreciate their commitment to you, your friends and your families, sometimes at the expense of their own.

Please be kind and support your local restaurant community before it really is their last service.

ON OUR RADAR: CANADA'S TOP CULINARY TALENTS

Hotel Chefs Edition

BY BRIGITTE FOISY, VP CHEFS CANADA

Canada is full of exceptional culinary talent. We all know the names of those who helped put our country on the gastronomic map. They are the chefs we see on TV and in magazines: Mark McEwan, Alvin Leung, Susur Lee, Normand Laprise, Patrick Kriss, Michael Bonacini, Lynn Crawford, Jamie Kennedy, Alex Chen, Scott Jaeger, David Hawksworth... to name a few in the national limelight. But beyond the headlines, there are chefs in cities big and small that should be on your radar because of their creativity, unique flavour combinations and simply because of the impeccable beauty of their dishes. I could fill this entire issue with some of the names that impressed us at Chefs Canada over the past few years, but here are just a few of our current favourites who should be on your radar.

Chef Keith Pears: You only need to take a peek at his Instagram to see that when it comes to Chef Pears' cooking, you're in for a treat. The Vancouverite was born into a family of chefs and destined to become one of Canada's top culinary talents. He's won every competition from *MasterChef* to *Chopped*, not to mention his latest: gold at Canada's Great Kitchen Party. Chef Pears recently accepted the role of executive chef at the upcoming W Toronto hotel, scheduled to open later this year. We cannot wait to eat there!
IG: @keith_pears

Chef Dan Craig: From the two-Michelin-star Abbaye Saint Ambroix (France) to the Four Seasons Hotel (Sydney) and the Ritz Carlton (Toronto) to his present home at the Westin Harbour Castle, Chef Dan Craig's name is synonymous with passion, creativity and food mastery. Over the years, Chef Craig has worked with two of the world's top 50 restaurants and competed in several international culinary events including the 2016 Bocuse d'Or National competition. Though his training is primarily in French cuisine, he loves including flavours from his travels to create fresh, relevant and innovative dishes. If you ever have the chance to try his homemade pâtés, I have no doubt you'll join me as one of his faithful fans!
IG: @chefdanielcraig

Chef Jason Bangerter: Though he will go down in my history as one of the two chefs that truly made me enjoy carbs, Chef Jason Bangerter is one of the most exquisite chefs in the country. Worth every second of the 75-minute drive from Toronto to Cambridge, Langdon Hall celebrated its 30th anniversary with the number four spot on Canada's 100 Best Restaurants earlier this year. Part of Canada's Relais et châteaux, the spa and country club is the only restaurant in Ontario to be awarded the AAA/CAA Five-Diamond rating. An extraordinary culinary experience, everything in the 116-year-old mansion is exceptional. Chef Bangerter went from one of the city's best restaurants (Auberge du Pommier) to making Langdon Hall even greater with a splurge-worthy menu of extravagant offerings that changes with the seasons. Though he is one of the most influential leaders of the Canadian culinary scene, what I love the most about Chef Bangerter is his passion to give back and mentor the next generation of Canada's culinary scene.
IG: @chefbangerter

Chef Jonathan Gushue: Towering above the falls of the Grand River and Elora Gorge, the Elora Mill Hotel & Spa has been part of the community for over 175 years. Though most come to Elora for the view, the culinary team at the Inn now brings world class dining to this adorable village. The restaurant serves a true farm-to-table Canadian, vegetable-driven menu that draws its inspiration from the bounty of local fare, artisans and from relationships with organic farmers. Formerly at Langdon Hall and Fogo Island Inn, Chef Gushue is poised to follow in the footsteps of his mentor Chef Jason Bangerter and build the restaurant into a serious culinary destination.
IG: @Jonathan_gushue

Chef Eric Gonzalez: Located in the Laurentians, Le Manoir Stone Haven is a destination filled with history and charm but also home to one of Quebec's most noteworthy chefs. Chef Eric Gonzalez (ex Enfants Terribles, Atelier Joël Robuchon, Hotel Saint-James) is undoubtedly one of the noteworthy chefs in the country. A member of the prestigious Maîtres cuisiniers de France, he received his first Michelin star the age of 27. His menu oscillates between classics of French cuisine and dishes focused on freshness. Though some experience seekers head north of Montreal for the breathtaking views, nature trails or the hotel's Italian garden, I recommend heading there for the food.
IG: @chef_ericgonzalez

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 our national culinary teams including Bocuse d'Or Team Canada. She has also been working with some of the world's biggest food and beverage brands for over 25 years.*

The 2021 Canadian Spirits Report

A LOOK AT CHANGE, GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITY FOR CANADIAN OPERATORS.



Great opportunities often follow periods of great change, and spirits show new promise for Canadian operators. As consumers grew increasingly familiar with pandemic innovations from alcohol delivery to cocktail kits, the collective shock to the system has shaken up typical behaviours and exposed a willingness to explore new experiences and products.

In the background, Canadian craft distilling has expanded and matured, offering enhanced opportunities for operators to add a wide variety of local, premium and unique products to their bar menus. In this report, you'll get the latest consumer data from CGA with first-person insights from Canada's craft distillers to help you reimagine your offering and take advantage of emerging consumer trends.

CGA has provided the on-premises sector with the measurement, research & insight that has empowered the growth of the most successful food, drink and hospitality brands for over 30 years.

TOPLINE CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR & RETURNS TO THE ON PREMISES

Since reopening, almost 3 in 5 (57 per cent) of on-premises visitors have been out to eat or drink three or more times, demonstrating a high proportion of repeat visitors, a positive sign for the sector.

Source: *Canada On Premise Pulse Survey – Survey of 1,200 respondents aged 19+ between September 24-29, 2021) for consumers in Ontario, Alberta, British Columbia and Quebec who have visited On Premise venues since reopening*

Although most visits have been food-led (**85 per cent**), **34 per cent** of consumers have been out for a drinking occasion, and drinks are playing a pivotal role. "Drinks with food" is the third-most-common occasion for visitation (**31 per cent**) aside from a catch-up with friends (**43 per cent**). Treats/Reward occasions have also been common, with **a third** carrying out these visits.

Together, these top occasions bode well for the consumption of spirits and cocktails as they play to both the up-tempo visits, as well as elongated low-tempo stays that can involve meals.

Based on CGA's BeverageTrak service, which tracks POS data from outlets across Canada, there has been a shift in sales increases on weekends at the expense of lack of visitation during the weekdays, promoting the potential for further increases for spirits sales through those catch-up with friends and treat occasions.

Comparing 2021 to 2019, total sales in outlets are up on the weekends (+0.9% on both Saturday and Sundays) vs. slight declines on the individual days (Monday-Fridays).

SALES HAVE BEEN A CLEAR SHIFT TO THE WEEKEND

- MONDAY: -0.4%
- TUESDAY: -0.2%
- WEDNESDAY: 0.0%
- THURSDAY: -1.0%
- FRIDAY: -0.1%
- SATURDAY: 0.9%
- SUNDAY: 0.9%

Source: *CGA Spring 2021 On Premise User Survey – Survey of 5,002 On Premise Consumers who typically go out to the On Premise within a three-month period that is nationally representative by age, gender, and province. Fielded in March of 2021.*

DRINK CATEGORY ENGAGEMENT

COCKTAILS POISED FOR CONTINUED GROWTH

21% OF CANADIAN CONSUMERS SAY THEY DRINK COCKTAILS IN BARS AND RESTAURANTS

FEMALES: **27%** MALES: **15%**

AGE 21-34: **34%**

4 IN **10** ON PREMISES VISITORS CONSUME SHOTS ON A WEEKLY BASIS

21 per cent of consumers say they drink cocktails in bars and restaurants, and when looking specifically at the consumers that are engaging with these drinks, we see that it is heavily driven by females (27 per cent vs. males 15 per cent) and 21-34 year olds (34 per cent). What helps drive this consumption is engagement with the later dayparts, as well as Happy Hour, as we see cocktail drinkers heavily over-indexing their visits to the channel for drinks during these timeframes. As outlets are able to stay open later and engage consumers with offerings that support the late-night/drink-forward occasion, this category will continue to grow.

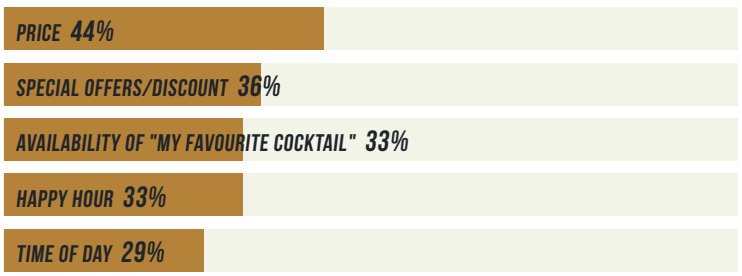
COCKTAIL CONSUMERS VISITING THE ON PREMISES FOR DRINKS BY DAY PART

ANSWERS	*ALL CONSUMERS	CATEGORY DRINKERS: COCKTAILS
Early evening (5pm-8pm)	64%	68%
Late evening (8pm-10pm)	34%	50%
Happy hour	27%	41%
Late night (10pm onwards)	12%	22%

Building on the same conditions, 39 per cent of on premises visitors consume shots on a weekly basis, which should see increased engagement and add another value serve for operators.

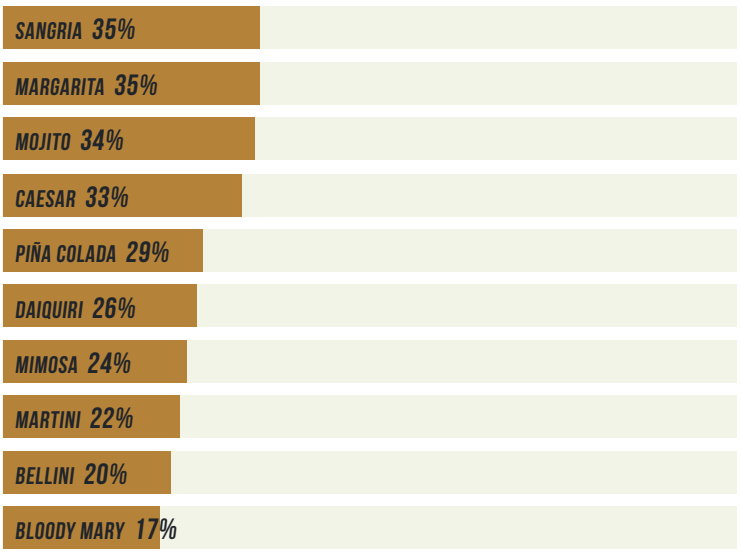
TOP INFLUENCES TO DRINK COCKTAILS WHEN OUT

Cocktail drinkers are heavily influenced by pricing and special offers, typical enticements for Happy Hour visits with the power to influence traffic.



TOP COCKTAILS

Sangria, margaritas and the ever-popular Caesar are all key offerings consumed by cocktail drinkers in the on premises.



FAVOURITE SPIRIT BASES FOR COCKTAILS

Overall, there is a preference for clear spirits bases among consumers, with whisky being a key category for males.

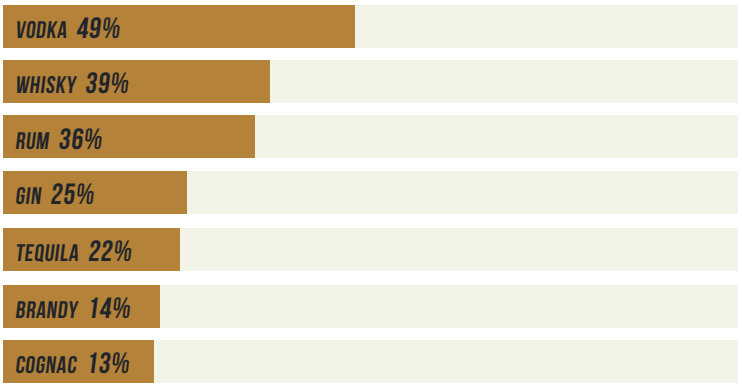
ANSWERS	*ALL CONSUMERS	GENDER: FEMALE	GENDER: MALE
Non-flavoured vodka	35%	38%	29%
Gin	28%	27%	30%
Flavoured vodka	28%	31%	22%
Tequila	26%	26%	25%
Light Rum	24%	26%	21%
Whisky	20%	15%	30%

59 per cent of consumers strongly agree/agree that they are much more likely to try a cocktail if they have heard of the spirit brand(s) included, while only 11 per cent strongly disagree/disagree.

