# MENU

CANADA'S FOODSERVICE MAGAZINE




## FOODSERVICE FACTS 2022:

***Restaurants Canada's Chief Economist Chris Elliott on the stranger things that lie beneath the "return to normal"***

## THE CONVERSATION:

with **The Re-Seasoning Coalition Co-Founders**
Chef Philman George
& Elle Asiedu

# LA FARFALLA

**INSIDE ASCARI HOSPITALITY GROUP'S METAMORPHOSIS WITH**

# CHEF JOHN SINOPOLI

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# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

*And just like that, we bring summer to a close. For many of you, this marks the end of one of the first restriction-free high seasons since the beginning of the pandemic. For others, it marks the start of a journey towards bringing back the losses that have come as a result of the past few years. With this, I think for every member of the foodservice and hospitality industry, these past few months have really highlighted that we are not out of the woods yet. We've seen new challenges arise, or be entirely amplified, due to the COVID-19 pandemic; think inflation, supply shortages, debt and the desperation our industry is experiencing with the need for labour. These trials ahead will likely define how this industry does business over the next decade, as we shift to implement new systems and ways of work, ultimately redefining Canadian foodservice and hospitality.*

In this issue of MENU Magazine, we spend time focusing on *what's next*, and how we move towards the future redefining how we do business to come back stronger than ever. Starting with the tools used to run businesses; we connected with leading brands in the financial space to provide our readers with a list of what works, bringing you insights that we hope will provide you with clarity on what you should be investing in. You'll also hear from The Re-Seasoning Coalition, a non-profit organization offering the tools needed to remove barriers to success by helping the foodservice industry achieve greater representation of Black Canadians across every organizational level – an important conversation that could be the answer to attracting and retaining new talent. We also caught up with leading restaurateurs like Ascari Hospitality Group's own Chef John Sinopoli, who offers an inside look at the ingredients behind his company's metamorphosis.

With the future in focus, we see more organizations looking to feed the next generation of the industry. This is much like what *La Tablée des Chefs* aims to do. Their staff and volunteers combat food insecurity with an innovative food recovery program designed to feed people today, coupled with creative educational programs that will provide skills and training to the people of tomorrow.

Right now, rebuilding is the topic on everyone's mind, and with that, we are moving in a positive direction, with still a ways to go – though we cannot forget, replace or even redo the last two years, we can come back stronger than ever. And we can ensure the challenges ahead of our industry bring forth a redefinition of foodservice in Canada.





**Tianna Goguen**
Editor & Director, Communications

Fall 2022
Volume 7 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.*

# 7.4

**MENU** is published four times per year by Restaurants Canada

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MENUmagCA

**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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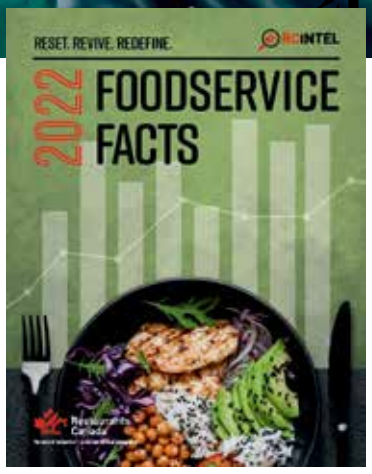


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MENU

# Proust Questionnaire with Restaurants Canada *President & CEO Christian Buhagiar*



The selection of new leader is always a big decision for both the organization and the candidate. Given the specific challenges of the times we're living in, the arrival of Restaurants Canada's new President and CEO, Christian Buhagiar, is as critical as it is exciting.

Christian is a new initiate to the foodservice industry, so some may be asking, "Who is Christian Buhagiar?". As we eagerly anticipate the activity and impact of his first 90 days in the role (and beyond), we thought we'd deploy the time-honoured Proust Questionnaire to help begin to understand the man we've all been waiting to meet.

**Q: Your perfect idea of happiness?**
**A:** Walking with my wife on a golf course on a final-round Sunday of an LPGA event watching our daughters battling for the win in the final group.

**Q: Your greatest fear?**
**A:** Something happening to my children.

**Q: The trait you most deplore in yourself?**
**A:** I am very comfortable with who I am. I don't focus on deploring any part of myself.

**Q: The trait you most deplore in others?**
**A:** Lack of kindness. Selfishness.

**Q: Which living person do you most admire?**
**A:** My wife.

**Q: What is your greatest extravagance?**
**A:** I'm not extravagant.

**Q: What is your current state of mind?**
**A:** Excited for the opportunities that lie ahead.

**Q: What is your most overrated virtue?**
**A:** Call my wife and ask.

**Q: On what occasion do you lie?**
**A:** When people ask me how I'm feeling. Other than that, I don't lie (sometimes that gets me in trouble).



**Q: Your favourite qualities in a person?**
**A:** Kindness. Inquisitiveness. Strong work ethic. Humbleness.

**Q: Which words or phrases do you most overuse?**
**A:** 100%.

**Q: What or who is the greatest love of your life?**
**A:** My wife and my daughters.

**Q: When and where were you happiest?**
**A:** During the birth of my daughters.

**Q: Which talent would you most like to have?**
**A:** Major league baseball player, but then I wouldn't be the CEO of Restaurants Canada.

## Q: What do you consider your greatest achievement?

**A:** I don't live my life for achievements, I just try to add value and be better each day.

**Q: If you were to die and come back as a person or a thing, what would it be?**
**A:** One of my cats—they always look totally relaxed.

**Q: Where would you most like to live?**
**A:** On a golf course, somewhere warm.

**Q: What is your most treasured possession?**
**A:** I don't treasure possessions.

**Q: What do you regard as the lowest depth of misery?**
**A:** I try to view the world as a "glass half full."




**Q: What is your favourite occupation?**
**A:** CEO of Restaurants Canada. If the question is what occupation I most respect, it would be a soldier.

**Q: What is your most marked characteristic?**
**A:** Decisiveness.

**Q: What do you value in your friends?**
**A:** Loyalty.

**Q: Who are your favourite writers?**
**A:** I don't tend to read books. I prefer reading the news.

**Q: Who is your hero of fiction?**
**A:** Indiana Jones.

## Q: Which historical figure do you most identify with?

**A:** Winston Churchill.

**Q: What are your favourite names?**
**A:** Melodie, Elliana and Emilia.

**Q: What is it that you most dislike?**
**A:** This questionnaire.

**Q: What is your greatest regret?**
**A:** That I agreed to take this questionnaire, and that I stopped studying French in high school.

**Q: How would you like to die?**
**A:** In a blaze of glory.

## Q: What is your motto?

**A:** Work hard and be kind.

**Q: Your favourite meal?**
**A:** I don't have a favourite meal. I love all kinds of food.

**Q: Your favourite wine or beverage?**
**A:** Tea.

**Q: Your most memorable restaurant experience?**
**A:** I've had so many, and I look forward to having many more as CEO of Restaurants Canada.



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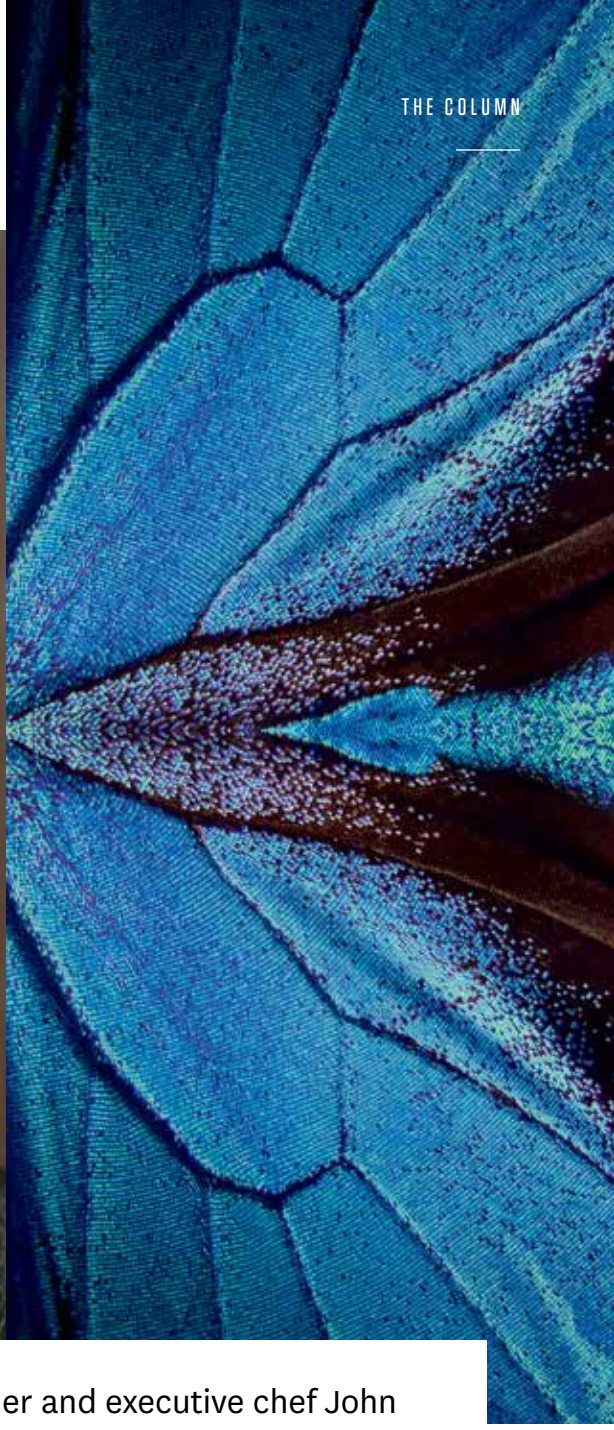
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# LA FARFALLA:

**Chef John Sinopoli shares the mechanics behind Ascari Hospitality Group's stunning metamorphosis.**

Led by owner and executive chef John Sinopoli, president Erik Joyal, and partner and chief operating officer Rahil Hoque, Toronto's Ascari Hospitality Group has transformed from a celebrated single-unit independent to a multi-line restaurant, catering and events, and retail business without compromising the original founders' vision, product or momentum. Not even for a global pandemic. Chef John Sinopoli shares the Ascari story with hope that other operators can learn and grow from their experience.




We caught up with the always busy and always inspirational Chef John Sinopoli (on a drive home from a late meeting) to talk about Ascari Hospitality Group's intentional and successful evolution and growth, which continued unabated throughout the pandemic. Generously willing to share knowledge and experience with others in the industry, John did not disappoint, and let us into his cocoon.

Sharing is what Sinopoli does best, and he's built a growing culinary empire on inviting people into his "house" for world-class, quality cooking without smoke and mirrors. "Our technique is sound, precise and respectful of the ingredients. It's honest, high-quality, professionally-cooked food, but there has to be an element of surprise," he shares. "A lot of the items on our menu are inspired by our family's table at home."

Growing up as the kid of Italian immigrants, on Sundays Sinopoli's family would share polenta with sugo served on a wooden board. "So you make this sauce that's super rich and tender with all these offcuts in it and you bring out a three by four-foot wooden board with the polenta and you just pour the sauce over it. Everyone just takes their fork and eats it off the board. It was this incredible, fun, communal experience when you were a kid. Your cousins are over, your friends and family are over—it's a great way to feed a lot of people without dirtying a bunch of plates. When we brought that into the restaurant, people just loved the shared experience. These are the food memories that matter to us. The food has to be delicious, the mechanics have to be correct, but what keeps people coming back is the emotional connection. You want your staff and guests to be emotionally connected to what you do. Then, you need to let your people spread their wings and fly—create their own stories, their own regulars, and their own emotions on the plate."

Deeply committed to this principle, Sinopoli tells the story of his journey from chef-owner of a single-unit independent chef to multi-unit operator, slow-cooked for the times we're in, and ready to share with the restaurant community.

## *On getting smarter to grow bigger...*

"I think we're unique in the way we're transitioning from being a small operator with one or two restaurants to something hopefully a little bigger—a medium-sized company without a ton of external funding. We're just trying to bootstrap it and grow organically. We want to pace-set and show other smaller operators that they can do it. They can make that move. It's possible to get out from behind the counter or behind the stove and create the systems and protocols they need to replicate to get there."

Growth like this did not always seem like an achievable path for Ascari—the decision to transform and scale the business was one John grappled with. "For years, I was behind the stove and in the kitchen with my team and Eric was front-of-house running the business side and reservations and the team up front. We asked ourselves how anyone could do more than one restaurant and keep up the quality control. We felt we had to be there every day and even our two days off a week could be challenging—we were always getting phone calls."

The mechanics of our decision to try and grow really came down to two things: team and training.

## *On hiring forward...*

"The strategy for us is to hire people who are probably more qualified than the position we need them in in the moment, to think forward to where we need them to be a year from now, and then create a structure for those employees. If you know you need to fill a certain position in six months, what is the employee's path to learning about the place, who we are, and the culture of the space? We put them on a path and training system that facilitates that move up and gives them the confidence to own the new role. Whether you're hiring a sous chef or a floor manager who you want to be the GM, you hire someone with those future-state qualities who just hasn't taken that next step yet and then set them up for success."