While it's true that consumers have been gravitating towards familiar brands since the return of the channel opening, there is a large group of consumers that can be influenced with unique and different cocktails featuring new or unfamiliar brands. In fact, 64 per cent of consumers state they look at a cocktail menu every time/ almost every time when ordering cocktails, proving there is headroom for influencing behaviour.

SPIRITS CATEGORIES

Looking at category engagement overall, spirits drinkers do show a heightened preference for Vodka, with 49 per cent saying they consume the category when out.

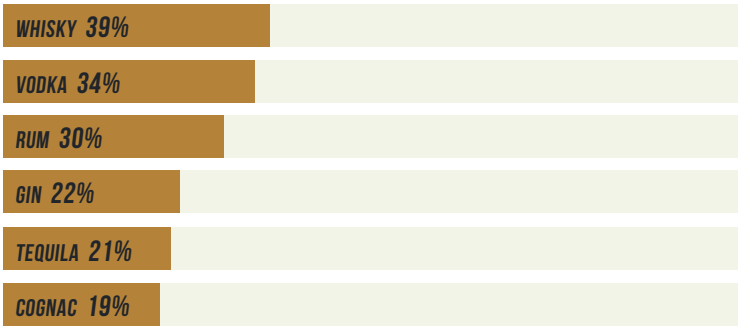


SPIRITS DRINKERS SPEND MORE AND VALUE QUALITY

Spirits drinkers are valuable to on premises business, as they generally spend more per month in the channel ($148.32) vs. the average (+$26.91). Additionally, 39 per cent of spirits drinkers pay more for better quality drinks every time/almost every time when out, which is +14pp vs. the average. Speaking directly to alcohol spend-per-week, spirits drinkers say they spend roughly $50 weekly on drinks, while the average consumer spends $37.

Looking at specific categories where consumers are most likely to pay extra for a better-quality drink, whisky exhibits the highest trade-up behaviour.

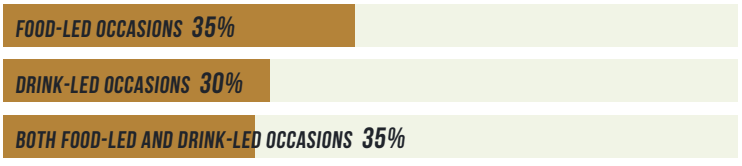
CATEGORY RANKINGS: SPIRITS DRINKERS ARE MOST LIKELY TO PAY EXTRA FOR A BETTER QUALITY DRINK



SPIRITS: DRINKING OCCASIONS

What supports positive messaging for spirits in general is the category's ability to be consumed both through food- and drink-led occasions.

On which occasions did consumers drink spirits?



TAKEOUT/DELIVERY OPPORTUNITIES

Interestingly, 25 per cent of consumers say they have ordered alcohol takeout/delivery, with 50 per cent of those being consumers who typically visit the on premises weekly for drinks.

Takeout/delivery has become another avenue where consumers can interact with their favourite drinks, with 34 per cent of consumers who say they drink spirits in the on premises stating they have specifically ordered a cocktail kit for takeout/delivery.

A third of consumers state they have used alcohol delivery/takeout more frequently since the early stages of the pandemic, and there is balanced usage in how they are ordering – 31 per cent directly from bars/restaurants and 29 per cent via third-party apps.

While table wine (19 per cent) and import, craft and domestic beer prove to be more popular options (17,15, and 15 per cent respectively), the top players within spirits are as follows:



LOCAL CRAFT & COLLABORATION WITH ODD SOCIETY SPIRITS



Housed in a reimagined motorcycle garage, Odd Society is a certified craft distillery and can't-miss experience in East Vancouver's port district. The neighbourhood distillery is well known and beloved locally for the quality of its products and genius for experimentation with unique ingredients. Their growing portfolio of distilled products ranges from whisky, vodka and gin to an alcoholic ginger beer and a killer Crème de Cassis said to be "indistingishable from French imports" but made from local B.C. black currants.

Miriam Karp, general manager, presides over Odd Society's busy tasting room and focuses on servicing their restaurant and retailer accounts across B.C., Alberta and Quebec. "Trends in spirits are increasingly driven by the consumer,

and consumers are passionate about local," she acknowledges. "In B.C., it's long been the case that to have a successful bar or restaurant, you needed to have BC wines and craft beers on your menu. That hadn't included craft distilleries, but that's changing. Right now, a lot of bars are adding more local spirits options in response to consumer demand."

At Odd's Society's tasting bar, it is increasingly common to have new customers of all ages and backgrounds wander in looking for a guided spirits experience, some of them for the first time ever. "I think people are very adventurous," says Karp. "We have people coming in all the time with very little experience, and it's great to see. It's all about the experience – that's nothing new, but it's increasingly important at the bar."

In Karp's view, premiumization is here to stay; however, as bar sales represent a crucial profit centre for operators, the experience and story behind premium craft products is the key to both differentiation and fair margin. "We offer field trips for bar staff and operators to give them that deep dive into our products – how they're made and how to educate their customers in turn. Our whiskiesare becoming very popular with restaurants, particularly our rye whisky, Prospector. Despite it being a premium product, it's growing in demand and popularity."

While already deeply committed to sourcing local ingredients for their products, Odd Society's team has dug a little deeper into the idea of "local", exploring unique collaborations within their neighbourhood. "We're surrounded by at least a dozen breweries of various sizes – many within walking distance – representing an enormous product array," says Karp. "The brewing community here is fabulous and really help each other. Our distiller, Joel McNichol, used to work as a brewer, so when we'd finished with a whisky or gin barrel, we'd offer it to a brewery. Later, we'd offer the brewery's beer that came from that barrel at our tasting bar."

These relationships have blossomed over time, ultimately evolving into limited edition collaborations like Odd Society's Storm Black Plague Stout Rye Whisky crafted with Storm Brewing and P49 Old Boy Single Malt Whisky with Parallel 49. The fruits of new collaborations with local partners are slowly aging to perfection in their barrels, waiting to add to the Odd Society product portfolio and narrative. "Neighbours and communities and businesses need to support each other," Karp emphasises. "We've all learned, I think, that we can't survive on our own."

ONTARIO'S DISTILLING RENAISSANCE



In Ontario, the legendary Hiram Walker distillery in Walkerville is still Canada's largest distiller and makers of Canadian Club Whisky, which has long served as our national whisky ambassador around the world. Canada's rich history of large-scale distilling also includes classic brands like Crown Royal, still distilled in Gimli, Manitoba and, famously, Seagram's, once the pride of Montreal, Quebec.

While large Canadian distillers continue to earn loyal fans at home and abroad, Ontario's distilling industry is growing fast and adding new breadth and texture to the Canadian spirits portfolio. New vodkas, gins and whiskies are emerging at a breathtaking pace, propelled forward by craft.

What defines a distillery as "craft" isn't just the size of the operation. The distinction lies in the independence of the distillery, its production methodology, and its faith in ingredient transparency.

As the province's craft story and brands are still young, origin stories, taste of place and the people behind the bottle are as important as the tasting experience in earning new customers. "It's about our story, where we came from, why we're doing it and where our product came from – it's a massive part of the brand, says Chris Jacks, President of the Ontario Craft Distillers Association. "It's what people really attach themselves to. People find something not only in the product, but the story to identify with and become part of."

Jacks is also owner and operator of Nickel 9 Distillery, located in the heart of Toronto's Junction neighbourhood. Originally a bartender and restaurant consultant, Jacks got into distilling as a personal hobby. Nickel 9's portfolio includes high-quality spirits crafted from local ingredients and botanicals. Now, as leader of the Ontario craft movement, he is optimistic about the opportunity for growth, and feels Ontario craft distilleries are poised to connect with consumers in powerful ways, driven in part by bar staff and restaurants due to their ability to connect with new consumers and introduce them to new local spirits. "Over the last few years, we've really grown as an industry in Ontario. We've reached our adolescence and that success comes out of our story and relationship with our consumers and business partners."

In the 12 years since Still Waters opened the first micro-distillery in Concord, Ontario in 2009, roughly 30 distilleries have opened their doors, with creative local offerings from gins, vodkas and whiskies to moonshine, brandy and amplifiers like bitters. They've come a long way from the red tape and confusion faced by early craft pioneers to direct-to-consumer sales. Even with the changes to Ontario's Liquor Licence Act in January of this year (which allowed restaurants to deliver premixed cocktails to their customers and spirits to be sold at Ontario farmers' markets), restaurants previously represented about a third of craft distillery sales, and bar staff are of crucial importance to the sector as tastemakers with a shared interest and passion for introducing and promoting new spirits.

Craft distillers and restaurants can help one another thrive in the post-pandemic era, in part by understanding their shared customer and storylines. "We have an opportunity to evolve. You learn about the company, the owner the distiller and partners and customers can even come and visit the distillery for a tour. The ability to connect with the producer is such a special thing, and the story is such a big part of the offering and the success."

While lifestyle has long been a key component of the marketing strategy for many alcohol brands, there is a sense of tribalism that is unique to craft, and to spirits in particular. "There's always been that element of "Oh, it's a pretty bottle"," says Jacks. "There's no denying that sense of identifying with that brand and that lifestyle is huge for craft. I feel that the craft offering takes that idea a step deeper into the lifestyle represented by the company, and that our partners and customers have a role to play and can benefit from that."

CIRKA DISTILLERIES & THE NEXT FRONTIER



Paul Cirka, founder of CIRKA Distilleries, the first grain-to-bottle distillery open to the public in Montreal, is confident and ready for Canadian craft distilling to come of age. "We're looking beyond the pandemic; looking forward. A lot more people are embracing craft and small producers both locally and domestically. If anything, we have gotten stronger."

Across the board, consumer demand for locally produced products has increased, and so has the expectation of transparency around ingredient origin, production methods and the people behind the brands they support. "Even at the restaurant franchise or chain level, our clients are reporting that consumers are actually asking for the venue's local spirit portfolio," says Paul. "It's being driven bottom up, not just top down. That leads us to believe in the longevity of demand for local."

Craft and local are universal bedfellows, and both concepts inform the distillery's entire sourcing and production methodology. CIRKA's flagship gin portfolio provides a balanced reflection of Quebec's growing craft gin craze, and of its mastery. "Gin gives you a really broad spectrum of expression which was super important to me," Paul shares. "As a craft distiller, you want to be able to make something memorable, and that allows you be distinctive and differentiate yourself in the market."

"There are 171 gins in on the shelf, made in Quebec," asserts Gizmo Sirois, CIRKA brand ambassador. "But only two per cent are produced "origin Quebec" and from that, there are only seven or eight that are actually distilling from grain. Paul is the number one, and the trailblazer on that within the industry."

CIRKA's Navy Strength gin won gold at the 2020 Gin Masters in London, and while it is true navy strength at 57.1%, it is surprisingly smooth with boosted citrus notes of sweet orange and lemongrass. Their GIN375, crafted in honour of Montreal's 375th anniversary, won the prestigious title of "Best Flavoured Gin" for Canada at the World Gin Awards in 2019 and features indigenous Québec botanicals including plants from the Boreal forest, fruit from the Eastern Townships and honey from the Laurentian Mountains.

Paul is equally as devoted to nurturing their whisky portfolio. "We do want to be known as great whisky makers," he admits. "There's no question about that. Canada has a long history of producing whisky. Over the decades we've produced great volumes, but not necessarily great whisky. There's no reason whatsoever, that we shouldn't be able to create really distinctive, memorable, regional whiskies. And that's what we're trying to build and explore. We're trying to make whisky that stands up to the best and is memorable. Where people say, "I remember my first sip of CIRKA whisky and it was a great moment." That's what I hope someone will write about one day."

Both Paul and Gizmo have confidence in the longevity of recent changes in consumer behaviour and demand. "We do predict that by 2024, the whisky category will outpace vodka sales globally," Paul affirms, "and will become the number one spirit." Gizmo is confident that a classic cocktail revival is on the horizon and that operators should take note and get ahead of it. "The classics are coming back. The obvious trend had been around tequila and mezcal because so many American superstars joined in. They used to forage the blue agave plant at seven years and now they're doing it at four years and it's really banging up the plant, so the price of tequila and mezcal is going to go up. Hence opening the door again to gin and whisky to stay on trend."

Gizmo is passionate about the importance of working directly with operators to help them optimize their relationship and their revenue. "Have us in. Let us meet your people and share our story. People think that we don't have the time or the interest to meet them. But for me, sitting at a table, sipping and talking to people who are actually interested is a way better investment than sending free t-shirts and bottles."

Gizmo sees the relationship between craft distilleries and clients as true partnerships and is eager to work with operators to co-create a custom experience that delivers. "Every bar looks for something a little different to engage and grow their audience. The best way for us to engage with you is personally. Otherwise you're just getting bottles. And a storyline. But if we work together, we all grow."



Odd Society Spirits' Crème de Cassis deserves your attention. Made with the finest B.C.-grown blackcurrants, this local take on a French classic is an essential addition to any well-stocked bar. Based on the family recipe of Master Chef Hervé Martin—once the personal chef to the late King Leopold III of Belgium—this majestic liqueur remains true to its royal lineage with rich fruit and bright acidity. Odd Society's Crème de Cassis is the best of Europe and the best of B.C. in one bottle. This must-have cocktail ingredient is available to purchase direct from the distillery and at select private liquor, beer and wine stores.

Price: $16.31 SKU: 594531 Bottle size: 375 ml ABV: 23%

Contact: Order direct from the distillery by email: **info@oddsocietyspirits.com** or phone **604 559 6745** or through your local reps
Distribution: Available in B.C. and Alberta



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Adapting to adaptogen beverages

BY BRIA WEAVER

Adaptogen beverages are functional drinks that have been flourishing over the last few years, popping up in grocery stores and menus across North America. While essentially, these are simply beverages that contain an array of ingredients linked to providing health benefits, this oversimplifies their marketplace potential and impact.

Matt Dean Pettit, president and co-founder of PowerPlant Superfoods Inc., approaches his products by turning everyday drinks into superfoods. He launched his company with a line of mushroom coffees and the idea that consumers won't have to change their everyday routine. More than the average cup of joe, his coffee benefits wellbeing, integrating chaga, an antioxidant-rich, immune booster and lion's mane, which has been used to help people focus and soothe their stress.

He offers both instant and brew coffee grounds which can be prepared the same way you would prepare any coffee, which is important as Baristas and users making his brews won't have to learn new techniques or buy any special tools. Consumers also won't have to compromise on taste. While the sound of mushroom coffee may make some people squirm initially, the mushroom is integrated in powder form and has no taste, making for an easy transition.

The mushroom powder in PowerPlant products cuts through the caffeine, helping eliminate "coffee jitters" and providing "clean energy". Due to a mix of factors, many Canadians are sensitive to caffeine, and are left with negative side effects when they consume too much, even just one cup of coffee.





Boreal Brewing is another adaptogen beverage company that developed their product with consumer habits in mind, abiding by the tagline "Drink Something Better." The packaging design and flavours of their brewed botanical tonics drew inspiration from ready-to-drink cocktails and craft beer. Their beverages feel like a cocktail so that consumers out for a night with friends, can substitute alcohol for one of their beverages and enjoy a more exciting alternative to club soda that is less labour intensive and expensive than a mocktail. When chatting with Boreal Brewing's co-founder, Andreas Duress, he posed the thought-provoking question "Why do we have this culture that requires you to be social, but feel crappy the next day?"

Both company's products speak to those who may have previously felt excluded from cafe and bar culture. Boreal Brewing's drinks are sugar-free, plant-based, alcohol-free and caffeine-free, appealing to diabetics, vegan and sober individuals who do not drink because of religious, health or personal reasons.

Companies like Mood Milk are also providing exciting and naturally energizing low-caffeine and caffeine-free adaptogen options, including their





Coconut Matcha or Beet Chai Latte Blends. These blends can easily be mixed with plant-based and dairy milk products to create eye-catching, brightly-hued drinks, which are not only a delicious alternative for coffee, but great for creating interest through social media.

It is important to note that adaptogen beverages are also widely being adopted by the flexitarians of the world. These are people who are not looking to cut out all alcohol, caffeine or sugar from their lives, but who crave healthier options to choose from. As a whole in the western world, we are becoming more conscious of the foods we ingest. Gen Z is looking more critically at the world and Boomers are wanting to age healthily. Nourish Marketing predicts a "healthy" future for adaptogen beverages, with functional beverages expected to grow by 7% each year.

This demand has only grown stronger in response to the pandemic. Nourish Marketing conducts social listening for many of their culinary clients and saw content around functional food and beverages grow exponentially throughout the pandemic. Drink Daydream, which launched in July 2019, is already in 400 grocery stores, 120 retail shops and nearly 100 restaurants and cafes. Boreal Brewing only launched this year, and is already in over 280 locations.

Consumer demand is there, but it's not necessarily coming from where you'd expect. Boreal Brewing acknowledges that they've had great interest from rural communities, including restaurants and shops in northern Quebec, the Yukon and small towns in Winnipeg. Mood Milk echoed a similar sentiment, gaining interest in smaller communities, specifically out west.

While there is consumer demand, there remains a learning curve for some consumers. Fresh Restaurants has been providing modern, healthy plant-based food for over 20 years, including a full line of adaptogen booster shots to pair with their signature smoothies and juices. They offer a section in their menu outlining the benefits of their adaptogen ingredients, putting this key information right at their guests' fingertips. As we know in today's society, convenience is key.

Restaurants interested in serving adaptogen beverages can enjoy many benefits. These drinks can liven up a menu with exciting new flavours and ingredients and can attract and cater to new customers who may have previously felt excluded. When it comes to coffee-adjacent options, staff won't have to learn new techniques and owners won't have to invest in any new equipment.

Pettit of PowerPlant Superfoods Inc, points out the great margin for their clients as their coffee only costs 20-30 cents per serving. Restaurant and bar operators can enjoy similar savings with adaptogen seltzers and tonics. The RTD formats save time and cost, especially if the alternative of choice is a complicated mocktail.

Of course, the bottom line for restaurants and cafes is sales. With the expected growth in the adaptogen beverage category, they're sure to be a winning addition to the menu.

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BY CHRIS ELLIOTT

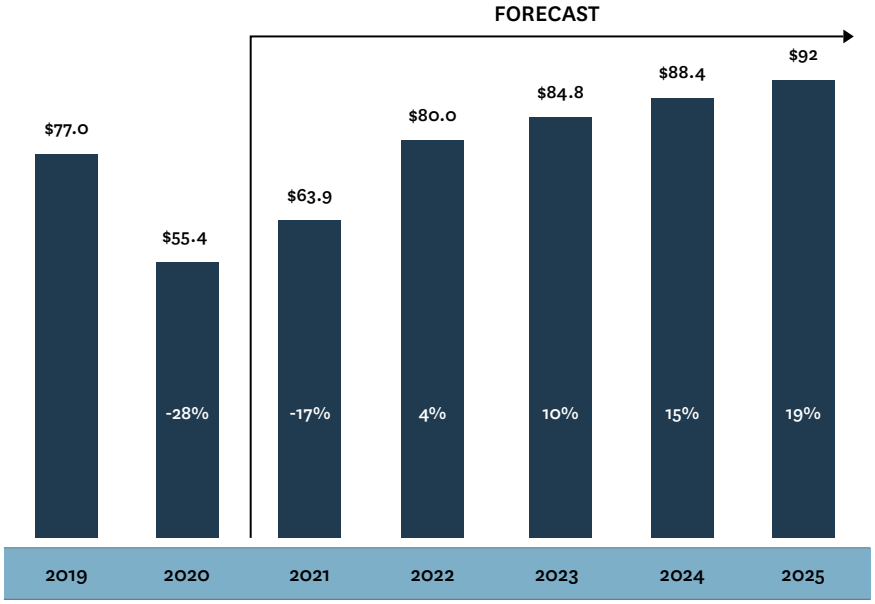
For the last two years, pulling together our annual *Foodservice Facts* report has been challenging, tricky and tough. The COVID-19 pandemic shattered Canada's foodservice industry, inflicting a devastating impact across the entire foodservice landscape. The effects rocked every corner: from manufacturers, suppliers, distributors, restaurants and bars, to hundreds of thousands of employees, as foodservice sales plummeted to their lowest level in more than two decades in April 2020. Since then, it's been a volatile time with more than 10,000 foodservice establishments permanently closing their doors.

Sales were expected to improve in the first half of 2021, but a severe third wave hit foodservice operators hard once again, resulting in a lengthy shutdown of on-premises dining across many parts of Canada in April and May. As the foodservice industry shifts into recovery mode and Canadians feel more comfortable returning to restaurants, the expectation is the economy will continue to gradually reopen in the second half of 2021.

Despite the setbacks of the last two years, hope is on the horizon. Canada has one of the highest vaccination rates in the world, with almost 75 per cent of Canadians (12 and older) being fully vaccinated at the time of writing.

As a result, annual commercial foodservice sales are now expected to increase to $63.9 billion in 2021, which is an upward revision from our previous forecast that called for sales of $61.1 billion. By the fourth quarter of 2021, quick-service restaurants are forecast to return to pre-COVID levels. Still, total commercial foodservice sales in Canada will remain 17% below pre-pandemic levels due to the weak first half of 2021.

The outlook for 2022 is even more encouraging as overall foodservice sales in Canada are forecast to grow to nearly $80 billion compared to the previous forecast of $75.9 billion. As a result, foodservice sales expected are to be 3.8% above pre-pandemic levels. The upward adjustment in the forecast reflects several favourable developments, including the aforementioned recent surge in vaccinations in Canada, combined with stronger-than-expected growth in consumer spending. Full-service restaurants are now expected to return to pre-pandemic levels in the second quarter of 2022. By the end of 2022, real per capita foodservice spending at quick- and full-service restaurants are expected to reach 97% of pre-pandemic levels, while caterers will be at 94% of pre-pandemic levels. Drinking places, however, are expected to be at only 85% of pre-pandemic levels by the end of 2022, due to unit closures and consumer hesitancy to return to bars, taverns and nightclubs.



Commercial Foodservice Sales Forecast - Canada

(in billions of dollars/growth rate compared to 2019)

Source: Restaurants Canada and Statistics Canada

While the economic outlook has improved significantly and we've seen positive developments that will lead to stronger commercial foodservice sales in Canada, Restaurants Canada remains cautious when it comes to the timing of the recovery. Some aspects of foodservice sales will continue to be restrained, including weak foodservice spending by international visitors (which accounted for 4 per cent of foodservice sales in 2019) and business travel and meals. Lastly, there still remains uncertainty about the virus itself.

The fourth wave and potential for more stringent containment measures could put a halt on the reopening of the economy.

Even with a reopening, it will take time for the foodservice industry to bounce back. Currently, the economy is going through a K-shaped recovery — some sectors are on an upward swing while others are in decline. Of the four largest private-sector employers before the pandemic, retail, construction and manufacturing are at or near pre-COVID-19 levels. Foodservice, however, has a much longer road to recovery.

So what does recovery look like for the foodservice industry? We see it much like a puzzle, with loops and sockets, tabs and slots, all in fragments which our industry is urgently trying to piece together to understand what the whole picture looks like. We are trying to figure out what piece fits where, navigating each bit again and again to decipher how everything works together in a post-pandemic world, realizing we may be missing pieces as the industry has changed and that somehow we need to now fill those holes and gaps.

In order to successfully build the puzzle, it's important that recovery is addressed from two main viewpoints—both as a foodservice business owner and also through the lens of the customers—not only thinking about what restauranteurs can do, but also what the customer wants.

Many businesses are facing labour shortages, higher costs and higher debts. Menu prices are forecast to rise by 2.9 per cent in 2021, followed by a 3.7 per cent increase in 2022. Delivery, which gained traction throughout the pandemic, will continue to be a lifeline, and restaurants need to focus on how to make this a piece of their reopening puzzle—how to continue bringing service and food to customers in ways that make them comfortable. Throughout the pandemic restaurants have constantly pivoted by paring down menus, creating meal boxes, offering groceries within their environments, taking the opportunity to clean their spaces and ready staff while preparing for customers to enter their doors once again.