For the Ascari team, Sinopoli notes that failure is purpose-built into their employee development model. "In time, we slowly take our hands off the steering wheel and allow them a little rope to fail. One of the strategies

we learned to be very effective was to not be so uptight about people making mistakes. What we remained uptight about was how they stood up again or how they got up and recovered. That was much more important to us. Did they make a mistake, tell us, and then own the solution? Or, did they make a mistake and leave it to us to figure out the solution? We promote people who create the solutions for us to approve, disapprove or contribute to. That's how our growth happened. We were able to open a second place by leaving the first place in the hands of capable team members and move on to the opening, which requires singular attention. Now, we have three restaurants, a retail wine shop, wine bar and prepared food store as well as a full-fledged event and catering company with a commissary kitchen. It's possible, and it's a lot of hard work that takes a lot of faith in staff."

It's not one-size-fits-all in the Ascari universe. Ultimately, it's about listening, observing and adapting to give and receive the employer-employee relationship. "There are times when it's beneficial to be fully transparent with an employee and share your vision for their path. There are other times where you might just wait and see what people do with the opportunities they're given—let them spread their wings and show you their initiative. There are times when you're surprised; you don't think people have a certain potential and then, within weeks, you realize they're going above and beyond, picking things up very quickly, they intuitively understand the correct way to approach customers or speak to their fellow staff members, organize their tasks and their day. There are people who just show up on time every day ready to learn and grow and work hard. Then, there are people who come and for some reason just want to be passengers. Every team may have a few passengers, but it's the first group you watching and waiting to groom, train and pour your energy, money and time into. They're the ones asking questions and requesting new opportunities to learn."




## *On building up confidence and showing respect...*

"Sometimes, you do have to nudge a little and work with people to instill confidence in someone who may be a little timid," Sinopoli speaks from experience. "Maybe no one has told them they're good at what they do? I worked as a cook in a very busy, very high expectation restaurant in New York City. I had been there for maybe six or eight months and had been moved to a new station that was incredibly challenging. Each day at five o'clock I was almost never ready, never set up and I wondered, "Is this just impossible or am I just not good enough to do this?" The chef, my boss, noticed I was down and asked what was wrong. I said, "I'm just never ready. I can't get it down." He looked at me and asked, "You do know that you're very good at what you do, right?" I did not know that. "Everything you put up is seasoned, and cooked correctly," he said. My confidence just clicked, and when your confidence goes up and your anxiety level goes down, your work production improves. Sometimes that's all you need is someone to lean over and finally tell you you're good at your job."

## *On attitude over aptitude...*

Consideration and respect only matter more as restaurants struggle to attract and retain great people. "I think it's important to note that the pandemic has changed the game in terms of hiring, quality of team members, training structure and work-life balance. The expectations of hospitality employees have changed, and probably for the better. People don't have to be worked into the ground to be considered fully dedicated and successful."

> *"The expectations of hospitality employees have changed, and probably for the better. People don't have to be worked into the ground to be considered fully dedicated and successful."*

Sinopoli doesn't focus on hiring solely based on where someone studied. "We've always hired based on resume. In the times we're in, we're hiring much more on attitude versus aptitude. We don't look down on any resume until we meet someone and really try to understand them. Recently, I've had some very talented cooks come to me through a history of chain restaurants. Normally, that's not where independents seek kitchen talent, but man—in a short-staffed world, people who understand systems and standard operating practice are very valuable. I can teach you how we cook, but what I love is the organized, task-mastering approach. We've changed how we look at resumes and who we take interviews with and who we love to hire. And then next, it's a question of personality—is this person a culture fit? —both within their team and the company. We've learned that the first two weeks of an employee's tenure is very indicative of their future within the company, and the responsibility of nailing those first two weeks is almost entirely on the company; not the employee. If we've done a good job of creating a comfortable, welcoming, structured environment, someone is going to feel comfortable and invested in the company and will be more forgiving of any small mistakes we might make. People need to build trust to forgive mistakes.



> *“There’s a reason people regularly patronize the better chain restaurants as frequently as they do. It’s because they get the kind of service they want. They get “warm and friendly” and they like it. They don’t want to be plate-shamed. That’s why when you’re in our house, we’re going to take care of you.”*

For us, the first couple of weeks of training, orientation, corporate awareness and personal introductions makes people feel like they’re part of the team in a meaningful way. We’re not perfect either, but we’re working on that because it matters, and expect the same from our staff in return.”

## *On the importance of sharing resto-culture.*

Sinopoli is a huge proponent of culture-building in the workplace. “Every strong company or operation needs to build a culture that is consistent and tangible. For us—and we discuss this all the time—our culture is about high-quality people who understand warm, friendly, approachable hospitality. We’re thoughtful and precise and make a strong attempt at avoiding all forms of pretension or losing touch with any customer who walks through the door. It means the hospitality must be honest and genuine so that everyone from the front to the back understands that we cook for customers. We don’t cook for ourselves. I oversee the back-of-house team, and that’s the one thing my corporate executive chef Luke Donato and I try to drive home. When the team develops specials, when they think about how to respond to customer requests, we try and accommodate. We’re there to cook for our guests. That said, we’re not a “say-yes-to-anything” culture. We are a customer-centric culinary operation. That doesn’t mean “fries with everything”. It means we stay true to the concept we’ve created and the expectations and boundaries we’ve worked so hard to set.”

This give and take is built into the Ascari business. Keeping the food and service honest and unpretentious while providing a true culinary experience is a nuanced balancing act. “We’re not here to teach our customers”, explains Sinopoli. “We’re here to share and listen. We bring in the best possible quality product and are always searching for new suppliers and interesting things to put on the plate or in the glass. We connect with our suppliers so we can tell the story of their food at the table and share the “hows” and the “whys.” That’s the cultural through-line for everything we do, whether it’s a coffee shop, a wine bar, a French brasserie or one of our Italian restaurants. I spent the better part of the last 25 years immersing myself in food, cooking, and wine and how to prepare things for people in a way that is impressive, but not intimidating. It may sound clichéd to say “warm, familial hospitality,” but there’s a reason people regularly patronize the better chain restaurants as frequently as they do. It’s because they get the kind of service they want. They get “warm and friendly” and they like it. They don’t want to be plate-shamed. That’s why when you’re in our house, we’re going to take care of you.”



ASCARI
HOSPITALITY GROUP

*Chef John Sinopoli, Owner and Executive Chef of Ascari Hospitality Group is Restaurants Canada’s 2022 Leadership Award winner. John’s love for the hospitality industry has been demonstrated in many ways over the years. As one of the founders of savehospitality.ca, in the early days of the pandemic, John helped launch a campaign to support the restaurant industry. The LocalLicious event followed, with restaurants offering prix fixe menus to help and highlight local restaurants.*

*John graduated from the French Culinary Institute and subsequently honed his skills at celebrated restaurants La Caravelle and Kraft in New York. Returning to Toronto in 2003, he cooked at Splendido until partnering with Erik Joyal in 2005. Today, Ascari Hospitality Group owns and operates Italian cuisine notables Ascari on King Street and Ascari Enoteca as well as the French brasserie-styled Gare de l’Est. They also offer in-person and online retail at Mercatino e Vini, including meal kits and prepared foods as well as curated wines and grocery items.*

# THE PASS

## Terroir Symposium: Calgary

Renowned chefs, restaurateurs and hospitality thought leaders gathered together from September 18 – 20, to find inspiration and to make connections at the first Terroir Symposium at the Central Library and other locations throughout the city. The inaugural symposium in Calgary reflects the nearly 6,000 restaurants, the craft beverage industry and local agricultural producers in the area. **Learn more at: terroirsymposium.com**

## Rendez-vous Gourmet Québec: Ottawa

More than 35 food manufactures will be ready to connect with restaurant owners, executive chefs, food buyers and retailers at the very first Rendez-vous Gourmet Québec at the Canadian Museum of Nature in Ottawa on October 17. Email David Dupuy, agri-food attaché with the Québec Trade Office in Toronto at **David.Dupuy@mce.gouv.qc.ca** to confirm your attendance.




## Michelin Stars in Toronto

A total of 74 restaurants made the inaugural selection for Toronto's MICHELIN Guide, including one Two-Star restaurant, 12 One-Star restaurants, 17 Bib Gourmand restaurants and 44 recommended restaurants, reflecting 27 different types of cuisine. In May, it was announced that Toronto is the first Canadian MICHELIN Guide destination, with Vancouver just around the corner. **Learn more at: guide.michelin.com**

## PEI International Shellfish Festival

Restaurants Canada was on the scene for Canada's biggest shellfish festival September 15 -18 in Charlottetown, PEI. This four-day festival featured top-notch food and culinary competitions including oyster shucking, junior chef challenges and PEI potato chowder championship. Shortly afterwards, Hurricane Fiona destroyed the cold storage facilities of the Lobster Barn, this year's Shellfish Excellence Award winner. In support of those affected by Hurricane Fiona, please consider donating to the Red Cross.

## Canada's Best List

Canada's Best List is back with the first post-pandemic list. To level the playing field, 12 new judges were welcomed, who were able to vote for great food wherever they found it. Restaurants could also be assessed on take-out in addition to, or instead of, the dine-in experience.
**Learn more at: canadas100best.com**






## Canadian Restaurant Investment & Leadership Summit

In its 12th year, the Canadian Restaurant Investment and Leadership Summit returns to **Toronto on November 3** and makes its debut in **Vancouver on November 10**. The Summit provides restaurant executives with new insights, timely data and networking opportunities to help prepare for the future.
**Learn more at: restaurantsummit.ca**

## With Honour and Appreciation...

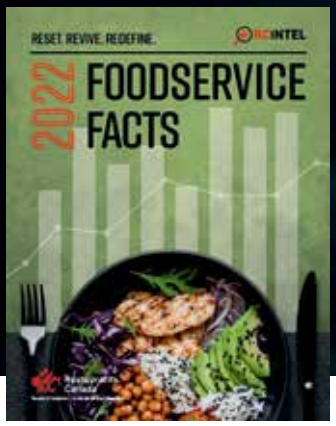
**Sandy De Almeida: Bartender, Icon, Trailblazer**
Known for her contributions to the Toronto bar and club scene through her choreographed bartending, crafty cocktails and overall kind and generous heart, De Almeida started her career at Urban Thai, and spent many years at the Gladstone Hotel, the Drake Hotel and many other places along West Queen West and throughout the city. Her passion, energy and knowledge of both bartending and human nature will be deeply missed by friends, family and patrons. De Almeida was 43.

**Peter Oliver: Restaurateur, Philanthropist, Entrepreneur**
Leader and co-founder of Oliver & Bonacini Hospitality (O&B), Peter Oliver was born in Cape Town, South Africa and moved to Canada in 1967 to attend McGill University. In 1993, he partnered with Chef Michael Bonacini, marking the beginning of Oliver & Bonacini Hospitality. As O&B grew, so did Oliver's philanthropic efforts, founding the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation's (JDRF) Ride to Cure Diabetes, serving on the national Board of Directors of JDRF, where he created fundraisers like the Flagpole 100 Challenge. He also founded the Leacock Foundation whose mission is rooted in the belief that all children, regardless of their circumstances, have limitless potential. He passed away at age 74 with his wife and children by his side.

**Xavier Poncin: Leader, Quarterback, Innovator**
As CEO of SIAL Canada, Xavier Poncin worked tirelessly to promote and grow one of Canada's largest and most popular food expositions. After two years of business school, Poncin spent 17 years playing professional football in Europe. He moved to Canada in 2009 as executive director of Expo Canada France and was named CEO in 2016. He passed away at age 50 and leaves behind his two sons.



# NUMBERS DON'T LIE




## Restaurants Canada's Chief Economist Chris Elliott on this year's Foodservice Facts report and the stranger things that lie beneath the "return to normal".

**As Chief Economist for Restaurants Canada, Chris Elliott's year revolves around the research, development and release of *Foodservice Facts*. The highly anticipated and trusted foodservice industry research and insights guide is designed to capture the economic moment and forecast opportunities and challenges to help guide the industry through the year ahead. The publication kicks off a flurry of media calls and presentations to stakeholders. As the long-term outlook on the recovery of the restaurant sector remains a topic of broad interest and passionate debate, this year's cycle has been intense.**

Coming off three presentations over three hectic days to Restaurants Canada members, media and industry suppliers, Chris sat down with **MENU** to talk about the big findings and the whitespace within the report. "This is not the presentation I wanted to be giving," Chris admits. "We had written most of *Foodservice Facts*, and it was generally positive—things were on the move, things were improving, there was almost that light at the end of the tunnel. In 2022, it seemed the worst was coming to an end after Omicron. But, when we conducted our Restaurant Outlook Survey of our members, and we got the result back, it just flipped everything on its head. As of July, half of our operators were still losing money and were unable to keep up with debt. It was astonishing to see those results. We started digging deeper and realized this was not just a statistical anomaly, this is what's actually happening in the industry."

Each year, Chris searches for a familiar, relatable story to add colour and context to the data and insights presented in the report. This year, he found his narrative in the universe popularized by the Netflix blockbuster series, *Stranger Things*. "How do you present, on the one hand, what looks like a world of "normal" where you walk down Main Street and the patios are full of people and then, on the flip side, you have operators struggling? I was using *Stranger Things* as an analogy throughout the presentation. It's a scenario where you have this normal human world, but then on the flipside you have this dark, parallel dimension called "The Upside Down". So, everything looks normal and positive on the surface, but underneath lies a deep, dark universe where operators are deeply struggling and wondering whether they're going to survive. What you may see on the surface isn't necessarily the reality for the restaurant operator."