The good news is that Canadians do want to dine out. A survey of Canadians in May 2021 found that 89 per cent of Canadians are looking forward to going out to a restaurant with friends and family again. They are looking for health and safety, speed and convenience and a meaningful experience.

Recovery is often seen as a period to heal oneself, and that is what our industry needs to do—to look inward to create that positive change. The only certainty we can expect in the future is to get comfortable with being uncomfortable. Through facing that discomfort and unease comes growth. Change is good. It is messy and frustrating, exhausting and at times overwhelming, but it is necessary. While our patios may have filled up and we can see a small pinhole of light at the end of the tunnel, it is not the time to relax or fall into old habits. We have survived the storm and now it's time to learn from it. It's time to cautiously, yet optimistically, finish the puzzle.

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Attracting and Retaining Labour in a Post-Covid Landscape

BY KIM LEUNG

As we begin to emerge from pandemic restrictions, it's slowly becoming clear that traditional hiring and retention methods are no longer effective. Restaurants, in particular, are reporting a severe labour shortage, with difficulties attracting qualified applicants. The hospitality industry lost close to 300,000 jobs due to the effects of COVID-19 shutdowns. As a result, many restaurant employees have chosen to leave the industry altogether. CERB is the oft-cited reason for the labour shortage, but low wages, the instability of shift work and a lack of job security made it difficult for workers to stay in the sector during a crisis.

And yet, there are so many wonderful reasons to find work in the industry. It serves as an entry point into the workforce for students and young adults, providing a source of income and transferable skills for future goals. In restaurants, the staff are often tightly knit and enjoy a sense of camaraderie that goes unmatched in other fields. Those who choose hospitality as a long-term career enjoy fast-paced, hands-on work that is highly social with lots of variety—no two days are the same. And opportunities in hospitality extend past simply foodservice—there are numerous options to explore within the industry, from marketing and sales to manufacturing and travel.

However, the current challenge remains: attracting good talent to the field. Higher starting wages are becoming more common amongst restaurants trying to staff up ahead of pent-up demand as restrictions lift. But that's only part of the equation. To address this dilemma and find solutions to these pressing issues, Restaurants Canada has engaged with experts and thought leaders in the field to get their take on the situation. After speaking with restaurant operators, field consultants and educators in the hospitality space, some underlying themes and actionable insights have emerged for consideration.

THE BRAND



As a restaurant owner, **MICHEL FALCON** knows first hand the challenges in finding and hiring the right people. So when hiring for Brasa Peruvian, a fast-casual concept that launched mid-summer 2021 in Toronto, Falcon chose to do things differently. Instead of casting the net wide with a generic job spec, Falcon crafted a staffing process that would screen for the type of employees he was looking for, selling prospective workers on a collaborative work environment, one with opportunities for employees to realize their potential. New hires enjoy a higher than average starting pay with no probationary period, regularly scheduled days off and access to benefits from day one.

Falcon has also built a pipeline of coaches and subject matter experts for his team to tap into, whether to improve their public speaking skills, achieve personal fitness goals or help tutor their children. He's hired those with aspirations to open their own foodservice businesses, with the aim of mentoring them to take that next step. A culture of trust and active plans for knowledge-sharing and cross-training prevents the loss of any single employee from having an outsized impact on operations.

His advice? Look for ways to make your restaurant a more attractive, human place to work. Start with quick wins, whether it be higher wages, regular shifts or time off. Falcon also suggests a more holistic approach to hiring. Rather than seeing it as simply a vacancy to fill, a strategic plan needs to be in place to hire and retain the right people. "The focus should be on fit, not starting date," says Falcon. An employee should feel respected and trusted, with the knowledge that they have room to grow.

THE EDUCATOR



MICHELLE CAINE, the Chair of Hospitality Management at Centennial College, echoes some of these sentiments. "Flexibility is key in attracting a new generation of foodservice workers," says Caine. For those used to a more traditional style of management, this may require a mindset change. New and younger workers in the field are dedicated, but also value work-life balance, the flexibility to accommodate other commitments and the ethics of the brand they're working for. While pay is always a consideration, it's not the only factor new entrants into the sector will consider.

As part of a longer-term recruitment strategy, Caine suggests making contacts at local schools,

particularly those with a culinary department, to learn more about their programs and connect with graduating students. Faculty members can also offer insight into the hiring process or introduce students they feel might be a good fit. These connections may take time to build but can provide a steady pipeline of qualified applicants for future job openings. Caine also suggests a more collaborative interview process, one that allows the job seeker an opportunity to see the workplace in action, talk to current employees and ask informed questions about the role.

THE CONSULTANT



JOE BAKER, a strategy advisor with the Ontario Tourism Education Corporation, has been working to support the recovery and growth of the tourism and hospitality industries through the COVID-19 crisis. Because the industry is full of driven and talented people, Baker believes that a culture change is needed—one where hospitality staffers can thrive, with opportunities to develop their skills and parlay them into a fulfilling long-term career. “Restaurant industry workers should be able to expect a living wage, access to benefits, and career planning support,” says Baker.

Like Caine, Baker sees the importance of making relationships at schools and recruiting young talent. Programs that offer work-integrated learning, like co-ops, internships and practicums, are valuable for restaurants looking to develop new talent. Restaurant operators can utilize funding initiatives that provide a wage subsidy for students looking for experiential learning, linking their education with gainful employment.

Baker also notes that the workplace is a multigenerational one in many foodservice settings, potentially breeding misunderstanding and communication issues between age groups. “Sometimes, in a busy restaurant environment, it’s hard to stop and listen to what employees are saying. But it only takes a moment to pause and engage in active listening. Then, when employees feel like they are seen and heard, they feel understood.”

Ultimately, Baker believes the industry needs to make more opportunities that align with the values of those looking for work within the field, rather than the stop-gap, precarious work that hospitality is sometimes known for.

THE RECRUITER



JENNIFER MÉNARD-SHAND, founder & CEO of Staff Shop Inc., an Indigenous-Women owned staffing firm, has been keeping a close eye on the changes in the industry throughout the pandemic. “You need to take it one day at a time vs. trail blaze amongst moving targets and uncertainty,” says Ménard-Shand. “It important to be sure to get an unbiased education on Canadian politics, EDI training and consult with experts to ensure all in your organization from frontline workers to management work together respectfully, safely and without discrimination.”

One of the tools Ménard-Shand recommends is to employ an anonymous survey regularly to keep a pulse on the way your team is feeling. In addition, consider facilitating "skip-level meetings" where employees can meet with the supervisor of their supervisor—giving them a safe space to share their experience, offer suggestions and bring forward concerns. Most importantly, as an owner/operator, action their concerns. It helps to paint a clear picture for an employee’s future in or out of the organization vs. shackling them to a short-sighted-materialistic vision like a salary and job title, which can lead to unfulfillment and turnover.

Overall, given the current labour climate, it is incredibly important for operators to focus on actively becoming a diverse and inclusive workplace. For one, your talent pool is critical. And, when you’re recognizing everyone’s assets and giving everyone an opportunity to shine, you are cultivating a productive working environment. Having a diverse team is good for morale and helps to foster a culture of trust and acceptance. Prospective talent will assess your organization when considering coming to work for you. Is it an environment where they can feel comfortable? Does it mimic the other environments they are comfortable in—their neighbourhood, social circles, or values? Ménard-Shand says; "If the answer is no, you may be losing out on amazing talent simply because you’ve failed to cultivate an environment where they can grow and effectively picture themselves fitting in."

THE MAVERICK



While service roles are top of mind when considering the hospitality industry, the truth is, many opportunities exist outside of the restaurant. **JEFF MCMULLEN**, VP of Sales at Garland Canada, a foodservice equipment distributor, has held many roles in the industry. He started off as a restaurant dishwasher in his teens and later moved into sales and marketing, retail food production and capital purchasing, just to name a few.

For anyone with extensive kitchen experience looking for a career change, McMullen suggests looking within the industry first. “My culinary background has given me a definite edge in the other roles I’ve taken,” he says. For one, restaurant work is known for building soft skills, helping hone the teamwork and communication abilities needed to succeed in a variety of positions. But there are more specific advantages as well. Citing his experience with sales as an example, he adds, “Someone with working experience in a restaurant setting has a deeper understanding of the challenges and pain points that come with the territory. You’re able to connect with them on the

same level and make better recommendations based on their needs." Hospitality careers exist in healthcare, distributing, retail manufacturing and travel, and that's just scratching the surface. Based on current trends, McMullen also projects ample opportunities in foodservice technology in the future.

Even before COVID-19, there were an estimated 60,000 unfilled positions in the restaurant sector, an industry that represents Canada's fourth-largest source of private employment. And it's facing a significant shift. Workers are looking for employment opportunities that offer stability, fulfillment and room to grow. As the effects of the pandemic hopefully continue to subside, those in leadership positions in the field have a responsibility to rethink what rich, rewarding careers can look like and create opportunities accordingly. The health and future of the industry depend on it.

A New Perspective on Labour: Moving away from the traditional views of costing

BY KIM LEUNG

The restaurant industry is well known for operating on extremely slim margins. Throw in the stressors of COVID and the current labour shortage, and it's no wonder many eateries across the country face serious challenges. Media coverage and trends reports are starting to emphasize higher wages and better benefits to attract labour, but **JIM TAYLOR**, owner and president of TaylorCo Hospitality Solutions, believes they're only a part of the picture when it comes to building a healthy, thriving restaurant.

Restaurants have always placed a heavy focus on labour cost as a percentage of sales to evaluate the health and efficiency of operations. Traditionally, labour costs sit around 30 per cent of total sales, a common benchmark; a reasonable and sustainable value for most concepts. Should this percentage rise in the form of increased pay and benefits, it understandably gives many restaurant owners pause, especially given the many other restraints the industry is facing. Restaurant managers across the country live and die off their weekly labour cost line on the P&L. This mindset can artificially suppress wages and the hours/bodies that a restaurant may actually need to thrive.

Taylor takes a more holistic operational look at labour and how it really impacts the P&L. Rather than just recruitment and retention, he coaches his clients to reframe their thinking. "Labour should be viewed from a perspective of productivity, rather than solely as a percentage from sales." His reasoning? While many factors influence sales, restaurant operators are only in control of a minimal number of them. "Variables that impact sales can include customer behaviour, marketing, weather, time of year, pricing, promotions and the like. But many are outside the control of restaurant management. Operators can only control staffing levels, with perhaps some limited influence over the number of customers served."



Based on this logic, Taylor creates a scorecard for his clients and provides them with an optimal value score based on the relationship between the number of covers and the number of staff hours required to provide service. This way, variables outside the operator's control are minimized.

How close the score is to the optimal value provides a gauge of how well-managed the restaurant is over a given period. While the traditional, lower score indicates the restaurant was overstaffed that day for the number of customers served, and a higher score suggests inadequate staffing, his process allows restaurant management to focus on service and operations on a daily basis, without overreacting to fluctuations in labour costs. It also gives them a different perspective on what's considered successful.

Taylor cites the example of a Wednesday Wing Night promotion: it brings in higher traffic, but when each customer spends less on a promotional offer, the busier-than-average shift does not actually provide a benefit to the restaurant's productivity levels and the restaurant sees a traditional higher labour cost as a percentage of sales. The reaction is to cut staff hours which will have an impact on your sales (and your brand) if customer service is not up to par during a busy promotion.



This process helps Taylor move his clients beyond an arbitrary wage increase dollar amount by providing metrics-based options for operators. For instance, a nominal increase in menu pricing could be sufficient for a brand to raise pay, or an extra table turned, or a menu item upsold: all these actions will have an impact on labour costs. An increase in wages won't cause undue alarm if there is a corresponding increase in productivity. This way, brands can be aggressive about hiring the right people at higher wages. In addition, focusing on a productivity score allows management to make operational decisions. Like: do all staff have to come in at opening? Item costs, more bussers vs. servers, etc—these choices can be examined rather than sticking with the status quo without justification.

Running a restaurant can be challenging, even in good times. Concepts across the country have been relying on innovation and a willingness to pivot in order to thrive during the past year. Now operators have been given a unique opportunity to consider whether embracing new methods and different mindsets can put their restaurants on a trajectory of success during a period of uncertainty. Bold moves made wisely can pay dividends.

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LET'S CELEBRATE OUR CHEFS

Stay tuned for our **Celebrate our Chefs Program** where we'll be locking down prices on select items for 11 weeks to say thank you to our chefs, live from Thursday, October 21, 2021 to Wednesday, January 5, 2022. Don't miss your chance to win one of 10 prizes of $50 at your local Wholesale Club. Visit our website or your local store for details.

†Applicable fees for in-store pickup of online orders are extra. In-store pickup of online orders is only available at select locations and on orders over $75.

4 RESTAURANTS LEADING THE WAY IN SUSTAINABILITY AND MAKING IMPACTFUL CHANGES

BY NATASHA ZAROSKI

If paper straws are your restaurant's greatest sustainable achievement to date, then you are behind. Why should you care about sustainability in your daily operations and beyond? Because restaurants in the know understand that putting sustainability at the forefront of their business builds trust with their guests, improves the quality of food they are able to serve and establishes a resilient business model in the long term.

GreenPrint's ***Business of Sustainability Index*** reported that 75 per cent of millennials are willing to pay more for an environmentally sustainable product. Demand for sustainably focused products and services is only expected to grow as customers continue to push for answers regarding where their food comes from, who made it and what the true environmental impacts are.

Here's how four Canadian restaurants are making big impacts in sustainable foodservice and how these moves have ultimately affected their bottom lines.



1. CHOP STEAKHOUSE & BAR

Chop Steakhouse & Bar, a Canadian, family-owned restaurant chain, began their sustainability journey years ago when they became a member of a community devoted to advancing sustainability within the Canadian beef industry known as the Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (CRSB). From early on, Chop recognized the importance of sustainable sourcing and was the first full-service restaurant in Canada with a beef sustainability claim on their menu.

Doubling down on their commitment, in June of this year Chop extended their beef sustainability pledge across all beef menu items. Chop has committed to sourcing a minimum of 30 per cent of its beef from CRSB-certified farms and ranches, earning the right to feature the CRSB Certified Mass Balance Mark on all their menus.

So, is it really worth it to invest the additional cost and resources into third-party audits such as the CRSB? "We have a responsibility to earn trust with our customers and our guests across Canada when it comes to beef supply and the way to do that is through this third-party auditing system," says Marcel Blais, President of Chop. Not only is Chop building a foundation of trust with their guests, they are making strides in sustainable beef with their impact being felt across all 16 locations in Canada.

"To serve sustainable beef meant creating a demand for sustainable beef from producers and further-educating the public at large about the importance of all of us participating in whatever way we can for the welfare of the planet," says Marcel. The conversation around sustainability continues tableside where servers are proud to explain the meaning behind the CRSB Certified Mass Balance Mark and guests can fully appreciate knowing where their food came from.



2. RECIPE UNLIMITED

As Canada's largest full-service restaurant company, Recipe Unlimited Corporation recognizes the responsibility they have to operate in a sustainably-minded manner and the impact that their decisions have across their 1,327 restaurants. In August of this year, Recipe published their inaugural Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) report for 2020, highlighting three key pillars including people, food and planet.

Within the report, it states that Recipe has committed $20 million to various sustainability goals over the next few years. So, do you really need a multi-million-dollar budget to make impactful change? Absolutely not. "Start with one thing—choose something that is meaningful for your business, your guests, and that you and your team feel most passionate about," says Gina da Costa, Director of Strategic Sourcing at Recipe. "The most important thing is just to get started. Even if only one project is executed at a time, over time those small changes will have a positive impact." da Costa explained that though this is Recipe's first CSR report, many sustainability initiatives have been individually tackled over the last several years.

"From a bottom-line perspective, we know that operating sustainably is important for the long-term success of our business and because it is aligned with the expectations of our guests, teammates and investors." The publication of Recipe's CSR report is an accomplishment to be celebrated with the understanding that it is a roadmap for continued improvement over the next several years.

To read Recipe's CSR report visit: www.recipeunlimited.com/en/corporateresponsibility.html



3. A&W CANADA AND CARGILL

A&W Canada and Cargill have partnered to create sustainable change through Grazing Forward, an initiative to support Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS) and expand their New Acre Project. ALUS is focused on helping farmers and ranchers implement regenerative agriculture practices including improved soil health, water quality and increased biodiversity.

A&W Canada and Cargill are leading a movement when it comes to sustainable foodservice. "While at times overlooked, agriculture offers a solution to address one of the greatest collective challenges we face—climate change syas Heather Tansey, Cargill Sustainability Director. The way we produce food can be a powerful lever against the impacts of climate change," The regenerative agriculture practices that A&W Canada and Cargill are investing in not only directly benefit customers and the quality of beef they are able to supply, but also strengthen relationships with suppliers. Tansey confirms: "Participating farmers and ranchers appreciate the hands-on approach from the Grazing Forward initiative, which includes outreach and extension services, technical guidance, implementation and maintenance support."

Grazing Forward is an example of how restaurants can largely impact sustainability; however, smaller scale initiatives should not be overlooked. A&W Canada and Cargill, "encourage restaurants and businesses to adapt other practices that have positive environmental impacts, such as partnering with responsible suppliers and operators, buying locally, cooking what's in season and reducing food waste."



4. POPEYES

This past March, Popeyes announced new quality and sustainability commitments as part of the Restaurant Brands for Good sustainability plan. Over the next ten years, Popeyes will work towards removing artificial colours, flavours, preservatives and antibiotics important to human medicine from their chicken. In addition to altering their chicken supply chain, Popeyes is also challenging current packaging protocols and upgrading their cups from EPS foam, which is not easily recyclable to paper cups.

"We strive to serve responsibly sourced, high quality and great tasting food every day while continuously reducing our environmental footprint, because we know it matters to our guests," says a Popeyes spokesperson.

Similar to Recipe Unlimited, Popeyes looks at sustainability through the lens of three pillars: food, planet, and people. The brand recognizes that because these pillars are all interconnected, improvement in one area will ultimately lead to overall success, both environmentally and financially. The company's position is clear: "Sustainability is about doing the right thing for our guests, for our environment, and for the people and communities that we impact. The long term health of our business and our planet both depend on it."

> "The most important thing is just to get started. Even if only one project is executed at a time, over time those small changes will have a positive impact."

With these four Canadian powerhouses paving the way in sustainable food service, what can we expect to see in the industry moving forward? "Environmental sustainability is not just a trend," says Anna Pham, Executive Director of Leaders in Envionmentally Accountable Foodservice (LEAF). "As long as we attach monetary value to food, customer loyalty will continue to be a main focus. By implementing sustainable practices, businesses will see direct cost benefits and increased brand visibility." Restaurants like those mentioned here, continue to put their customers at the centre of their business and in doing so, they have tapped into what their guests care about most.

"Consumers are seeking out sustainable restaurants; therefore, shifting marketing strategies to highlight the overall sustainable efforts wouldn't impact a business' budgeted marketing expenses, but would help them gain additional market share," says Pham.

Post pandemic, restaurant operators may not have significant financial capital to invest in sustainability so it's best to start with the low-hanging fruit. "Reflecting on your own current business practices is free and will provide you with additional information and insight into your business. We then encourage restaurant operators to lean on LEAF for free sustainability resources that are currently listed on our website," explained Pham. Taking the time to learn about sustainable practises is an investment that will surely pay off down the road.

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SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT:

What you and your customers need to know about animal care on Canadian chicken farms

Chicken Farmers of Canada

Canadian consumers continue to be increasingly invested in the journey of their food. When it comes to the chicken industry—which produces approximately 630 million birds per year according to Chicken Farmers of Canada (CFC)—there is mounting pressure on restaurants to serve ethically-sourced food. If you've ever been approached by a customer about animal welfare, you'll know that misinformation can make it more challenging to set the record straight.



The good news is, CFC, a national organization that represents the more than 2,800 chicken farmers across Canada, has several programs in place to ensure you're well-equipped to address any customer concerns.

The Canadian chicken industry works to some of the highest international standards of animal care, food safety, and sustainability. The Animal Care program for Canadian chicken, for example, has a solid, credible, and science-based foundation, and is like nothing else in the world. The program is based on a Code of Practice, developed by the National Farm Animal Care Council (NFACC) NFACC is a world leader in bringing together stake holders with different perspectives, and includes farmers, scientists, veterinarians, processors, retailer and foodservice representatives, transporters, animal welfare associations, and provincial/federal governments.

One hundred per cent of Canada's chicken farmers are certified on this mandatory program , which is second and third party audited.

In 2016, CFC developed the Raised by a Canadian Farmer branding program, which demonstrates farmers' commitment to producing chicken that was raised in Canada by responsible farmers that adhere to strict, national food safety and animal care standards. Recent data from the CFC found that 91 per cent of Canadians want chicken raised in Canada, and they want that certification to come from farmers. "Canadians believe that the quality of the product is better if it comes from a more local source," said Lisa Bishop-Spencer, Director of Brand and Communications, Chicken Farmer of Canada. "There's a sense of pride that is associated with local products and supporting Canadian farmers. Moreover, the Raised by a Canadian Farmer brand helps restaurants deliver on their customers' expectations for excellence."

The Raised by a Canadian Farmer brand is backed by numerous retailers and restaurants throughout Canada, including Walmart, Maple Leaf Foods, and popular fast-food chain, KFC. Since KFC signed on to the Raised by a Canadian Farmer branding program in 2019, the restaurant chain has witnessed numerous benefits, including continued growth in the restaurant's food quality and brand trust scores. Katherine Bond-Debicki, Chief Marketing Officer, KFC Canada noted that purchasing locallysourced Canadian farm-raised chicken has always been central to KFC's business.

"The Raised by a Canadian Farmer seal is a way of letting consumers know our commitment to sourcing only the best, quality Canadian chicken," she said. "Consumers want transparency in where their food is coming and trust that when it comes from a Canadian farmer, it has been sourced ethically and contributes to the economic growth and the welfare of our local Canadian communities. Our dedication to sourcing Canadian chicken and then certifying it through Chicken Farmers of Canada's Raised by a Canadian Farmer program helps show our commitment to industry-leading animal welfare guidelines and sourcing locally wherever we can."

For more information about animal welfare and the Raised by a Canadian Farmer branding program, visit LetsTalkChicken.ca

You can rely on this program to meet your needs and Chicken Farmers of Canada is here to support you. **For more information, visit LetsTalkChicken.ca**



Let's Replace Gossip with *Facts*

Consumers care more and more about where their food comes from, but misinformation about how chickens are raised is abundant. It's time to set the record straight.

More than 90 per cent of Canadians want Canadian chicken and they want certification to come from farmers. Chicken Farmers of Canada developed the Raised by a Canadian Farmer branding program which now appears in many restaurants and retailers throughout Canada. Carrying the logo assures Canadians that their chicken was raised right here in Canada, by responsible farmers who adhere to strict, national food safety and animal care standards. Using the Raised by a Canadian Farmer logo and other assets is free. **Email brand@chicken.ca for more information**.

HERE'S A TOP 10 LIST OF FACTS YOU MAY NOT KNOW ABOUT CANADIAN CHICKEN:

1. Chicken Farmers of Canada's Animal Care Program has strict standards for the care and handling of chickens. The program is mandatory, third party audited, and enforced across ALL Canadian chicken farms.
2. The program is based on a code pf practice that was developed through the National Farm Animal Care Council, consisting of stakeholders representing government, farmers, animal welfare advocates, food processors, transporters, veterinarians, researchers, restaurants and retailers.
3. More than 90% of Canadian chicken farms are family owned and operated. There are no 'factory farms.'
4. Canada's farmers are paid for each bird that is processed. So, it makes good economic sense for them to take care of their birds.
5. Litter is monitored daily and barns are cleaned out after every flock.
6. Light intensity and duration is carefully managed to ensure proper periods of rest and to promote flock health.
7. The density of Canadian chicken production is lower than or consistent with other countries.
8. The use of hormone and steroids has been illegal since the 1960s.
9. Chicken is the lowest cost Canadian meat protein.
10. The Canadian chicken sector has lowered its carbon footprint by almost 40% in the past 40 years.