Initially Chris had some trepidation about using a theme drawn from popular entertainment culture to convey such heavy data and insights, but feedback from internal and executive presentations has been positive and has even helped bring across the high strangeness of the report findings. "It exactly captures the challenges of what's happening in the industry. It's a bizarre world we're living in." Any concerns about using the analogy to help stakeholders grasp the implications of the report disappeared during the presentations. "Suppliers are saying they're using the information to find opportunities for growth. Operators are feeling validated that Restaurants Canada "gets it". We are corroborating the experience they're living every day. I think sometimes just hearing that you're not alone

and that others in the industry are struggling just as much can help. They're not in a panic—they're tough—but they want some understanding from government that these issues have not gone away. It's not, "patios are full, so everything's back to normal". If traffic is still at 2018 or 2019 levels, that wouldn't be a bad thing if our food, utility, labour and rent were also still at 2018 or 2019 prices. The problem is that traffic is at 2018-19 levels, but we're paying these highly inflated 2022 prices. That's what's putting new and increased pressure on operators now."

The report finds that this year's higher menu inflation represents food and labour costs, with other new supply chain factors adding to the stress on margin management. A shortage in supply and skyrocketing prices for takeout packaging have operators scrambling for new suppliers. "Overall, menu prices are expected to have climbed 7.8 per cent by the end of this year. Typically, we'd see menu inflation at about 2.5 or maybe 3 per cent each year. All those costs that households are paying, restaurant operators are also paying," Chris acknowledges. "All of the typical expenses operators have always had to manage have gone through the roof. Generally, operators are wary of price increases. They're now competing directly with grocery stores, so they wouldn't raise prices if they didn't have to. They're raising prices because, if they don't, they'll go out of business."

It was clear from the survey results that operators are taking many steps to minimize menu inflation including cutting back on hours of operation. "The pandemic made already-efficient operators even more efficient," Chris explains. "This has made them even more efficient. From cutting costs wherever they can to reducing operating hours. The average restaurant is operating at about 80 per cent of their normal capacity."

Within the tough conclusions reached in the reports are a few promising insights on the service side of the numbers. "There is a chart showing the results of a survey we conducted with Angus Reid in May where we'd asked consumers – "Yes, we know prices have gone up, but are you seeing value for your money when you go out to a restaurant?". It was interesting to note that even though the average cheque size for a full-service restaurant is higher than a quick-service restaurant, people responded "excellent" or "good" to the question at a much higher percentage than for quick-service restaurants. This suggests that when people are going out, there's not just food, there's also that service, that atmosphere, that experience. As one of our data partners said, "You have to make it a 10/10 guest experience every time every time somebody dines out at your restaurant, so they have that experience and feel like they're getting their money's worth.". Nine out of 10 Canadians say, that when they go out to a restaurant, whether it's quick-service or full-service, they feel they receive value for money."

Asked how he feels about his role as the bearer of tough news and the real people behind the statistics derived from the operator survey, Chris points to the comments as a major source of insight on the emotional context of Canadian restaurateurs. "The comments are so revealing in terms of how they're managing through this crisis—two-and-a-half years into this crisis—and it's emotional. We ask at the end of the survey, "Are there any other challenges you would like us to know about that we can include?". That helps us formulate upcoming surveys and how we relay operators interests to government. One operator this year wrote, "Where the [bleep] do I begin?!?", and literally wrote "bleep". That's the type of emotion that's coming out. They're overwhelmed…two-and-a-half years into this. Financially they're very much overwhelmed, and very much scared. Operators are commenting that they're going to have to take out another loan or cashing out RSPs to save their business. Statistics can't capture that. When you read that and you know that's a real operator trying to hold on for dear life and they may lose everything, it changes everything. And that has a bigger impact than the numbers themselves.

Noting that menu consolidation is another inflation management strategy many operators are using, Chris identifies that fewer restau-



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>
> **~ Chris Elliott, Chief Economist, Restaurants Canada**

rants are trying to be all things to all people. Building a culture around the whole restaurant that commodifies not only the food, but the complete experience as part of the price. And there may be learning from the chain restaurants for independent and full-service restaurants, particularly in building consistency of experience. “We’ve seen in past economic downturns that people weren’t willing to take a chance on a restaurant they didn’t know versus going to a restaurant that may cost a little more, but at least they know from past experience that it’s going to be good. The consistency is there, there are no surprises. That certainly helped a lot of the chain restaurants during past recessions.

In the future, the development of restaurant social identity and culture will also play a large role in adaptive strategies as the labour gap continues and the possibility of recession waits in the shadows. Building brand-of-place over brand-of-plate can help operators better manage supply chain, food cost and labour challenges by bringing customers into the culture and social values of the restaurant. Customers feel like they are part of and supporting something bigger than a meal and staff feel like the work they do is more meaningful. Chris calls out imPerfect Fresh Eats as an example of a restaurant that incorporates imperfect produce to lower overall costs without sacrificing taste and nutrition. “It’s also part of a larger movement towards sustainability, that is better for the environment by reducing food waste.”

Some relief on the labour gap may also come from the 60+ workforce. While Chris acknowledges that many members of this demographic may be retired and not looking for work, they may be interested in the social proposition afforded by the hospitality sector. “There’s a big group of people over 60 in Canada, but they only represent about eight per cent of the foodservice industry. That’s up from about four percent a couple of decades ago. This demographic has a great work ethic, and they can work during the day as their lives don’t revolve around school hours. I think this is a valuable market to connect with to address labour challenges, perhaps with accommodations like shorter shifts.”

The pandemic has changed lifestyle habits, some perhaps forever. Chris notes that the greatest factor affecting the full return of business in Canadian restaurants has been the shift to remote work within the portable work sector. “The biggest shift in consumer spend is due to hybrid working; people working remotely. According to our survey, about 33 per cent of Canadians who are employed are working entirely or mostly remotely. If you look at that by city, in Ottawa-Gatineau, that number is 60 per cent. I was up there not to long ago and it was a ghost town in the downtown core. There were no lineups whatsoever. Toronto is 44 per cent, but likely much higher in the downtown core.” This phenomenon shows clearly in consumer survey results, with wholly-remote workers reporting that they’re ordering breakfast about 50 per cent less and lunch about 66 per cent less than when they had worked onsite. “When we look at the traffic numbers reported by restaurants, they’re really showing exactly that”, says Chris. “It could be permanent if people continue to work remotely. Breakfast seems to be coming back, but lunch still has a long way to go for both full and quick-service restaurants. On the supper side, people are not going out for dinner after work as much, but they are ordering dinner for takeout and delivery more often if they work remotely than if they don’t. Remote work is having an overall greater negative impact in our industry because it’s impacting dayparts.” While Chris sees some positive gains in supper traffic, they’re mostly felt within the quick-service segment. Delivery remains strong and doesn’t appear to be returning to pre-pandemic levels. As for when (or if) the workforce will return to the office, he feels it’s too early to make that call, but he has faith in the sector to continue to adapt. “Whatever happens, restaurants will respond.”

Not to be left out of the discussion is operator concerns about the possibility of a recession and resulting further changes in consumer behaviour manifesting as fewer restaurant visits. If the worst fears do come to pass, there’s ample precedence to assume that it will hit the lower economic demographics first and hardest, immediately pulling that spend out of market. Higher income earners will also change their behaviour, likely reducing the frequency of their visits, conserving spend for dine-in or special occasions, curtailing spend on breakfast, snacking and lunch occasions. Even then, Chris notes that cheque size will also shrink as consumers forgo more expensive menu options and add-ons like fine wine, appetizers and desserts.

Many operators have given up the waiting game and instead are hyper-focusing on their



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most profitable daypart, focusing on their core service, what they do best. Chris calls out that the days of endless pivot and trying to cover all bases are at an end for most operators. "At this point, generally operators don't want to take many more risks. They're not saying, "Well, we do breakfast really well. Let's try and capture the supper market.", and then fail miserably. They're trying to focus on what they do well. They're micro-adjusting their business on a weekly basis. Let's say the price of a certain meat has gone up. Do they raise their prices to try and capture that increased cost or do they try and spread that increase across multiple items. Everyone has to decide the best way to manage it, but there's no doubt they're having to do it more frequently."

Asked to share his thoughts on restaurant formats and features that might help operators meet the challenges of these upside-down times, Chris suggests that an offering somewhere between quick-service and fast casual would be a good place to begin. "It would have a drive-through, the indoor space wouldn't be as big for on-premise dining, I would have my own window reserved for third-party delivery, and there would be a large digital component to the operation including advance orders to cut wait times and similar efficiencies to take some of the pressures off staff. Maybe not to the point of robots cooking in the kitchen, but certainly technology would have to play a bigger role."



*As the Chief Economist for Restaurants Canada, Chris Elliott manages and produces a comprehensive research program that has made Restaurants Canada a leading source of information for and about Canada's $95-billion foodservice industry. Chris produces a number of member reports that analyze key industry trends and economic forecasts. Chris has worked with Restaurants Canada for 20 years, has a Bachelor of Arts and Master degree in Economics and specializes in economic modeling and forecasting.*

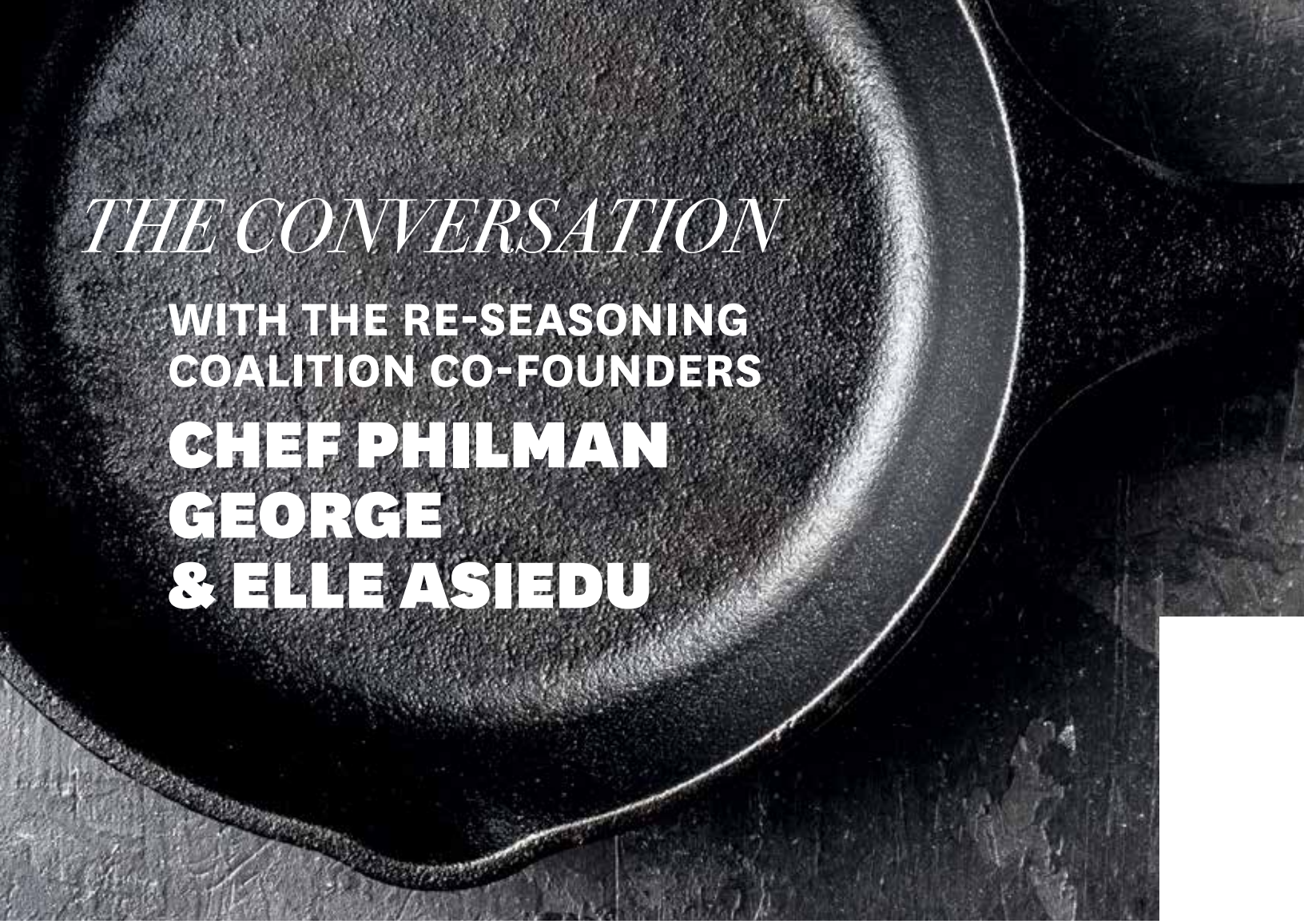
## The 2022 Foodservice Facts report is here!




Foodservice Facts is Canada's most trusted foodservice industry research and insights guide. This special edition of Foodservice Facts looks at how foodservice operators are adapting to survive the unprecedented impact of COVID-19. From the uneven recovery in sales in different segments and provinces, to changing consumer preferences on when and how they dine out, this year's report provides a detailed analysis of how COVID-19 has shaped and transformed Canada's foodservice landscape. This year's report is packed with a variety of industry experts on what key opportunities exist to keep your business running during these turbulent times.

**Find Foodservice Facts FREE in the Restaurants Canada Member Portal.**

**Non-members can purchase a copy of the report by scanning the QR code below:**



# *THE CONVERSATION*

## WITH THE RE-SEASONING COALITION CO-FOUNDERS CHEF PHILMAN GEORGE & ELLE ASIEDU

## Re-Seasoning for a more diverse, equitable and inclusive industry.

THE RE-SEASONING COALITION

As the industry seeks to understand (and hopefully embrace) meaningful diversity, equity and inclusion education within their workplace cultures to connect with employees and consumers, there's no shortage of organizations stepping in to facilitate. What's more, consumers are demanding more of the businesses they support.

The Re-Seasoning Coalition offers something a little different and a lot needed: a Black-owned and managed not-for-profit consultancy that provides foundational DE&I education and programming, with a focus on accelerating the movement of Black professionals into senior foodservice and hospitality roles. Officially launching this fall after two years of research and incubation, The Coalition's programming is derived from the lived experiences of co-founders Chef Philman George and Elle Asiedu who share a common passion and understanding of the inner workings of the industry and what it means to be a Black foodservice professional.



## CHEF PHILMAN GEORGE

***Co-Founder, The Re-Seasoning Coalition | Corporate Chef, High Liner Foods Inc.***

Chef Philman has over 20 years of industry experience and is no stranger to seafood! With both of his parents hailing from the small Caribbean island of Barbuda, he naturally learned to appreciate seafood at a young age. He has worked in a wide variety of establishments from the traditional English style pub to award winning restaurants, private clubs & hotels in Canada, Australia and the Caribbean. Chef Philman enjoys creating food that represents his lived experiences and his Barbudan heritage. He is also the father of two young boys, a loving husband and a proud Trustee of The Be Foundation, which is an NGO helping empower Barbudans to advocate for sustainable social change. Chef Philman was recently selected to join the Black Food Sovereignty Advisory Circle to help advance Toronto's Black Food Sovereignty Plan.



## ELLE ASIEDU

***Co-Founder, The Re-Seasoning Coalition***

Elle is a passionate leader and serial entrepreneur with strategic marketing experience in the public and private sectors. A strong believer in continuous improvement, she looks forward to sharing the work and insights developed by The Re-Seasoning Coalition so that the entire food industry can benefit from supporting, including, and uplifting marginalized voices.

The idea to develop the The Re-Seasoning Coalition was sparked more than two years ago, when Chef Philman George and Elle Asiedu were immersed in separate careers, yet independently looking for the right opportunity to incubate meaningful change within the industry they both love. "Once I realized that change was necessary, I reached out to Restaurants Canada to have some discussions", Philman recalls. "Elle was working with another organization that time, but we were of the same mind. We realized we had to make systemic change, and the way to make it was through Restaurants Canada." Elle agrees. "At the time, I was working for another organization focused on food, so the seed for a natural partnership was there. All the experiences I've had in my life and all the projects I've worked on in some way have all been connected to the Black community and Black people. Helping them reach new levels of excellence, helping them restructure their businesses to improve profitability and so on—so this was an easy "yes" for me. The DE&I needle hasn't really moved in this industry despite studies proving that it's essential for innovation and growth. The Re-Seasoning Coalition exists to help answer the question "Why?" and to address what is holding organizations back. Being able to have Phil's chef, restaurant and corporate food experience made it easy to start to have those conversations with Restaurants Canada. We've been working very hard in the background to make sure we get it right and making sure we're using the language and the data to really prove that a systemic problem exists within our industry."

Chef Philman's motivation to commit to building the Coalition was both professional and deeply personal. "We're in the hospitality industry. This industry is fueled by people. It doesn't matter how big or how small you are – your doors don't open without people. Right now, we're in this situation, due to the pandemic and due to the structures of our industry that have never been focused on diversity, equity and inclusion. That was a fire that was already burning, and then you layer on the pandemic…nobody wants to work in this industry anymore. It doesn't matter if you're a small restaurant or a big corporation, you're affected by that lack of labour.



I think it's even more important for the small, independent operator because they're the ones studded around all our neighbourhoods. They're the ones that keep our neighbourhoods glued together. We all saw what happened when those restaurants closed down and that glue was no longer there. If you're leaving a certain group behind in your labour pool and human resources, you're not going to capitalize and move forward. If you want to succeed in this industry, you're going to need people, and we hope that The Re-Seasoning Coalition is an organization people can look toward to make sure they have all the structures in place to help every individual thrive."

The value of diverse workforces has been documented now for decades. Diverse teams tend to return larger profits and are a catalyst for innovation and new ideas. The Coalition believes that strong work on diversity is a key cultural and competitive elevator to help restaurants survive the challenges ahead. "This is more than a moral imperative. It's tied to innovation. It's tied to success." says Elle, referring to the labour crisis consuming restaurants and the entire foodservice industry. Within this shared challenge, the Coalition sees an opportunity to address labour challenges by accelerating meaningful change to attract new Black talent to the industry and to create opportunities for Black foodservice professionals to grow and thrive. Elle highlights these efforts: "A large part of our focus is concentrated on recruitment—helping to address and correct labour shortages by helping participants implement anti-oppressive frameworks within their companies and by empowering them to create working environments that are inclusive to all folks."

Weighing names for the new non-profit that captured both the organizational goal and industry of focus, the co-founders were inspired by the re-seasoning process that optimizes the performance of a foodservice staple, described on thereseasoning.org: "Just as a cast iron skillet needs to be re-seasoned regularly for optimum performance, the food industry needs to be re-calibrated for the highest grade of representation, service delivery and innovation."

Supported by Restaurants Canada, High Liner Foods, and Technomic, The Re-Seasoning Coalition has developed a comprehensive research report illuminated by the results of an omnibus survey that asked Canadian consumers to share their views on racism, systemic racism and anti-Black racism within the foodservice industry as well as their expectation of restaurants, organizations and brands to address these inequalities. During a webinar hosted by Restaurants Canada at the beginning of October, the Coalition shared Technomic's compelling research insights bolstered by proprietary survey results that underscored the need – and opportunity - for urgent action.

As principals of The Re-Seasoning Coalition, Elle and Philman are as much business leaders as they are invested advocates and ambassadors. At the end of October, they will be attending Day on the Hill





> The DE&I needle hasn't really moved in this industry despite studies proving that it's essential for innovation and growth. The Re-Seasoning Coalition exists to help answer the question "Why"?"
>
> ~ ELLE ASIEDU ~

in Ottawa alongside Restaurants Canada, to share their research and insights with federal government leaders as they prepare for the launch of their programming offering in early 2023. The co-founders believe research is best understood—and its implications truly felt—when reinforced by first-person, 'human' stories. So, to personalize their message and connect with foodservice leaders, the Coalition will be releasing a series of digital stories and lived experiences from Black restaurateurs, entrepreneurs, and front- and back-of-house staff beginning in November.

So, how does a restaurant or corporate business get "Re-Seasoned'? Businesses will self-select their Re-Seasoning journey based on three programming tiers. "Programming delivery for clients relies on several important factors including where they feel they are in terms of their DE&I work to date; how knowledgeable they feel they are about anti-Black racism and systemic racism and addressing those issues within their own workforce, and how important that is to their corporate mission, vision and values," Elle explains. "This will help us understand where they are, match them to one of our tiers and customize the best package of programming to meet their goals."

Programming falls into three primary buckets—policy review, recruitment and mentorship—and is designed to collaboratively support clients throughout the process. "Recruitment supports include learning how to implement equitable policies and how to create strategic pipelines for Black employees," Elle explains. "What do job postings look like? What do the roles need to reflect? How do you learn to hire for competencies instead of education alone?" How are businesses connecting with community organizations that may have a large talent pool who may not have had the opportunity to attend recognized schools and programs?" These are the questions the Coalition identifies as foundational to help businesses reshape their hiring strategies to bridge the labour gap now and carry them into the future.

No matter which tier organizations fall into, re-seasoning starts with anti-oppression training from experts connected to the Coalition. From there, clients move through the programming and training to achieve their goals. A key differentiator of Re-Seasoning facilitation is that clients do not "graduate" until key criteria are met. The coalition is actively invested in making sure the work gets done and that client organizations have fully completed their program, are "walking the talk", and are truly Re-Seasoned. This proof-or credential-based approach allows clients to promote the value of the program investment to their leadership and employees as they work toward earning formal Re-Seasoning certification. Elle points out that certification both acknowledges organizational success and provides a valuable credential visible to current and future employees and consumers. "By year two or year three, consumers will be able to look at organizations and say, "You know what, I feel great about applying to work here." or "I feel great about supporting these restaurants because I know they're doing the work internally, not just because their social media page says they are."

> This industry is fueled by people. It doesn't matter how big or how small you are – your doors don't open without people. Right now, we're in this situation, due to the pandemic and due to the structures of our industry that have never been focused on diversity, equity and inclusion.
>
> ~ CHEF PHILMAN GEORGE ~



The programming design is driven by Elle and Philman's hands-on experience as Black professionals working within diverse foodservice operation styles, and a commitment to serving all formats - from chef-driven and mom-and-pop independents to franchisees and publicly-traded companies. The Coalition's programming and consultancy services consider and accommodate unique operating environments to deliver consistent content with modified approaches without compromising core content or philosophies. "The independents are the glue that keeps our communities together, yet they have very little time and few resources." Chef Philman points out. "Everybody understands that DE&I is of importance, but we also see that hardly anybody has a program in place to get to their goals. We saw that gap and felt that we could fill it. We hope to leverage the programming and resources we create on behalf of big corporations to subsidize service and access for the smaller independents."

The Re-Seasoning Coalition puts action to Technomic executive vice-president Patrick Noone's words: "Canada is facing a moral awakening in how social justice is achieved... Unlike past social issues, consumers are demanding that the foodservice industry speaks up."

To learn more and sign up for the Re-Seasoning newsletter, visit:

**thereseasoning.org**

To watch the Re-Seasoning webinar for research and insights, visit:

**restaurantscanada.org**



# THE FUTURE OF FOOD & BEVERAGE THROUGH THE LENS OF ENTERTAINMENT

BY ADY FLOYD

Entertainment has always been at the heart of what consumers want when it comes to dining out. To meet these demands in today's robust landscape, bars and restaurants need to up-level their offerings in the form of flavour and experience, leveraging tech trends and ensuring they are allies for betterment in the industry.

When we think about food and beverage pairings, we typically jump into flavour profiles like sweet and savoury as a key example, but consumers are looking for much more than traditions these days. The Heritage Lounge, a bar and restaurant in Australia, curated a list of 20 unique offerings including rum with peanut butter and sour lollies paired with a vodka cocktail—this is what intrigues consumers today. The more unusual or unique, the better, and a great example of this in Ontario is seen in the form of cider and chocolate pairings presented at Loch Mór Cider Company. Located in the sprawling countryside in Prince Edward County, patrons can experience local, award-winning craft cider paired with handmade, artisan, dark, single-origin chocolates. The whole experience is guided by a cider ambassador, so consumers aren't just sipping and snacking, they're learning as well.

Inherently, food and drink are something deeply rooted in our human emotions and dining out isn't simply about sustenance. One brand that took this sentiment to another level was Philadelphia Cream Cheese by Kraft Heinz. They created a dining concept called "Feeladelphia" and partnered with award-winning chefs Jeremiah Stone and Fabián Von Hauske Valtierra to deliver a multi-sensorial and feelings-based dining concept and cookbook experience where consumers order feelings rather than food. It was a complete sensorial experience with sounds, visuals, and of course taste. This is an example of how brands can



## Sixty-five per cent of consumers order from or visited a restaurant after seeing it on TikTok.

not only say they connect with their guests but truly build intimate experiences.

One insight on TrendHunter.com titled "Unlikely Pairing" explores the rich connection between beverages and experiences with alcohol brands offering unlikely pairings to go along with their beverages. Straying from traditional wine and cheese pairings, they offer unusual combinations that are likely to pique consumer interest. A whiskey and fragrance pairing curated in a partnership between the Scotch Malt Whiskey Society and fragrance house Kingdom Scotland is just one example of how brands are curating these new and memorable occasions.