Canadian chicken farmers take animal care seriously. It frustrates me when I hear the false claims made about how I run my farm. They're simply not true. The Animal Care Program is one of the ways I can demonstrate to all Canadians that I take my work seriously and want to provide the best for the animals in my care. Make no mistake, this program is mandatory and audited, and it's very strict, but it's worth it when I see that my birds are happy and healthy. People sometimes forget that farmers are consumers, too, and strict, ethical animal care standards are important to all of us.

– Tim Klompmaker, Canadian chicken farmer



KITCHEN TECHNOLOGY

BY CHRIS SZEGO

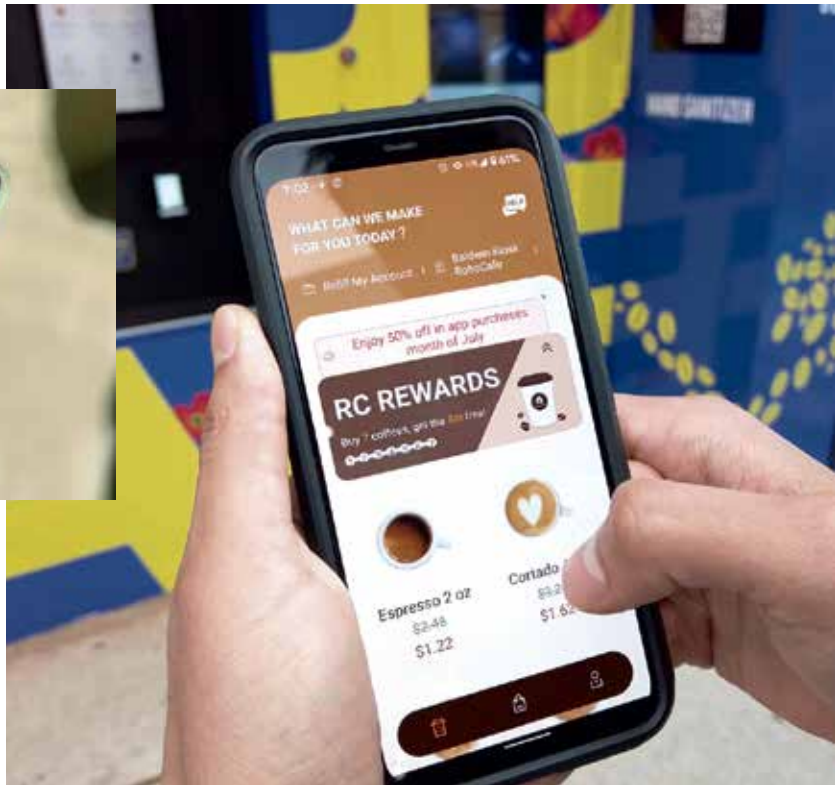
The foodservice industry is undergoing unanticipated leaps in technological adaptation during COVID-19. Innovations such as contactless payments, mobile ordering, tabletop technology and third-party delivery services were on the rise in Canada before the start of the pandemic, but adoption rates have soared dramatically since.

"Innovation is driven by the need to solve problems," says Dana McCauley, Chief Experience Officer at the Canadian Food Innovation Network (CFIN), a newly formed organization created to stimulate connections, collaborations, innovation and investment across Canada's food ecosystem. "Transaction-level technology, like tap, came about because everyone, both customers and retailers, wanted more security." In other words, whatever comes next will be an answer to a specific need.

One of those needs might be automation. McCauley says automation is already happening in an invisible way. "We're further along than we're aware when it comes to the mechanization of foodservice." The industry's largest producers and distributors rely on the kind of automatic equipment that is only affordable on a large scale. "Big, industrialized kitchens come with a lot of automation. Again, that automation is for solving specific problems: in this case, efficiency and consistency."

Consistency is important, and a highly desired goal in foodservice. A little automation can help with that. Brad Ford, General Manager of Coffee at RC Coffee, who has spent decades in the coffee business, knows this well. This past year, RC Coffee opened two Robo Cafe locations in Toronto: automatic coffee kiosks run by robot





> Low-touch, automated experiences are integral in foodservice during and post-pandemic."

baristas. The result is nothing like the dismal vending machine coffee of your memories.

"From bean to drink, there's so much that has to be done and monitored. It's both an artisanal and technical approach." The kiosks use Dark Horse beans, Super Traditional coffee machines, and a robot arm to deliver the drinks. Customers can choose and customize their beverages on the touchscreen at the Robo Cafe or on the RC Coffee app. The timing of their first location was somewhat serendipitous. Years in the planning and making stages, the kiosk opened in October 2020, as the Dark Horse Automat (it has since been rebranded). "Low-touch, automated experiences are integral in foodservice during and post-pandemic."

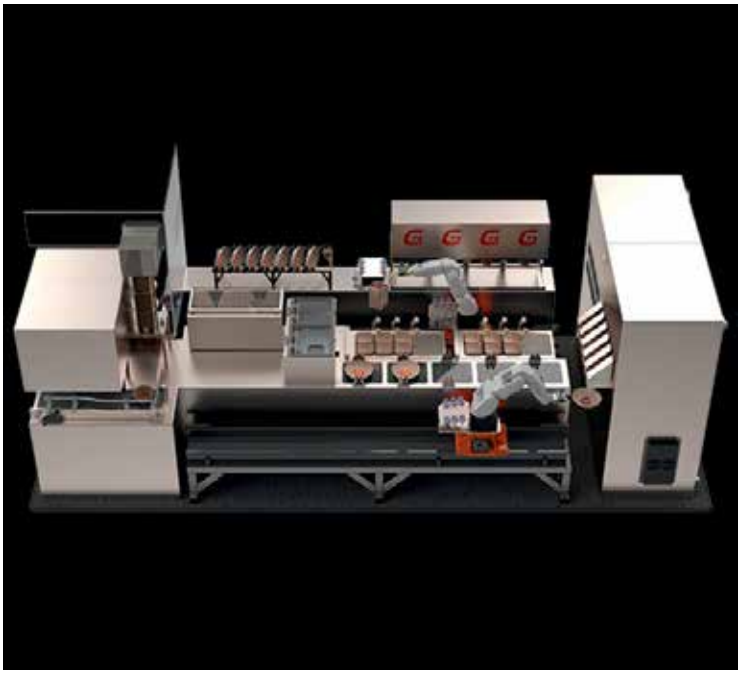
With four more Robo Cafes set to open across Toronto in the next year, including one in Toronto General Hospital, Ford is looking ahead. "Our goal is not to be on the street front: there are sufficient cafes. Our goal is to make amazing coffee everywhere, at any time."

Coffee isn't the only aspect of the sector seeing a rise in automation. Gastronomous Technologies, winner of Restaurant Canada's Innovation Award in 2021, has created an autonomous kitchen, run by robots. Co-founder and CEO Kevork Sevadjian says they built the kitchen to prove what they can do. "We honed our skills in the automotive industry, and we want to bring that efficiency and automation to foodservice and ask: what are your pain points?"

One of those pain points might be staffing. It's no secret that the foodservice sector has had a labour shortage for years. COVID-19 only exacerbated the problem. Sevadjian firmly believes that automation can help. "The point is to automate processes that require little skill. Those are the jobs that are hard to fill. Replace the repetitive, low skill, low interest jobs. Eliminate the need for those positions so that restaurants can focus on hiring higher skill jobs, with higher pay—the kind you can make a career of."

McCauley agrees. While the initial advent of automation will be disruptive, she believes that automation and robots can fix some problems. "And provide the opportunity for people to be liberated to do more high value work in foodservice. Like customer relations or designing cool menu concepts." That may require a different kind of employee, but the work itself will still need the human touch.

Ford also makes it clear that the goal of Robo Cafe is not to replace human staff. On the contrary: "It takes a whole team to run a robot barista. On the development side, the deployment side, the day-to-day maintenance side." When the first Robo Cafe opened, human staff monitored the site every hour it was open. Today,



there are still daily visits, with constant sensor and camera monitoring and a repair crew readyto leap into action if needed.

In fact, robots have been visible in Toronto's foodservice landscape since 2018, when Robo Sushi opened their doors. With cute greeter robots to lead guests to their tables and utilitarian robots to deliver dishes to the table, Robo Sushi provided the first look at what automation might add to the restaurant experience.

In late 2019, tech start-up Tiny Mile was formed and has since launched a small convoy of food delivery robots. Small, pink and deliberately adorable, the insulated robots (all named Geoffrey) trundle through the streets of downtown Toronto delivering food and beverages from local restaurants.

But automation doesn't only mean robots. Gastronomous is developing technology and equipment embedded with Internet of Things (IoT) capabilities to gather and provide access to valuable data. Embedded software that connects to POS, seamlessly integrated to equipment, can reduce lead time and eliminate potential errors. And more, some of the incoming technology can provide solutions to more than one problem. Sevadjian says, "We're seeing tech now where we can use heat generated by some of the ovens and fryers to heat hot water. You'll reduce energy costs and your carbon footprint."

"This is one of the last great frontiers for automation," Sevadjian concludes. "Accommodation and foodservice are the only industries that require so much labour for predictable activity. It won't happen overnight, but one step at a time. We'll need people with greater skills to operate in that environment."

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Baked Brie with Cranberries, Caramelized Honey & Thyme created by Chef Tim Schulte of Auberge du Pommier for the Savour Ontario Harvest Pairings program

Dairy Farmers of Ontario (DFO) has committed its Savour Ontario local food brand to exploring new ways of working together across the foodservice and hospitality sectors to bring consumers back to the table. This fall, Savour Ontario is celebrating Ontario-crafted cheese and wine pairings, further paired in recipes and in-venue experiences by celebrated chefs and restaurants.

Food experiences are coming back in a big, reimagined way, and it's no secret that support for local is at its zenith. As operators evaluate their menus and on-premises experiences, new collaborations with suppliers offer a means to deliver a more dynamic, experiential offering focused on local ingredients, products and venues. More than ever, there is opportunity to pool resources, talent and ideas across the food community to achieve common goals.

While pairing wine with cheese is both natural and obvious, the *Savour Ontario Harvest Pairings* program pushes traditional pairings a step further, engaging local chefs and restaurants in creating a further-paired recipe featuring an Ontario cheese and wine in a chef-created recipe. "We wanted to further connect with our customers and find new ways to encourage trial and double down on our support for restaurants," says Alan Grebinski, director of business and educational development at Dairy Farmers of Ontario. "We all know that it continues to be a difficult time for many partners across Ontario's food community, so we wanted to make sure that we were able to provide some additional support to local cheesemakers, restaurants and wineries. When we put all of our resources together, we can do big things. Harmonizing efforts to deliver true local experiences to people just makes sense."

Promoted on wine neck tags at the LCBO, in *Food & Drink* magazine as well as across social and partner media platforms, the collaboration between Dairy Farmers of Ontario, Ontario artisan cheesemakers, Henry of Pelham winery and a select group of Ontario chefs including Auberge du Pommier Chef Tim Schulte, Chef Todd Clarmo of Wildcraft Grill + Long Bar and Chef Erik Peacock of Henry of Pelham's Coach House Café, the program offers a live, multi-faceted demonstration of the power of shared values and complementary collaboration.

The program is designed to build awareness of and loyalty for local and Ontario-made cheeses and wines, while encouraging consumers to patronize local chefs and their restaurants for the full experience. "Our hope with every partnership is that it's not just a one-off but a relationship that creates value both ways," says Grebinski. "We're looking for local partners with a shared approach—whether it's how we value and support hospitality, the industry in general or how we provide value to our customers."