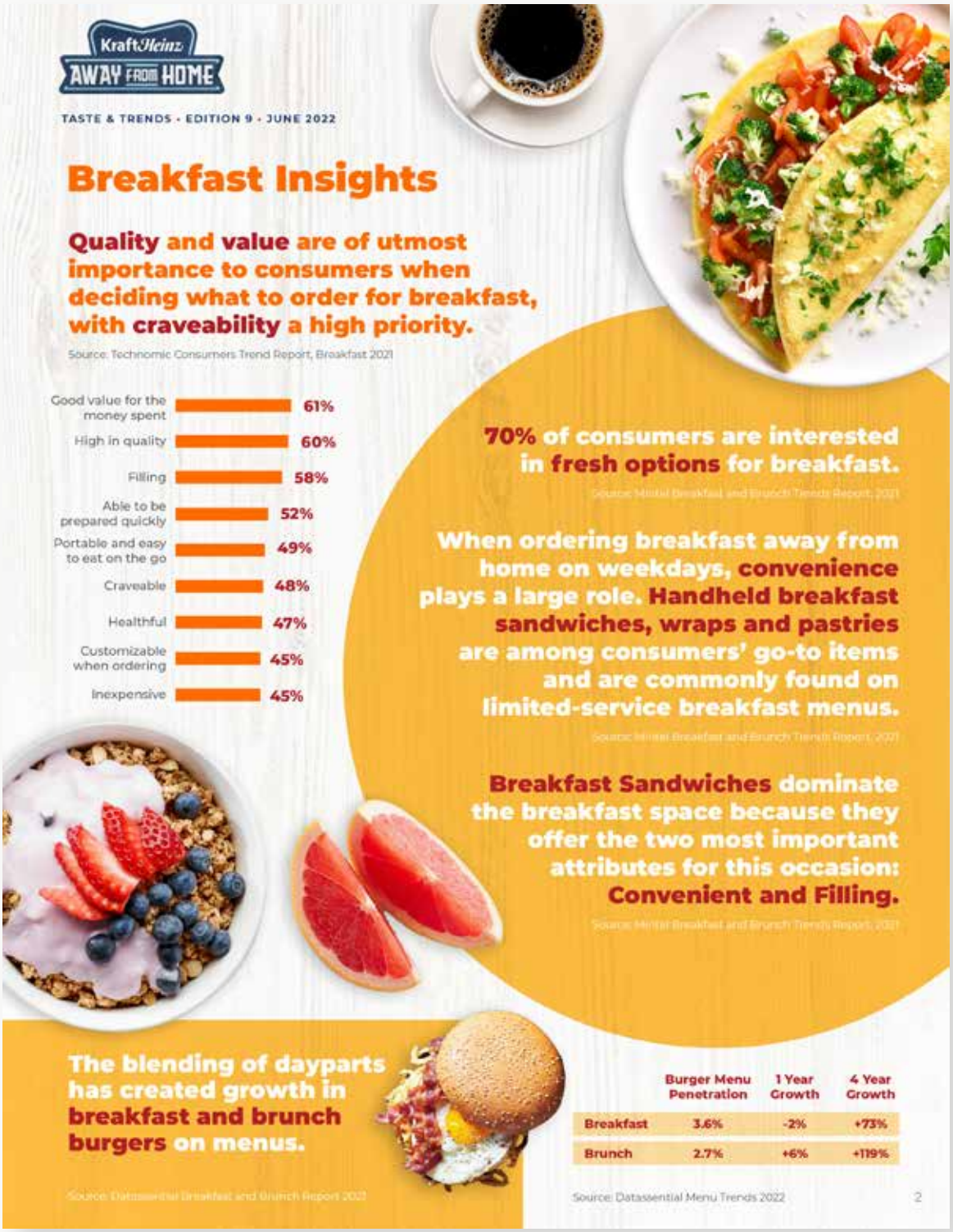
Bars and restaurants that want to connect more intimately with their customers need to step outside their own comfort zones. It also never hurts to create an experience your customers can—and want to—share on TikTok, Instagram and other social media platforms. In fact, Sixty-five per cent of consumers ordered from or visited a restaurant after seeing it on TikTok.

When we consider how technology continues to be a powerful force in our lives, our jobs, our hobbies, etc., it's obvious that it plays a massive role in hospitality, too. In Canada, the top four most-used food apps include McDonald's Canada, Uber Eats, DoorDash and Tim Hortons. One reason for this is because of the unparalleled reward system built into these apps. While traditional fast-food restaurants are increasingly having to compete with healthier QSR options, reward programs are helping to better engage customers and grow loyalty. This is also an increasingly desirable choice as prices continue to grow. The Sonic delivery service has made a commitment for everyone who orders through their app to automatically get half-priced drinks. As consumers increasingly turn to new and healthier fast-food options, brands in this space are having to adapt and offer more incentives to bring in new customers.

Another new introduction to this space is the QSR metaverse. Fast food chains are among the brands across a range of industries experimenting with products, services and marketing in the metaverse. Fast food restaurant brands are now creating virtual experiences and NFTs to stay up to date with Web3 innovations. Consumers' growing interest in the metaverse comes from brands' willingness to offer more engaging online experiences than they're accustomed to. Quick-serve burger chain Wendy's announced that it has expanded Wendyverse, its virtual reality platform located within Meta's Horizon Worlds. The new expansion, called "Sunrise City", will consist of a virtual breakfast realm where customers can explore a 3D breakfast-themed environment and participate in promotional "quests." Specific elements of Sunrise City include a castle, flying biscuits and bridges built from bacon. In terms of activities, customers will be invited to partake in tightrope jousting, biscuit tossing and a unique, potato-themed paragliding game. The interactive nature of the metaverse and its potential in a wide range of industries means that brands' options for designing and creating products or services in this space are limitless. The tricky part will be to balance brand objectives and stay true to that brand while honing consumer interest.

The last piece of technology that is becoming overwhelmingly popular is food lockers, and for good reason! Restaurants are using locker-like technology to offer contact-free food pickups, and this is available for everyone including fast food chains, restaurants and ghost kitchens. Due to the pandemic, consumers are now accustomed to contact-free purchasing. This is especially true in the food industry, which, in response to sudden lockdown

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## by 2027, the smart parcel locker market size in North America is expected to exceed $450 million USD.

measures, saw a deluge of new delivery and pick-up solutions pop up. And while these solutions made food ordering safer, they also made things more efficient and convenient for consumers. In fact, by 2027, the smart parcel locker market size in North America is expected to exceed $450 million USD.

From upgraded loyalty apps to metaverse expansions and even smart food lockers, the amount of technology available to bars and restaurants today is boundless, but brands don't need all of it. It's about using what fits the brand and meets your consumer's needs.

One additional need consumers are seeking from the hospitality industry is community. "Shopping local" continues to win, which means "dining local" will also see benefits, but consumers want to dine where they are welcome. The 'Unified Bar' insight on TrendHunter.com looks at how bars and restaurants are taking initiatives to bring communities together and support those in need. Using their platforms as community establishments for social outreach, the companies are creating more inclusive environments through in-house initiatives and branded donations for worthy causes. One Toronto-based event from September 2022 is Home Grown: A Talk and Taste with Beer Diversity's Ren Navarro. This event discussed the fact that, over the next 30 years, Northcrest Developments will be transforming the 370-acre Downsview Airport Lands into a series of vibrant new communities. Guests were invited to taste a delicious Downsview pilsner, specially commissioned by Northcrest and produced by Red Tape Brewery. Attendees were also encouraged to bring curiosity and questions to Navarro's exclusive beer talk about the creation of the beer itself and her quest to increase diversity in the Canadian beer industry. The event was limited, but offered free of charge to those who could attend, which is an amazing way to reach your community and educate them in a meaningful and fun way. This resonates because, throughout the pandemic, North Americans who were given the opportunity to work safely from home have had more time for introspection, leading to a greater appreciation of community and social interactions. As consumers continue to look inward and reassess their values, they expect companies to do the same. In response to this social change, businesses are increasing their community involvement to create a more inclusive environment for customers.

One final method for maintaining a positive and loving community is the hybrid model. A trend that emerged many years ago, the hybrid model was about creating many spaces in one and, in this post-lockdown era, this is what consumers are looking for. Restaurant-store hybrids merge the dining and retail industries bridging the gap between shopping and eating. While it's not uncommon for retail stores to contain restaurants, the reverse—dining establishments that also operate as stores—are becoming more popular. These intimate spaces create more modern versions of the one-stop experiences that large retailers have made so popular. They can easily be compared to the brewery and bottle shops we're seeing in the beverage industry. In Toronto, the Society of Beer Drinking Ladies Clubhouse is a perfect example of a hybrid space that includes a taproom, bottle shop, coffee bar, artisan market and event space all in one!

People shop and engage with brands differently than they did 10 or even five years ago and, with the growing popularity of eCommerce, consumers now need more persuasion to be drawn to in-person shopping and dining experiences. Factors like the convenience and enhanced experience—often associated with online shopping—now need to be replicated in brick-and-mortar spaces to motivate consumers to show up in person. The good news for bars and restaurants is that four out of five of today's consumers feel closer to their communities than they did at the beginning of the pandemic, and you can bet hospitality is a huge reason for this.

When we think about the future of bars and restaurants, we think about how entertainment can play a huge role in innovation. Beyond basic definitions of entertainment, consumers are looking for uniqueness, technology that speaks to them, and places they can feel at home.

# FINDING CLARITY IN A SEA OF DISRUPTION:

## THE FINANCIAL TOOLS OPERATORS NEED TO MAKE DECISIONS NOW.

BY CHRIS SZEGO

As we head into the final quarter of 2022, the foodservice industry is facing extremes on several fronts. Inflation and the still-disrupted supply chain are affecting margins already pushed to the brink. The cost of food and other supplies has risen sharply; labour is still in short supply. On the other hand, consumer savings are at a previously unheard-of level, and the Bank of Canada expects Canadians to spend a quarter of those extra savings over the rest of 2022 and 2023.

Canadian foodservice operators can expect to see a significant portion of those savings head in their direction. Which is all to the good: struggling with high supply prices, low margins, and possibly even pandemic-assumed debt, foodservice operators can use the help. With pent-up demand moving dollars toward restaurants, there are handy financial tools and services available to guide operators and help improve profitability. Here are three financial services that can help in more ways than you might think.



## INTERAC: MORE THAN JUST PAYMENTS
## INTERAC.CA

Canadians have known and trusted the Interac name since 1984. The cooperative venture between Canada's major financial institutions gave Canadians wide access to their own money via a single, shared network. In 2018, Interac Corp was formed to bring the many Interac-branded products and services together, from ABM withdrawals through mobile payments, and even international solutions. Secure, reliable and efficient, Interac allows Canadians to have confidence in their digital transactions.

Most of us know Interac best as the 'debit' payment option. A leader in Canadian payments, Interac offers merchants the lowest cost option: every transaction costs a single small fee, regardless of the size of the purchase. Operators keep more of the total bill, since the transaction cost is fixed rather than a percentage of the cheque total. It's worth asking guests if they'd like to pay with Interac. And, Canadians use Interac at restaurants—29 per cent of all Interac transactions last year were at quick-service restaurants.

But Interac has more to offer. Not just for personal use, Interac e-Transfer also has several business applications. Operators pay employees and vendors instantly, even high-limit transfers. Payments are sent and received in real time, with instant confirmation, making cash flow management easier and more complete. Interac also offers a secure, one-step e-commerce payment option for online purchases and check-outs.



Interac isn't out there advertising that operators get a card," says Tricia Ryan, Manager of Strategic Initiatives with Restaurants Canada. "They support small businesses by enabling financial literacy as well as securing them against fraud." Interac is serious about the safety and security of its users and has created downloadable resources like security briefs and checklists for small business use. With world-class technology and techniques, Interac uses advanced and modern tools to secure your business at the point of purchase, whether that purchase is in person or online.

A collaborative effort from the very beginning, Interac fosters and supports small businesses with partnerships, contests and publicity, raising awareness and promoting the brands, culture, and community that make small businesses so vibrant and inspiring.

## TABLZ: OPTIMIZING YOUR SPACE
## TABLZ.COM

TABLZ CEO and co-founder Frazer Nagy has a family farming pedigree, a degree in International Development and Economics, and started working in restaurants at the age of 13. His tenure in foodservice gave him a lifelong fascination with the origin of food and the farm-to-table phenomenon.

As a precursor to his Master degree, he convinced the owner of the restaurant where worked to let him study five years of sales records, which solidified his interest in econometrics. It also raised a pointed question: Why was the restaurateur making such a small margin? "As a 22-year-old bartender, I was making 20 per cent in tips," Frazer says. "The owner was taking home 3.6 per cent." That discrepancy planted a seed.



Two concurrent facts aligned to create a new perspective. "First, reports started coming out about consumer savings being at an all-time high. By 2022, restrictions were finally being lifted. People wanted to be out and dining. It was a perfect storm to help restaurants make money." Frazer's second epiphany was that the foodservice sector was among the last to enact dynamic pricing engines for revenue management.

Dynamic pricing is the application of a voluntary surcharge for an upgraded experience. Courtside seats that cost more than upper bleachers, for instance. Frazer decided to apply the same model to restaurants, and TABLZ was born. "Foodservice is in the experience business," he says, adding that the sector is also in the real estate business. "A corner booth at 7 p.m. on a Saturday is worth more than a table near the bathroom at 5 p.m. on a Monday. We help restaurants unlock their most valuable asset."

TABLZ is a very simple service. "We're not trying to recreate a table management system." Instead, TABLZ integrates with a restaurant's existing reservation system and enables guests to voluntarily upgrade to the seat or section of their choice. If the guest isn't interested, the reservation system continues as normal. But if they are, they can choose their table for a small premium.

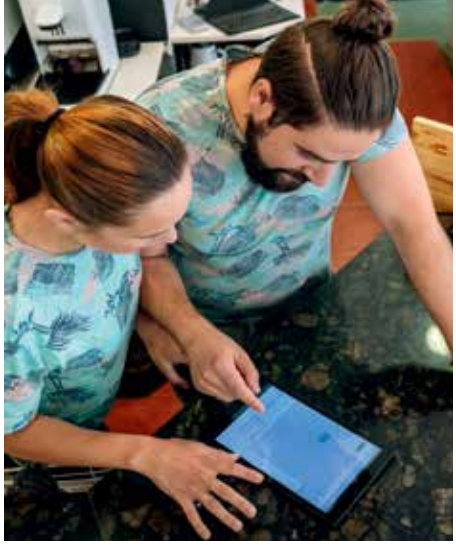
The TABLZ team works with each restaurant to select which seats and sections to feature. When a restaurant signs up, TABLZ sends a 3D camera crew to film the chosen tables in service-ready conditions. The onboarding process is very quick: clients can have the service up and running in a week.




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"There's no pressure, and no cost of goods," Frazer says. "We're after the 20 per cent of guests who want to upgrade their experience."

The result is pure profit for the restaurant. "The customer pays upfront, and we put the reservation in the system. If we don't sell a premium for a table, the capacity is still there and can be used. We're just optimizing your profitability."

With team members across North America and restaurant customers in Canada, the U.S., and pending in Europe and the Caribbean, TABLZ is a Canadian technology company with deep ties to the restaurant business. Frazer knows that restaurateurs, burned by other services promising much and delivering nothing, can be skeptical. "This time," he says. "They're not being asked to give up anything to get something, like with third-party delivery. We don't affect operations in any way. We just help them pre-sell their tables for a little bit more."

TABLZ financial model is profit sharing: with an onboarding cost payable by money collected, restaurants keep 70 per cent of fees, and money is transferred directly to the restaurants every month. "It's money that's so meaningful," says Frazer. "This is the future. Take advantage of the technology."

### XERO: APPROACHABLE ACCOUNTING
### XERO.COM

Xero is a cloud-based accounting platform, designed to help small businesses save time and money. A single, unified ledger system built 100 per cent in the cloud, Xero allows businesses to work in tandem with their account or financial advisor on the same figures at the same time. With more than 300 connections to banks and other major financial partners, Xero connects business to their numbers anytime, on any device.

Xero's reasonable subscription model allows businesses to pay bills, claim expenses, accept payments, run payroll, track projects and quotes, all while capturing data with which to run detailed analytics. In addition to keeping all your financial records in one place so you can easily get a full financial view of your business, Xero automates tasks like invoicing and reporting. The platform securely imports bank transactions, so you can reconcile your accounts every day and have an extreme close-up on your cash flow.

Toronto-based Aaron Doucet is a Partner Success Manager at Xero. A CPA by trade, Aaron started his career in tax accounting. Having previously worked for a boutique cloud-based accounting firm, Aaron moved to Xero, attracted to the wide variety of its customer base. "Everything from local coffee shops to software as a service."

Deeply knowledgeable about cloud accounting technology Doucet is passionate about how it can empower small businesses across Canada. "Accounting systems often throw around terms and jargon which aren't necessarily difficult in nature, but can cause confusion," he says. "I always look at things from the perspective of an advisor. Xero was built for the owners as much as for advisors." As such, the language of the platform is very clear and straightforward. 'Accounts Payable' becomes 'Bills to Pay.'

Desktop accounting software can lead to out-of-sync data sets, because the client and accountant work on it at different times. With Xero's cloud-based accounting, everyone is looking at the same figures. Flexible reporting enables customers to move beyond mere compliance into intelligence. "You can create beautiful financial reports – you can tell stories with the data."

Built in a way business owners understand, Xero allows for real-time collaboration. "Talking to your accountant in Canada is like a hockey stick," says Doucet. "It's super flat though most of the year, but then, during tax time, it skyrockets." With Xero, owners can engage with their data every day. And as they grow more proficient, their financial literacy improves.

Doucet thrives on setting up the proper technology for small businesses to make the traditionally cumbersome year-end process seamless and efficient. "Our software platform is really primed for restaurants of all formats. We know the last couple of years have been really tough, and we feel that Xero can help illuminate the path forward."

### TOOLS AND SERVICES THAT CAN HELP

**In these difficult and uncertain times, it's good to have as many resources as possible. Restaurants Canada maintains a robust list of companies offering exclusive deals to members. There are options available to help you do what you want and need to do.**

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**Silver Chef** offers flexible equipment financing for hospitality entrepreneurs.

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# TABLZ

**Member Recommendation from The Courtyard Restaurant | Ottawa, ON**



Tablz brings dynamic pricing to the restaurant industry by intelligently optimizing the most valuable dining room real estate. Essentially, it's a value-added application that integrates perfectly with restaurant booking software to improve profitability by applying the concept of premiumization to restaurant seating areas, private rooms and dayparts. Using Tablz can be as simple as applying surge pricing for the busiest service hours or as creative as adding the ability to promote special restaurant rooms or experiences to both new and return guests.

The Courtyard Restaurant in Ottawa's Byward Market is an historic city venue and an enthusiastic Tablz convert. Julia Johnston, Courtyard's senior event planner, shares that Tablz has not only helped optimize their dining and event spaces, but has helped in other, unexpected ways. "It has been a great way to generate reservations throughout the whole year, especially on some low days, and truly elevate the whole customer experience. Tablz has really introduced a new audience to us, as well as a new way of interacting with our previous customers and guests."

Tablz works well with existing reservation systems, adding both value and opportunity. Julia finds the virtual dining room feature, which allows guests to view and select the precise table or room they wish to reserve, particularly effective. "Some of the more meaningful bookings have been related to couples booking a certain table to eat at, which was the same one they got engaged at or the room they were married in. The technology gives the guest a visual aid to help sell the atmosphere, and ultimately sell the space for private bookings like weddings and corporate groups. It has actually been a great marketing tool for our event side of the restaurant during COVID, when we were trying to sell the space but weren't able to have in-person meetings."

Has Tablz helped The Courtyard grow their business? "Overall Tablz has helped market our quaint venue and has ultimately brought us more business because of it", Julie confirms."The additional monetary bump is just an extra bonus!"

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# OFF TO THE BOCUSE D'OR FINALS

**Team Canada won silver at the continental selection of the most prestigious culinary competition on Earth! Here's why it should matter to the food service industry...**

BY BRIGITTE FOISY, VP, CHEFS CANADA



**Specially designed by Montreal's RICOSTUDIO, the platter is a tribute to the king of the Great North's rivers: the salmon. Meant to celebrate Canada and tell a story of the landscapes of our Canadian winters, the various components included Canadian corn, mushrooms, fennel, asparagus and Canadian forest lichen to only name a few.**

**THEY DID IT!** At the Bocuse d'Or in Santiago Chile, our national culinary team took second place and won their golden ticket to the world finals in Lyon, France this January. Though we can be proud of their stellar accomplishment, why should the Canadian foodservice industry care and get behind our national culinary team?

While the world's greatest athletes will soon compete in the World Cup and the World Series, some of the planet's greatest chefs are busy training for the Olympics of food: the Bocuse d'Or. In our summer issue, **MENU** highlighted the 35-year-old international competition known to be the most prestigious and most challenging on Earth. With more than 60 countries competing for one of the 24 spots to cook in France, the event makes fine dining an arena sport and comes with all the trimmings including uniforms, judges, cheering fans holding flags, bronze-silver-and-gold statuettes, and winners on podiums beaming while their national anthem blares in the speakers.

For the uninitiated, the Bocuse d'Or takes place every two years in France and features continental finalists battling to out-cook each other over the course of the two-day competition created by the world renowned chef, Paul Bocuse. And while there's glory in winning one of the culinary Oscars, the road to Lyon is a long process that takes passion, dedication and a strong desire for perfection. "Our two-year process starts with a call for applicants," explains Thomas Delannoy, President of Chefs Canada, the organization that manages the team. "Once the hopefuls have been interviewed by our board, four are selected to compete at the Restaurants Canada show in April. Based on their food mastery, technique and experience, the panel of chefs and industry professionals elect our national culinary athlete. Then we repeat a similar process to find the commis (the chef's right-hand man or woman who needs to be less than 22 years old at the time of the competition in France). When chosen to represent Canada on the world stage, our national culinary athletes drop everything to train in our National Training Center in Montreal for the Bocuse d'Or full time. It's an experience of a lifetime."

Canada has participated in every Bocuse d'Or since its inception in 1987 — with first candidate being Jamie Kennedy — but has never made it to the podium or even finished better than in fourth position. But the question isn't really whether we can win or not — we can; the question is why participate at all?

## THE BOCUSE D'OR: A TEAM SPORT THAT NEEDS YOU!



If you ask most of your customers, they probably wouldn't know much about the Bocuse d'Or or any other high-level competitions for that matter. Most probably wouldn't particularly care about fancy plates created with tweezers, molds, emulsions and eatable flowers even if shows like *Top Chef*, *Iron Chef*, *Chopped* and *Hell's Kitchen* have taken over prime time TV. Though chefs like to say that they just want to make people happy with their food, the truth is, they are competitive, creative, driven and won't shy away from the thrill of the fight to scoop a position on the "100 best" or Michelin's best lists. And customers eat it all! While those rankings help diners with limited budgets spend their hard-earned dollars with minimum risk, the Bocuse d'Or winners' circle plays at a much higher level, fostering national pride, and drawing the coveted eyes (and wallets) of global culinary tourists.

"Bocuse d'Or is about more than cooking. It's about technical abilities and the creativity to produce showpieces within minimal time and under pressure but, most of all, it's about planting the nation's flag on European haute cuisine and beating the French at their own game, and that makes a career overnight," shares Samuel Sirois, our national culinary athlete. "We're not figure skaters or skiers at the Olympics, but Team Canada is working to represent the local restaurant industry and define, in the eyes of the world, what Canadian food is."

Culinary tourism is big business. Prior to the pandemic, the World Travel and Tourism Council estimated the sector's contribution to be 10.3 per cent of the world's GDP (US $9.6 trillion), with international visitors spending upwards of US$1.8 trillion ($278.9 billion directly spent in foodservice in 2019). In 2021, following a loss of almost US$4.9 trillion, travel and tourism increased by 21.7 per cent, an increase of one trillion dollars USD.[1]

While cuisine has always been an important part of most travel experiences, the concept of traveling to a destination specifically for its food and beverage offering is a relatively recent trend. It is estimated that 80

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per cent of travelers will research the culinary offering before they go on a trip while 70 per cent will pick a destination based on its food and beverage. And while 70 per cent of visitors state they bring local food back home as gifts, culinary tourism "products" including food events (79 per cent), gastronomic routes and cooking classes (62 per cent), and visits to markets and local producers (53 per cent) are top activities sought by travelers.

Countries like France that have taken home the gold at Bocuse d'Or multiple times are undeniably top destinations for gastrotourism. But in more recent years, following the wins by Scandinavian countries Norway, Denmark and Sweden, have seen a growing focus on their tourism. Or take Iceland, a small country that made it to the podium in 2017 that has since seen a 19 per cent annualized growth rate, far outpacing any of its peers. And that is why the U.S., Asia and Europe get funding to participate in culinary competitions, invest in their top culinary talents and as a result have consistently dominated the Bocuse d'Or over the years.

"Food tourism plays a significant role in preserving local heritage while driving innovation," concludes Delannoy. "By increasing visitor demand for local fare, food tourism contributes to the long-term sustainability of local agriculture, foodservice businesses, communities and culture. That has been the foundation of Chefs Canada from the start as we aim to inspire the industry technically and creatively, to build on the promise of sharing our expertise with each other and the next generation. It's about working together to promote our terroir and our producers, helping to give our profession the lustre it once had, but most importantly, to put Canada at the top of the list of culinary destinations for travelers – and THAT benefits every restaurant, hotel and foodservice business."



[1] *https://wttc.org/Research/Economic-Impact*

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**Prior to the Americas, Delannoy had promised to take the top prizes in an interview... and the team didn't disappoint. Now we need more support from the provincial and federal government, sponsors, and foodies but most of all from you, chefs and food and beverage professionals from coast-to-coast. Join more than 350 Ambassad'Ors by uploading your photo on https://www.chefscanada.com/ambassador.html.**

CHEFS CANADA



## S.Pellegrino Young Chef Academy Competition 2022/23

# ANNOUNCING CANADA'S TOP 10 REGIONAL FINALISTS

**S.Pellegrino** is a proud supporter of Canada's chef and restaurant community, continuously looking for ways to support emerging talent, share industry voices and partner with restaurant owners. Over the last few years, the culinary community across the nation has faced severe challenges and, as many in the industry are aware, it hit young chefs hard as the pandemic devastatingly impacted so many restaurants we know and love.

As a way to show continued support for emerging talent, S.Pellegrino brought the Young Chef Academy Regional Competition back to Canada. In its fifth year, the competition offers young chefs an inspiring experience that provides national visibility and professional prestige. After a nation-wide call to all young chefs to take a chance and apply to be one of the top talents selected to take part in the S.Pellegrino Young Chef Academy Competition, the Academy is pleased to announce Canada's top 10 2022/23 Young Chef Academy Competition regional finalists [*see opposite page for the list*]. Each finalist was hand-selected by the prestigious culinary academy, ALMA (International School of Culinary Arts in Italy), and will now go on to showcase their talent in front of an esteemed panel of Canadian culinary royalty including celebrity Chef Christine Cushing, Chef Patrick Kriss of Alo Group, and Chef Suzanne Barr, taking place October 23-25 in Toronto.

"Like each one of these brilliant finalists, everyone in the culinary world begins their journey with talent and a dream," said Christine Cushing. "I am so honoured to be selected as a judge for the S.Pellegrino Young Chef Academy Competition Regional Finale to help make someone's dream a reality and give them this opportunity to represent Canada on the world stage."

In the Canadian leg of the competition, all ten of the hopeful finalists will share their unique signature dish, which communicates their heritage, personal vision, unique skills and creativity. Each chef will have to execute their signature dish in less than five hours (from prep to expert plating) to win over the hearts and tastebuds of the judging panel.

The panel of culinary sages will be evaluating the dishes based on three criteria including technical skills, creativity and personal belief which, simply put, is a clear message summarizing the "vision" of their work, their vision of the world of food, and their contribution to today's society in general, through food. After trying each dish against the above golden rules, each judge will have to rate each dish with a score from 1 to 10 with the highest score winning the evening and the title.