To learn more and engage with Dairy Farmers of Ontario's Savour Ontario local food program, please contact:

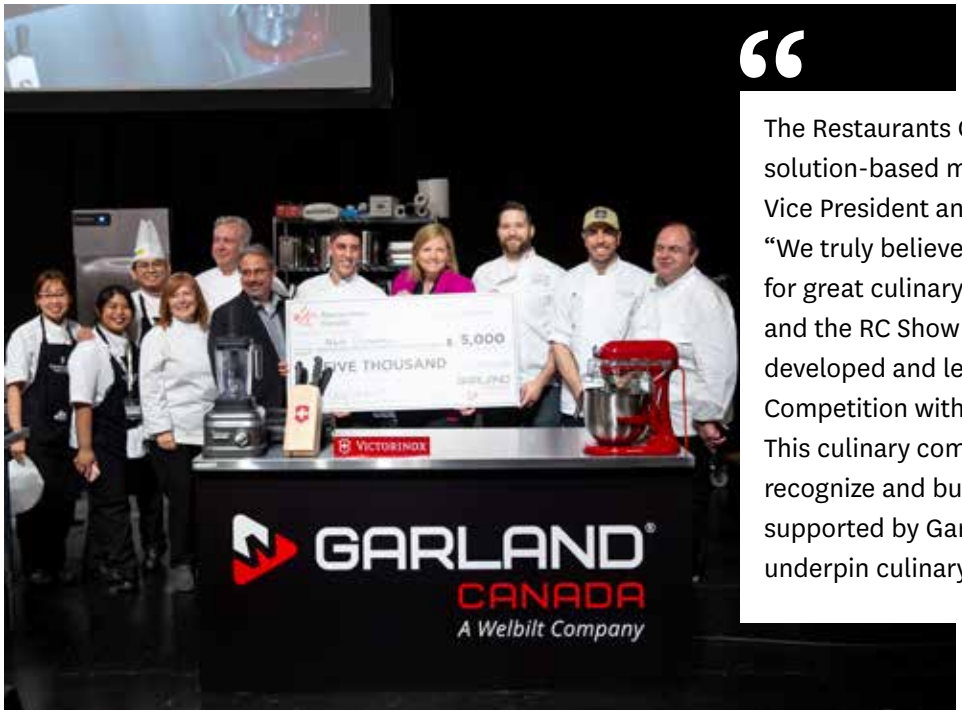
Alan Grebinski, Director, Business & Educational Development
Dairy Farmers of Ontario | alan.grebinski@milk.org

LIVE AND IN PERSON!

RC Show
Restaurants Canada
The voice of foodservice | La voix des services alimentaires
• THE HOSPITALITY EVENT OF THE YEAR •



RC Show is back live and in person! Restaurants Canada knows that the Canadian foodservice and hospitality industry is hungry for face-to-face experiences, and as we sit on the precipice of an industry upswing, we're here to satisfy that craving for in-person interactions and to deliver the solutions and insights needed to revive your business.



> The Restaurants Canada Show is a critical element to our solution-based marketing strategy," says Mary Chiarot, Vice President and General Manager of Garland Canada. "We truly believe our products and brands are essential tools for great culinary experiences for chefs and for their guests and the RC Show puts us in front of key buyers. We have also developed and leveraged the Garland Canada Culinary Competition with Restaurants Canada as part of the RC Show. This culinary competition provides a platform to discover, recognize and build the culinary leaders of tomorrow, all supported by Garland Canada brands and products that underpin culinary excellence."

Restaurants Canada is thrilled to welcome our industry back to its conference, trade show, competition and events with the very fitting theme of REVIVAL. RC Show 2022 will be a hybrid model, being held once again in Toronto, Ontario at the Enercare Centre at Exhibition Place and virtually as well.

Combining a dynamic trade show floor, an international buyers program, competitions, and networking events with live and on-demand content delivered on a world-class broadcast platform, attendees will have the opportunity to shop, taste, learn, connect and REVIVE their business.

"For more than 75 years, industry professionals have been looking to the RC Show to find the best advice, tools and expertise to help them run their businesses, and this year is no different," says Todd Barclay, President of Restaurants Canada. "Our last live show was the most successful show to date, and the last major event before COVID-19 hit the industry. We look forward to being one of the first back with an in-person event."

WHY YOU SHOULD ATTEND

Restaurants Canada's forecast for foodservice sales is nearly $80 billion in 2022. Additionally, according to the Restaurants Canada Discerning Diners Report, 89 per cent of Canadians say that they are looking forward to eating out with family and friends. Adding to this, 78 per cent of Canadians say that they are yearning for comfort food during pandemic stress and 64 per cent say that dining out will be an important part of their lifestyle post-pandemic. It's clear that there is strong pent-up demand for dining out - but is your business prepared to meet this push from consumers?

While our industry remains hopeful during this period of recovery, we are not immune to some of the trials on the horizon. Many of our members have raised flags around labour or supply chain issues, and topics like anti-racism and sustainability remain top of mind for operators. At such a pivotal moment for restaurants, it's fundamental that you have accurate, up-to-date insights and information from the industry leaders and pioneers paving the way.

This is the hospitality event of the year where the industry comes together under one roof. RC Show 2022 presents our industry with the opportunity to take in top class content, competitions, and the latest research insights and trends.

This is where we showcase the newest tech, food and beverage innovation, and where we bring buyers and sellers together to network at our events and do business through our matchmaking and meetings system and buyers program. If you are in the foodservice and hospitality business this is the event not to be missed.

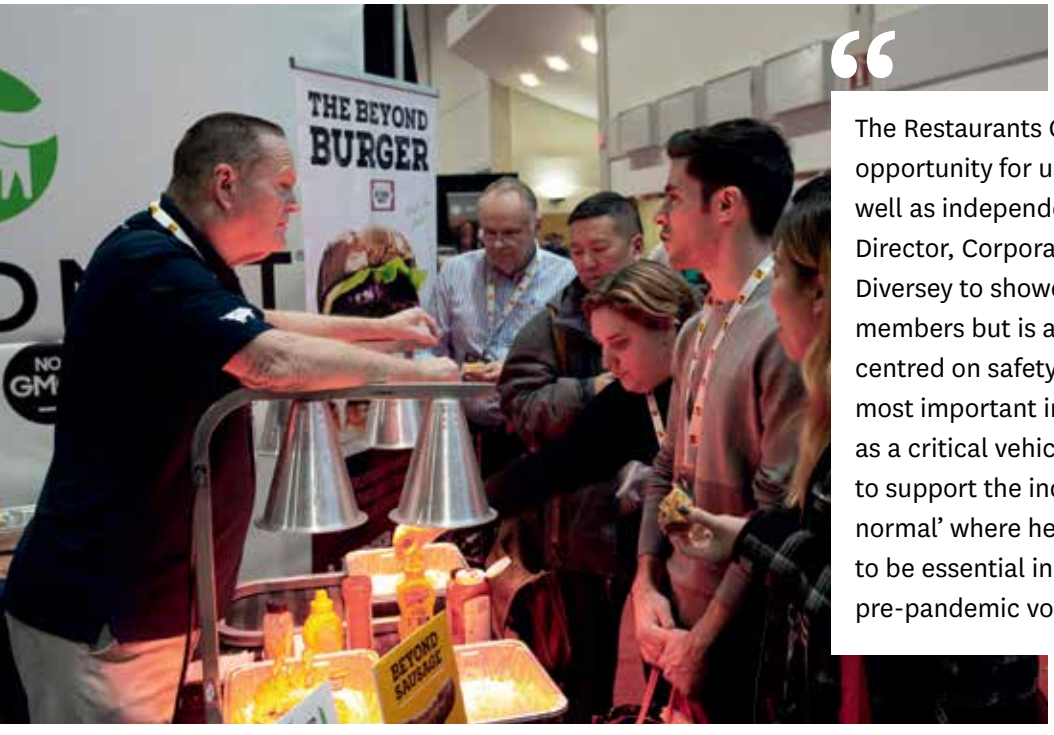




THE ESSENTIAL CONTENT TO FUEL YOUR REVIVAL

With an overarching theme of REVIVAL, this year will deliver not-to-be-missed content that directly addresses the challenges and changes your business is facing in 2022 and beyond.

- Catch experts as they address the current labour crisis and offer solutions focusing on attracting, retaining and training staff.
- Hear from thought leaders across all sectors who will bring innovative ideas and new ways to do business to positively impact your bottom line.
- Understand how to build a positive cash flow and diversify your revenue streams.
- Listen to industry professionals speak on diversity and how we can increase inclusiveness in the foodservice community.
- Hear from authorities on mental health and addiction solutions and how to foster a positive workplace.
- Gather data-driven insights from the Restaurants Canada research team as well as exclusive research from our partners. Collect meaningful and actionable advice as they deep dive into the data to aid in your revival.
- Take in sustainability best practices, learn how waste reduction can positively affect your bottom line and discover products to assist in your sustainable journey.
- Learn about new revenue generating opportunities for your business including meal kits, retail, catering, events and food trucks.



> The Restaurants Canada show provides an excellent opportunity for us to network with industry professionals, as well as independent and chain operators," says David Coulter, Director, Corporate Sales at Diversey. "This not only allows Diversey to showcase its innovations and technologies to members but is also the perfect platform to present solutions centred on safety, brand protection, guest experience and most important infection prevention. We view the RC Show as a critical vehicle to educate our customers. It allows us to support the industry by helping operators adapt to a 'new normal' where heightened levels of facility hygiene are going to be essential in driving consumer confidence and rebuilding pre-pandemic volumes."

WHAT'S NEW AND WHAT'S RETURNING

- **NEW** this year, attendees can expect to find solution-based content both in-person and online.
- Exciting culinary and bar competitions will be back as will cocktail, wine, and coffee competitions showcasing the latest innovations in product, process and service.
- A fully-functional pop-up restaurant and bar will showcase innovative concepts, solutions and products to add to your business.
- An enhanced domestic and international Buyers Program that will attract global speakers and bring buyers and sellers together supported in part by a contribution from CanExport Association, a program of Global Affairs Canada.
- A simplified Match-making & Meetings System to help you make the most of your time at the Show.
- Networking at Restaurants Canada's signature events including RC Show's Opening Night Reception, Industry Night Out, Top to Top and Breakfast With Champions.
- **NEW!** A Design Pavilion to help you source and learn from the best in both beautiful and functional design trends, ideas and products.





HOW WE'RE KEEPING YOU SAFE

Restaurants Canada is excited to bring back the energy of an in-person event and we want to assure guests that we are making all efforts to ensure the safety of attendees. Here are the safety measures that will be implemented at RC Show 2022.

All of the current federal, provincial and local health and safety guidelines will be strictly followed to ensure everyone's safety including:

- Proof of vaccination for entry (medical exception letters will be accepted)
- Hand sanitizer stations at entrances, regular intervals and in high traffic areas
- One-way foot traffic in the aisles
- Physical distancing protocols and markers
- Face masks
- Food sampling safety measures
- The trade show floor is a spacious 290,000 sq ft allowing ample space to follow physical distancing guidelines.

The RC Show is happy to partner once again with Exhibition Place, the first Canadian venue to receive the GBAC Star™ Facility Accreditation. Designed to assist venues of all sizes to develop a comprehensive system of cleaning, disinfection and infectious disease prevention, GBAC STAR™ helps facilities better prepare for, respond to and recover from biohazard situations like the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) keeping guests safe.

We look forward to welcoming you and your team back to a safe environment, providing you with the essential programming, an innovative Show Floor and events to revive your business! Visit rcshow.com to book a booth, buy your tickets or learn more about what you can look forward to and how to participate.



THE MARKETPLACE

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Quality Since 1840

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.

Blue Sky
HEMP VENTURES

Hemp is an excellent source of easily digestible protein and contains more omega-3s than any other food. It's gluten-free, vegan, and delicious—and it might save the planet. Usable in butter, ice cream, sauces, cereals, protein shakes and more, hemp has a subtle nutty flavour. Growing hemp requires little water, no pesticides or fertilizers and cleans the soil and sequesters Co2. Blue Sky Hemp Ventures are proud leaders in whole-plant utilization, sustainably farming hemp grain for food, flowers for nutraceuticals and fibre for alternatives to plastics, textiles, fuels and more. The result: lower costs to our customers and to the planet.



Products available: hulled hemp seed, hemp protein powder, cold-pressed hemp seed oil, refined hemp seed oil (colourless and odourless)
Contact: Ben Carnevale for wholesale pricing | blueskyhempventures.com/contact-us/



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Restaurants across Canada have been dealing with constant changes for the past year. As Canada's largest foodservice distributor, Sysco has been working tirelessly to ensure all our talented food experts are ready to help you prepare for whatever comes next. In addition to Canada's largest supply chain, broadest product assortment and best-in-class resources, we also offer flexible payment options with no delivery minimums. So you'll have the reliability, confidence and flexibility you need to adapt your business.