In the days surrounding the event, the 10 chefs will mix and mingle with peers, receive guidance from culinary mentors, participate in a culinary forum and of course showcase their signature recipe. The winner of the regional finalist competition will then go on to represent Canada in the Grand Finale taking place in Milan, Italy next year, where they will be set to impress a Grand Jury of the world's top chefs in gastronomy, in hopes of being named 'best young chef in the world.' The 2023 Grand Finale is slotted to be the largest to-date, building on the 300 young chefs and mentors from 50 countries who took part in the last competition.

The competition remains a highlight in the gastronomy world and is an initiative of S.Pellegrino's Young Chef Academy, an inspiring international community that aims to identify, connect and nurture the next generation of chefs, no matter where they are from, their gender or their ethnicity.

**For more information about the upcoming S.Pellegrino Young Chef Academy Regional Finale, the Finalists or their dishes, visit: www.sanpellegrinoyoungchefacademy.com/regional-finalists-2022/canada**



## THIS YEAR'S 10 REGIONAL FINALISTS REPRESENT THE 'CRÈME-DE-LA-CRÈME' OF CANADA'S EMERGING CULINARY TALENT, INCLUDING:



**SAMY BENABED**
Executive Chef, l'Auberge
Saint-Mathieu du Lac
Saint-Mathieu-du-Parc, QC



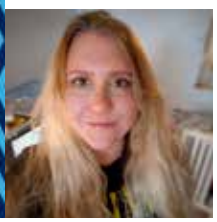
**TIMOTHY JAMES BLEAU**
Sous Chef, Deane House
Calgary, AB



**DAHYUN CHOI**
Senior Sous Chef, Islington Golf Club
York, ON



**HOUFENG DENG**
Chef and Owner, Neue Catering
Vancouver, BC



**KALI FAWCETT**
Chef De Partie, Stofa
Ottawa, ON



**CARMEN HOLTBY**
Head Chef, The Stable House
South Granville, Vancouver, BC



**HARPREET KAHLLON**
Chef De Partie, Don Alfonso 1890
Toronto, ON



**BEN MILLER**
Chef de Cuisine, Tableau Bar Bistro
Vancouver, BC



**PIERRE-OLIVIER PELLETIER**
Chef-Owner, Kebec Club Privé
Québec, QC



**BEN THOMPSON**
Sous Chef, Orchard Restaurant
Calgary, AB



# Putting Indigenous Food on the Map



**CHEF ZACH KEESHIG** makes waves with Naagan, the intimate dining experience featuring a nine-course, progressive Indigenous tasting menu, where nature, culture and skill come together to create something beautiful in the heart of Owen Sound.

## GETTING HIS BEARINGS

From a childhood spent in the kitchen, to honing his skills in hometown restaurants, the path for Keeshig's career was clear. After high school, Keeshig enrolled in Georgian College's Culinary Arts program and immediately sought his first apprenticeship under local Chef Tim Johnston at Cobble Beach

Climbing the ranks and learning to navigate the industry was an invaluable experience, though Keeshig knew there was a bigger picture—one that did not involve à la carte. Working with Chef Michael Stadtländer at Eigensinn Farm, Chef Jonathan Gushue at Langdon Hall, and Chef Eric Robertson at Pearl Morissette, Keeshig was inspired by their creative cooking philosophies, rooted in conscious local consumerism.

## COMING TO LIFE

Not long after that, Naagan was conceptualized. Keeshig wanted a place to celebrate his First Nations Ojibwa roots through inventive dishes, while taking his vision of sustainability to the next level. With actionable goals, Naagan found its beginnings as a single seating, 10- guest experience in the Owen




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Sound Farmer's Market. "It's time to put Indigenous food on the map," says Keeshig.

Today, Naagan lives in the same home, seating 13 guests. Keeshig's à la minute dishes boast the bounty of the local landscape, with each ingredient sourced from surrounding farmers markets, foraged from nature or grown in his own backyard. The progressive Indigenous dishes incorporate traditional cooking philosophies alongside modern culinary techniques to create an ever-changing tasting menu with beautifully paired wild beverages.

"Adapting to these philosophies and getting back to our roots also comes with finding alternatives for common ingredients that aren't found in our local environment. Things like lemons, pepper and vanilla all have forageable alternatives with similar flavour profiles — sometimes it can be hard but it's always so rewarding," says Keeshig.

## WHAT'S NEXT FOR KEESHIG?

With big plans for the future, Keeshig aspires to expand not only Naagan, but his culinary journey through brick and mortar, using the space for continued weekend tasting menus, as well as a culinary institute for youth. Through his own childhood experiences and those fatherhood have brought him, Keeshig is seeking to inspire the next generation of chefs to develop passion and skills while learning the importance and rewards of living and sourcing from the land.

Whether it's working alongside his son, trips to the market with his daughter, or foraging as a family, Keeshig is building a foundation – starting with his own – of opening the doors to more sustainable cooking.

## FIVE THINGS ABOUT KEESHIG

**General Vibe:** Pretty easy going, always thinking of new dishes to create how to incorporate wild plants or flavours into our cooking!

**Favourite Tool:** Would have to be my Vitamix blender! It's a work horse from puréeing sauces, pesto, sorbets, etc.—it gets a lot of work.

**Favourite Book:** I have learned a lot of wild cooking and using these types of ingredients from Pascal Baudar's books - *The New Wildcrafted Cuisine*, or *The Wildcrafting Brewer* are some favourites.

**Guilty Pleasure:** Culinary is a tough trade, so finding a balance is key. My guilty pleasure is honestly sitting around with my children watching movies, getting takeout and snacks and just being around them!

**Top Skill:** I would have to say that my creativity is number one. Being able to see and use some not-so-every-day ingredients to make a beautiful tasting dish. Another might be the ability to cook over fire as it's very different then cooking over a normal stove—controlling the heat and knowing what kind of heat you're looking to cook on are great skills.

## Fresh from Naagan | naagan.squarespace.com

**Indigenized Sourdough Bread**
Featuring local flour, ground wild rice flour, and pumpkin, sunflower, and golden flax seeds.

**White Fish Dish**
Georgian Bay White Fish cooked in grape leaves, seasoned in prickly ash and juniper, topped in sweet cicely sauce, and garnished with unripe wild grapes.

**Wild Beverages**
Including peach tea with pine and basil, as well as wild ginger beer flavoured with spruce.

# Just Add Eggs!

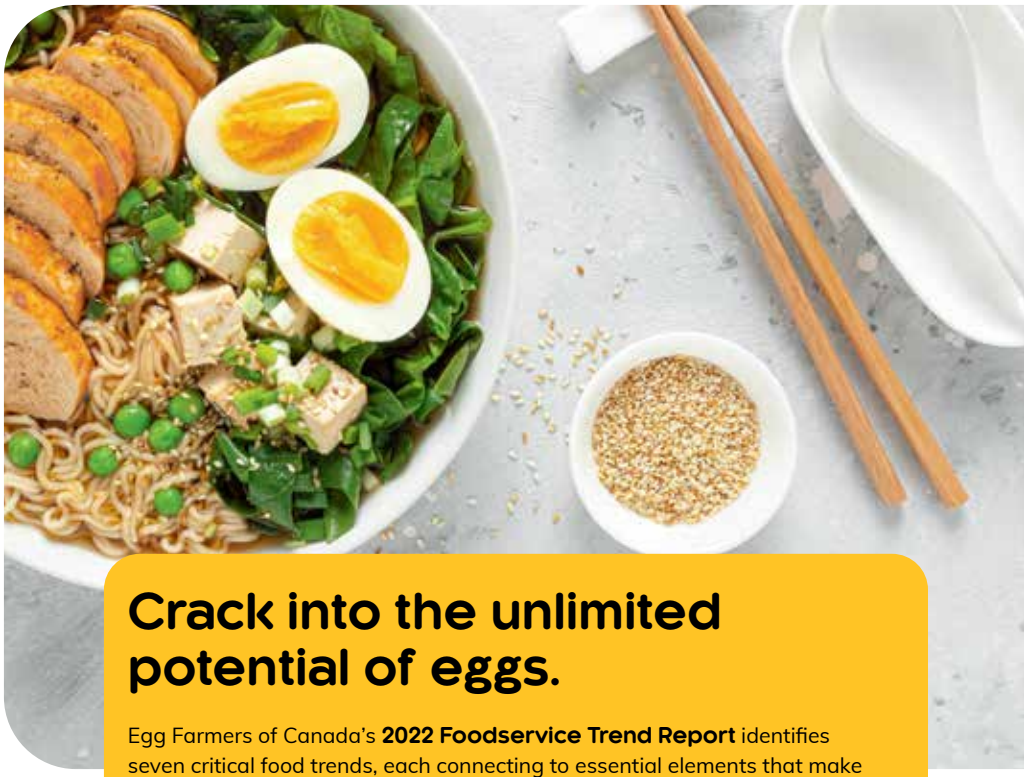
## A low-cost, high-value menu solution.

While there's no doubt the past few years have both strained and strengthened relationships across the foodservice industry – it's been (and continues to be) a relentless ride. The 2022 Foodservice Trend Report provides practical solutions, market intelligence, and insights for industry partners and operators.

Egg Farmers of Canada believes adding eggs to restaurant menus is an available, low-cost strategy with the power to increase margins. One of the most versatile proteins available, eggs can be easily introduced to new menu zones, dayparts and occasions based on global food and recipe trends.

It's no surprise that 80% of eggs are ordered at quick service restaurants – they're fast and very easy to train on. Now, with the growing labour gap, all restaurant segments are looking for simple solutions and efficiencies for their operations.

The 2022 Foodservice Trend Report, and other online research reports, can help you navigate these challenging times by providing consumer trends, menu planning ideas, and industry insights that are shaping the restaurant industry.



### Crack into the unlimited potential of eggs.

Egg Farmers of Canada's **2022 Foodservice Trend Report** identifies seven critical food trends, each connecting to essential elements that make eggs part of the foundation for rebuilding and future-proofing your business: Versatility, Profitability, and Simplicity.

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# COLOURING OUTSIDE THE LINES:

## *MENU Q&A with Stephanie Lui-Valentim*

**Co-founder of Quell, a purpose-driven talent management and consulting agency focused on amplifying underrepresented leaders in the food, drink, health, and lifestyle space.**

**Toronto, Ontario**



**MM What inspired you to be a part of the foodservice industry?**

*I've been connected with the food industry since I was little. There was always someone in my family who owned a restaurant where I helped to out and frequently visited—from my parents, to my uncles, to my brother, even until today. I have always been connected to food throughout my career, from HHOF to LCBO to Deloitte. So its not surprising that when we opened Quell, the core part of the business was to serve the needs of the Food & Drink industry.*

**MM Being an entrepreneur has its challenges, are there challenges specific to being a female entrepreneur? How did you overcome them?**

*Personally, it would be achieving a balance between work and family. This is still a work in progress and typically means very late hours to ensure I still have time for the kids before and after school until they go to bed. These boundaries are important to set but unfortunately, I still sometimes break them. Having an understanding and supportive partner is also vital to this balance. Becoming an entrepre-*

> *Since the purpose of Quell is focused on breaking down the barriers and the inequities that exist in the industry, I believe there is still a lot of opportunity to do better and be better.*

*neur was a family decision and a decision we made based on understanding what the new reality was going be for everyone.*

**MM What do you see as the most exciting new opportunities in the industry? What are your predictions for the sector's future?**

*Since the purpose of Quell is focused on breaking down the barriers and the inequities that exist in the industry, I believe there is still a lot of opportunity to do better and be better. We've continued to hear from our industry friends that they know and want to do better, but need guidance on where to start and how to do this sustainably and authentically. There is a noticeable shift in representation in marketing, staffing, and inclusion of value statements. But there is also so much more that can be done. I predict more organizations will start to build more purposeful DEI strategies into their business and go beyond the "cultural" and "dedicated" months and days like Black History Month, National Day for Truth and Reconciliation or Asian Heritage Month.*

**MM The pandemic created opportunities for collaborative ventures in new products/services that consumers are more open to trying. Has this created more space for female entrepreneurs? How can they take advantage of the opportunity?**

*The pandemic has taught us that there is no longer a "new normal." There are long-term, seismic changes that affected everyone. One of the positive aspects is that it allowed people to slow down, think about their career and purpose, and stretch their vision of what their career could be. This meant more people leaving their sector and focusing more on passion projects and taking a leap to kick off new projects/businesses. This has now opened the door to unconventional collaborations and opportunity for all entrepreneurs to be creative and innovative to leverage these changes.*

**MM What has been the most difficult obstacle to overcome? Does the obstacle still exist for entrepreneurs?**

*One of the most difficult obstacles as an entrepreneur is to switch from leading teams to being the whole team. Especially at the beginning when you decide to make the leap, you must be ready to wear every hat and tackle all tasks—even those that are unknown. Yes, this is an obstacle that still exists and a humbling experience that most entrepreneurs will need to experience.*

**MM What mistake have you learned the most from?**

*It took some time and meaningful conversations to really understand my true value, knowing my worth and building my confidence to ask for fees that reflected my value—impostor syndrome is real. In addition, being able to recognize when to say "no" and being comfortable with that decision. This is all part of the growth, and since I was representing 13 individuals, I was able to adapt to this mindset quickly.*

**MM Can you describe the moment you knew you were going to be successful in this field?**

*For the first few months of Quell, I spent my time introducing clients to our mission, vision, and the roster of talent, without the intention of booking something instantly. It was when these same clients started calling back months later with work, that I realized we have something meaningful and impactful that clients cared about. If we had to identify a moment, I would say it was after completing our work with Health Canada, as we realized we created a business that really can make change in this industry (and beyond).*

**MM What should the next wave of new entrepreneurs know about starting their own business?**

*I truly believe in the need to have meaningful purpose when you're building a business. Quell dedicated three months to research the "problem," the competition, the business model, the target audience and build our "DNA." I speak a lot about human-centred design and ensuring that your product/service is not just viable and feasible, but also "desirable." I encourage new entrepreneurs to dedicate time to do the homework and look deep into how their product/service is bettering this world and its people.*

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**Interested in learning more about Quell? Visit quellnow.com**

groupex CANADA
GIVING INDEPENDENTS THE BUYING POWER OF CHAINS!