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Beyond Meat



Beyond Chicken Tenders are a delicious, nutritious, plant-based option that does not sacrifice any of the taste and texture of traditional chicken tenders: a crispy, golden outside followed by a flavourful, juicy inside. In consumer testing, the product scored at parity in overall flavour to animal-based chicken tenders.[1] They are perfect as a standalone appetizer or entree, or as an addition to sandwiches, salads and tacos.

Beyond Chicken Tenders are made from simple, plant-based ingredients, contain 14g of protein per serving, have 40% less saturated fat than the leading foodservice chicken tender, contain no GMOs, antibiotics, or hormones, and have no cholesterol.
Available at Canadian foodservice distributors nationally.

[1] Based on US CLT results, May 2021, 95% CI, n=200



Zestpot

Emilie Henry cookware's prominence lies in their specialty cooking items which are an ideal addition to any kitchen. Whether you are looking to make traditional French baguettes or pizzas right out of your kitchen oven, you aren't limited in your cookware options. Indulge in an ooey-gooey baked Brie recipe with their specialized cheese baker or Moroccan meals served in a gorgeous tagine. These items and more can be found at zestspot.com, Canada's newest online, premium culinary retailer. Zestspot is a one-stop-shop for premium kitchen-ware products and a new destination for Canadian culinary inspiration for food lovers of all skill levels, from novice to professional chef.

All items are available now online at zestspot.com | Pricing: variable



Made from Leamington, Ontario-farmed tomatoes, **French's® Ketchup** is now available in a 2.84L bottle to keep your back of house running smoothly.

Whether used as a base to make a signature sauce or as a topping, French's Ketchup is the sweet, tangy must-have your restaurant deserves.

Look for the Promise Seal—a guarantee of quality, community and Canadian-made goodness.



TABLZ

Restaurants occupy the most valuable commercial real estate in the world and yet we are the last industry in the world to let our guests upgrade their seats.

No wonder on average we only make 3.6% profit margins!

Tablz is the first ever net new profit tool for restaurants, enabling your guests to voluntarily upgrade specific seats. Whether it's 5$ or 50$ for your best table, this guest service tool is changing restaurant economics forever.

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Restaurants Canada

Board Member Roundtable



HAKAN ULUER
The Bertossi Group
HALIFAX

As foodservice operations across the country work towards recovery, Restaurants Canada is engaging with the community to ensure that we are representing your interests and needs at every level. As part of our efforts, we want to give our members and our industry insight into the people leading the way in this era of revival.

As the 'voice of foodservice', our board is composed of representatives that showcase the variety of establishments present within the Canadian foodservice industry. From smaller independents to nationwide chains, the board pulls from every aspect of our sector to verify that all voices are heard.

In this Board Member Roundtable, we are connecting with three new board members: **Hakan Uluer, Owner of The Bertossi Group, Kelly Higginson, Executive Vice President of Operations for Eastern Canada at The CFW Group, and Brent Todd, Vice President Purchasing & Distribution at A&W**.

Read on to learn from these industry pioneers as they discuss the current challenges their operations are facing, what they see for the future of foodservice, and what they're working to accomplish through their work with Restaurants Canada.



KELLY HIGGINSON
The CFW Group
ONTARIO

MM Tell us about yourself, and describe your operations (or restaurant) for us.

Hakan Uluer: I've spent the last three decades of my career working in the restaurant and hospitality industry. In 2009, I came to Halifax, Nova Scotia to raise my family and I began working with the Bertossi family, whose award-winning restaurants were founded on traditional recipes from Friuli, Italy, and garnered a reputation for excellence through authentic Italian flavours and culinary delights.

Ownership of the company was a natural progression for me, and I continue to collaborate withthe Bertossis to this day. Our Motto continues to be... "We make everything by hand, we care about every detail, we love food with a passion and we serve it with style."

The Bertossi Group consists of four authentic, Italian inspired restaurants in Halifax: The Bicycle Thief, Ristorante a Mano, La Frasca and il Mercato Trattoria. Known for excellence and exceptional customer service, they have become destinations for both locals and visitors from around the world.

Kelly Higgson: I've been in the hospitality industry for over 25 years', it is an integral part of my fabric. The incredibly diverse components (people, food, wine, marketing, costs, systems) that contribute to success fascinate me continually. The application of them to the principal focus—the guest, is truly magical.

The CFW group is an independent restaurant group of eight large-scale higher-end, high-volume restaurants throughout North America; five are located in Canada and three in the U.S.



BRENT TODD
A&W Food Services of Canada Inc.
VANCOUVER

The Canadian operations span from Ottawa to Vancouver. The restaurants in the CFW group are: The Shore Club Ottawa, The Shore Club Toronto, Ki Modern Japanese & Bar in Toronto's Financial District and Joe Fortes in Vancouver and newly opened in Whistler.

My leadership development is constant and I try to learn something new every day from those around me—those that surround me are people who are better at their specific jobs than I could ever be! These individual people and their strengths are nothing short of remarkable when working together as a team to create that memorable experience. As a leader, I try to bring Intuition, empathy, passion, vision, integrity and emotional intelligence to my team.

Brent Todd: We're a quick service restaurant chain serving iconic menu items including A&W Teen Burgers, handmade onion rings and frosted mugs of A&W Root Beer. I work out of the A&W home office located in North Vancouver, BC. We have just over a thousand A&W restaurants operating from coast to coast across our great country

I joined the Purchasing and Distribution team as Manager, Distribution and Equipment Services at A&W in 2005. I was appointed Director, Franchise Sales and Marketing in 2008 and Senior Director, Facilities and Franchise Sales in 2012. In August 2020 I was appointed Vice President, Purchasing and Distribution. Prior to joining the Franchisor, I spent a decade in various managerial roles with Toronto-based Bachly Construction culminating in the role of Vice President.

I hold a Bachelor of Administrative Studies from York University and an MBA from the Richard Ivey School of Business at the University of Western Ontario.

What was your first job in foodservice?

HU: My first job in foodservice was as a busser with the Sun Hotel Group in Istanbul, in 1987 we were named the best hotel in Istanbul, Turkey!

KH: My first job in foodservice was as a busser at The Keg in North Vancouver.

BT: My first job in foodservice was with A&W focused on the franchising of new restaurant opportunities in my home province of Ontario.

The very first part of my onboarding at A&W involved completing our six-week new franchisee training program which was a great initial immersion into the industry for me.

What attracted you to the industry? How long have you been in the industry?

HU: I have been in the hospitality industry for 34 years—I was attracted to the restaurant & hospitality industry as a child, watching my uncle manage hotels. I used to spend days in the lobby enjoying the good food and atmosphere in the hotel. I loved listening to him speak to guests in different languages, and connect with people from all over the world.

KH: What started as a part-time job over 25 years ago quickly became a passionate part of my life. The collaboration and teamwork to create that memorable experience for the guest is what hooked me. All the details and pieces that come together is a magical process.

I was lucky enough as a child to spend a lot of time dining out and these experiences always fascinated me. I was conscious of and really amazed at how everyone worked together to make a long-lasting impression throughout our dinner. Of course—I cannot leave out the food and wine!

BT: I've been in the industry since I joined A&W 19 years ago. I was attracted to the industry by the incredible people I encountered at A&W and the steadfast commitment to our "Climate" of how we work together that has been such a powerful foundation at A&W for decades.

How has COVID affected your operation(s)?

HU: Operating four restaurants during COVID really taught us how to operate on a tighter budget, while still trying to find creative ways to maximize the experience for our guests.

KH: First and foremost, the detrimental impact this has had on our people is unprecedented. To have our operations come to a full stop, and for our staff to have their livelihoods come to a full stop, was emotionally jarring for everyone.

Owners, operators and hospitality employees have paid an enormous price in this battle that has impacted their livelihoods, future fiscal security and the subsequent stability of the entire industry.

BT: Along with all of our fellow restaurant operators, A&W went through an incredible amount of flux and challenges as COVID emerged and then ebbed and flowed over the last 18 months. We are almost entirely a franchised organization and our focus from the start and throughout has been on the safety of our people and our guests.

Its been an incredibly challenging journey as we worked hard to support our franchise operators to be there for our guests providing a meal and some moments of comfort amid the COVID storm.

What have you learned from this past year and a half?

HU: The past year has really reinforced how important the people in the industry are. From the people you work with, to the guests who join us each day, people are our greatest asset.

KH: Investing in our employees is the most important investment we can make. The significance of our teams and the impact each and every one of them has on our operations is invaluable. Ensuring we maintain flexibility and remain adaptable to change. Last, but never the least, remembering to laugh.

BT: Embracing the situation that exists and accepting that the solutions needed may be counter to everything you've known and experienced before.

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

HU: COVID has been tough for every industry, but, for restaurants in particular, we are facing a major labour shortage.

KH: Instability. The uncertainty of not knowing what is going to be thrown at us around the corner. The industry is seeing a huge rebound but the underlying labour challenges, supply chain issues and concerns about "what's next" weigh heavily on business operators.

BT: As we hopefully begin to emerge from the pandemic, we're hearing and seeing more signs of staffing shortages throughout the industry and in supply chains.

From your point of view, what does the industry need right now from the government to survive and thrive?

HU: We need the government to recognize the challenges that we face—the restaurant & hospitality industry is one of the largest employment industries in Canada. As operators, we would love to see the government provide more incentives and support to students who want to study hospitality and culinary education, and also make the process more streamlined for international talent looking to relocate to Canada to work in our industry.

KH: The subsidies provided primarily by the federal government were significant and definitely a lifeline for the industry. As we head into the 19th month of this pandemic, we need to have long-term commitments from both levels of government. Our business plans have been operating on a week to week, month to month basis which is just not sustainable. Short term subsidy extensions and not enough long-term planning and discussion with all levels of government is making it very difficult for the industryto go from survival to thriving.

BT: Strong, cohesive leadership for Canadians to quell the pandemic and support for restaurant operators most heavily impacted by it.

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

HU: Being a part of Restaurants Canada represents an incredible opportunity to have our voices heard by the National Board of Directors, government officials and other major players within the industry. I am looking forward to the opportunity to collaborate with other members from across the country, and to share what makes the restaurant industry in Nova Scotia so special as well!

KH: To contribute to an industry that has given me so much. As a woman in a senior position I am driven to see more diversity and opportunity therein. As an employer I want to ensure our industry continues to attract the next generation of leaders, and that we are considered a viable and attractive career option.

BT: A&W has been a long-standing contributor to Restaurants Canada as one of the very important ways in which we're able to contribute to and give back to the Canadian restaurant industry. I was honoured to have the opportunity to personally contribute in any way I could.

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

HU: I am eager to work with the other members of Restaurants Canada to tackle the labour shortage in the restaurant industry.

KH: Diversity in leadership positions of the hospitality industry.

BT: Helping the industry to move from 'surviving' to 'thriving'.

What are some of your favourite local restaurants?

HU: Although I might be biased, I spend every night of the week in one of our four restaurants —I truly love the food, the atmosphere and the people!

KH: That is a very difficult question in a city like Toronto with such an incredible food scene. La Palma, Giulietta, La Paradis, Lalibela Ethiopian Cuisine, Cafe Boulud, Greta Solomon, and Owen Sound's Casero Kitchen Table would be a start. So many incredible places to enjoy!

BT: Many around Vancouver including Yuwa, Vancouver Fish Company, Sandbar and of course A&W!

If you could sum up 2021 in one word, so far - what would that be?

HU: Opportunities

KH: Surreal

BT: Resilience

If you had to name the intention, objective, or goal you have for 2022 (or what you anticipate for 2022), what would that be?

HU: In 2022, I am looking forward to another year of continuous improvement! I am excited to be able to continue to invest in the people and community, so that together we can continue to showcase the very best this industry has to offer.

KH: Expect the unexpected, maintain your creativity and adaptability. Remember to laugh and enjoy the people you surround yourself with. Never let the challenge extinguish your passion.

BT: Returning to spending more time in person building relationships with our franchisees, colleagues, supplier partners and other important partners around A&W

NEXT ISSUES ROUNDTABLE:

TINA CHIU
Mandarin Restaurant Franchise Corporation, Brampton, ON

LESLIE ECHINO
Annabelle's Kitchen, Calgary, AB

GENE CORMIER
Hub City Social; Restaurant Clos Inc.; Halo Donuts Inc.:, Moncton, NB

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