# OLYMPUS BURGER

Co-Owner & Restaurateur:
George Kallonakis
Groupex member since: 2013
Port Hope, Ontario

*Before it even opened its doors in June 2013, Olympus Burger joined* ***Groupex****. "After meeting with my representative and learning about the company, it was an easy choice to join", shares Olympus Burger owner George Kallonakis. "Our goals, missions and values align perfectly, and the cost savings are a no-brainer."*

Olympus Burger isn't just your run-of-the-mill burger joint. It's a certified detour-worthy food experience that's made its way onto bucket lists and road trips of Canadians from coast to coast.

While a Greek-themed burger place isn't exactly intuitive, the Olympus Burger concept works. Why? Because these burgers are as much the subject of legend and lore and the theme implies. A visit to the homepage of their website asks visitors the curiosity-piquing question, "Have you met the gods of Olympus?". Each Olympus burger is named for a Greek god or goddess, with choices ranging from the classic "Zeus" (topped with peameal bacon, caramelized onions, sautéed mushrooms, aged white cheddar cheese, Olympus bbq sauce, lettuce, tomato) to the "Aphrodite" (topped with grilled pineapple rings, warmed mix greens, guacamole, and sautéed mushrooms). Olympus Burger also offers a secret menu not posted anywhere in the restaurant, featuring an additional burger lineup and a selection of special house-made sauces.







Kallonakis was raised in the restaurant industry from a young age. "It's in my DNA", he shares. "My parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles have all owned and operated restaurants. Despite pursuing a university degree in a completely different field, seeing the demand for a gourmet, freshly-made in-house burger restaurant in Port Hope made me take a leap of faith and pursue what I was destined for."

But what ultimately lured Kallonakis develop the Olympus Burger concept was a passion for the versatility of the humble burger as a medium for a top-tier food experience. "Burgers! Any burger. They are all uniquely built, with different combinations, topping and flavours. An option for everyone—various vegetarian, vegan and keto options as well! My personal favourite is the Ares burger with our fresh beef patty, topped with peppercorn, crispy bacon, caramelized onions, sautéed mushrooms, Olympus Burger BBQ sauce, lettuce and tomatoes. Or the Morpheus from our secret menu, that has peanut butter!"

Olympus Burger is one of the country's most decorated burger stops, and has earned a huge fan base over the years. When asked to share his proudest moment, Kallonakis admits it's hard to narrow them down to just one. "We have been featured on *You Gotta Eat Here* and the Food Network in 2016, have been voted Best Burger in Canada by *Canadian Living* magazine (2017), ranked in the Top 25 burgers in Canada list by Heinz (2019), became the first carbon zero-certified restaurant in Canada (2018) and have won all local yearly awards for best burgers in Northumberland since 2013. Being a part of Port Hope and the community, giving back wherever we can and working with many students over the years is definitely another proud accolade."

Of course, no restaurant was untouched by the pandemic, and Olympus Burger is resuming "normal" operations, with an eye to trimming costs while maintaining their reputation for excellence. Kallonakis is looking ahead to continuing to make an impact in his local community and proudly changing perceptions of what a great burger tastes like. "Olympus Burger wouldn't have achieved such success over the years without its community support. We cannot thank them enough. There are multiple fundraisers we host for local organizations throughout the year, such as our National Burger Day—all proceeds of the day are donated to different organizations every year. Every December we donate $0.25 from every burger sold to Green Wood Coalition, an organization that deals with hunger and homelessness in our community, as well as supporting various teams and clubs throughout the year.



What lies ahead for Olympus Burger? They've just put a new food truck on the road and Kallonakis invites the curious to follow their evolution: "I cannot wait to share what we have up our sleeves…or should I say, togas."

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DOORDASH FOR MERCHANTS

Restaurants Canada

# Local Support Delivered

At the pinnacle of consumer convenience, DoorDash is the forefront of last-mile logistics in their local economies. Partnering with over 300,000 local businesses across five countries, this merchant-first food delivery service was born from the philosophy of fostering a thriving local food and hospitality sector. Today, with their three service pillars —Merchants, Consumers and Dashers—DoorDash has gone from fostering to empowering, by bringing awareness, knowledge and support to each of their audiences.

Over the course of the past three years, the North American restaurant industry has seen an increase in the desire for consumer convenience and a growing demand for optionality. For restaurateurs, this shift instigated operational changes across the board, from service hours to menu offerings. As these businesses sought to adapt, DoorDash instinctively followed suit to support their merchants by expanding its offerings beyond breakfast, lunch and dinner to support not only restaurateurs, but eateries catering to unconventional mealtimes and grocers at large.

Though the shift in consumer behaviour instigated the expansion of their operations, the ability to react was not possible without extending resources to merchants, especially considering the state of the industry. With a mission to invest in their audience by empowering local economies, DoorDash developed programs to provide relief in the form of both monetary and tactical support for its local heroes. From the five-year $200M “Main Street Strong Pledge”, pandemic recovery grants and “Entrepreneurship Access Program”, to “Kitchens Without Borders” and “Black Food Energy”, the programs heightened awareness and support for local community businesses.

# INITIATIVES FOR SUCCESS

**Five-Year $200M Main Street Strong Pledge**
This initiative supports and strengthens the communities where DoorDash operates. Through low barriers to entry and a supply of resources, Dashers can achieve greater financial empowerment and meet their professional goals. Local merchants are also provided with financial opportunities and tactical support to enable a greater and more diverse equality of access in local economies.

**Entrepreneurship and Access Programs**
DoorDash's Entrepreneurship and Access Programs assist enrolled restaurateurs with a multitude of challenges including visibility, reach, financial barriers, lack of resources and more. By signing up, businesses can receive dedicated communication support, increased in-app visibility, funding opportunities, inclusion in DoorDash marketing initiatives, and a free Restaurants Canada membership—which in and of itself provides cost-saving programs, health insurance programs, training opportunities and educational resources.

**Kitchens Without Borders and Black Food Energy**
Kitchens Without Borders was implemented to elevate immigrant and refugee-owned restaurants, while Black Food Energy was implemented to celebrate and promote black-owned restaurants. Both initiatives provide tactical support for under-represented and under-resourced business owners. Once identified, restaurateurs receive in-app marketing, recognition and customer promotions, as well as small business advice for legal, financial and marketing matters. These opportunities aim to increase visibility, revenue, and growth.

**WeDash**
WeDash is an initiative that offers DoorDash employees the opportunity to understand the business by seeing challenges up close and finding their best solution. By involving ALL employees in the dashing experience, problems and their respective impacts can be identified throughout each part of the funnel and then solved as quickly as possible. This is the kind of primary research that allows the company to curate a seamless and efficient experience for all their audiences. According to Shilpa Arora, General Manager at DoorDash Canada, "The feedback has been resoundingly positive. We have made amazing One Per Cent Improvements—which is one of our values."

## CAMARADERIE & LEADERSHIP

This same support was adopted at an industry-level with website content, including their blogs—*Newsroom*, *Impact*, and *Engineering*—now integrated in the DoorDash mobile app. By sharing consumer trends, industry news and technological advancements, DoorDash can equip their partners, educate their staff and prepare the industry for new developments. Holistically, their online platform promotes camaraderie and leadership among not only merchants, but competitors as well.

Recently, DoorDash partnered with Restaurants Canada to share Canada's online ordering trends for 2022. This report details dining trends, consumer behaviour, takeout preferences, and more for restaurateurs to review, adapt and conquer.

"It's really to help the Canadian restaurants meet the needs of our mutual consumer. We take it as our responsibility to provide as much information to them as possible which is in- depth, current, and on top of consumer preferences and emerging trends, so that they can apply it and improve," says Arora.



**Access trends, tips and implementation tools, and business development and longevity ideas for the world of online ordering and takeout dining with DoorDash.**

SCAN HERE TO VIEW



# Bar & Beverage Trends from Around the World

BY CHRIS SZEGO



*Poised on the cusp of the last quarter of 2022, this is an excellent moment to examine some of the trends sweeping through the bar and beverage world. It gives us a good opportunity to see where we've come from and where we're going, and hopefully have a chance to come to grips with the ongoing challenges of this year as we prepare to face the next.*

First, the bad news. One continuing trend that no one is excited about (but everyone must face) is the continued upheaval in the worldwide supply chain. There isn't one root cause; each disruptive issue cascades into the next. The invasion of Ukraine, wildly fluctuating fuel prices and constantly unfolding shipping delays mean that plans should be flexible, adaptable and preferably plugged into local availability.

In addition, severe weather events are hitting every continent, sometimes from opposite extremes. Extraordinarily high and low temperatures are on the rise everywhere, and the floods and droughts they can produce may potentially result in massive disruptions on the growth and harvest of base ingredients.

But the news is not all dire. In fact, nations are beginning to address the realities of global climate change, taking their cue from the wealth of research environmental activists have gathered over years. Which leads us to our first—and most prevalent—trend.

## :: Sustainability

People visit bars for many reasons. Chief among them to socialize, to relax, unwind and have fun, to meet up with old friends or make new ones, and to drink something delicious. We choose our drinking spots for novelty or decor, for theme or location, or even for accessibility. Now there's another reason to choose a favourite spot: sustainability.

Eco-friendly bars are on the rise worldwide, and they approach sustainability from many angles at once. With drastically reduced waste production, a determination to move away from single-use plastics (especially drinking straws), eco-friendly architecture and fixtures, locally and fair-trade supplied ingredients, drinking places are setting a new standard of ecological stewardship and responsibility.

Canada is no stranger to one exciting aspect of this movement: the transformation of waste into delicious drinks. In 2016, Canadian Kelsey Ramage and Australian Iain Griffiths founded Trash Tiki, a traveling international event series and online platform demonstrating how to make drinks out of leftover bar items like rinds, peels and pulps. Although Ramage and Griffiths permanently closed their first fixed location, Supernova Ballroom, in Toronto during the 2020 shutdown, their influence still reverberates around the world.

Inspired by a Trash Tiki pop-up, owner Phil Abowd's bar Pocket makes cocktails out of spices and citrus peels sourced from his other bar, Southside, both located in Haebang-cheon, Seoul. Pocket is a highball bar focused on environmental, social and economic



Re bar in Sydney, Australia, owned and operated by Matt Whiley.

sustainability. Abowd distilled what he'd learned from Trash Tiki and Southside into what he describes as "a community bar that gives back, highlights local talent and charities and pushes us to think about food and beverage waste."

In addition to partnering with a local coffee roaster to collect grounds he forges into drinks with extra oomph, Abowd collected bottle glass and local shells to create Pocket's aggregate bar top surface. Pocket also gives back to the community, donating ten percent of profits to local charities which change every month—a percentage Abowd hopes will increase as the bar grows—and lets charities use the space for talks and workshops.

But when it comes to sustainability at every level, Re, in Sydney, Australia, is a world class standout. Winner of Ketel One's Sustainable Bar Award in 2021, Re's owner Matt Whiley built sustainability from the ground up, literally. Whiley diverted more than 82 thousand milk bottles from landfill for his bar top and tables. The bar floor is plant-based and largely compostable, and the banquette fabric is made from pineapple leaf fibre.

British-born Whiley's experience at former London bar Scout taught him that overripe fruit is sweeter, making for tastier drinks. He also learned that misshapen fruit is cheaper, and that shape is frankly immaterial once it's blended. He has since expanded to collecting other food byproducts which he uses to make drinks of all kinds. Re is considered the world's first bar built on waste. And, like Ramage and Griffiths, Whiley wants to change the world's perspective on what "waste" means.

An important cornerstone of Whiley's overall strategy is to pay suppliers for the waste products he obtains. "I don't believe I should benefit from it at the supplier's expense. He has to get paid for something that he would normally put in the bin. If you don't give him compensation, that just makes it easier for him to throw it away. Everyone has to benefit along the way—that's the only way it can work."

***According to a recent American Express Trendex survey, most Canadians prefer to buy from businesses and brands who support their own individual sustainable efforts.***

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***In May of 2022, 20% of consumers said that over the last three months, they had been spending extra for better-quality drinks.***

Penicillin Bar in Hong Kong was celebrated by Asia's 50 Best Bars 2021 for its minimal waste approach. Constantly trying to reduce its carbon footprint, including re- and upcycled materials, Penicillin's goal is to become Hong Kong's first "scrapless' bar" by brewing, fermenting, growing and reusing ingredients. Himkok, in Oslo, Norway produces 80 per cent of their own spirits, beer, wine, mead and kefir using botanicals they grow themselves or find locally, using a windmill to help power their distillery.

Beyond countries or currencies, what these bars share is the belief that sustainable choices are no longer an upscale option but an absolute necessity. Sustainability is more than a trend: it's a massive movement affecting every part of the global food industry, and it's important to both operators and customers. In fact, according to a recent American Express Trendex survey, most Canadians prefer to buy from businesses and brands who support their own individual sustainable efforts, and are willing to pay a premium to do so.

## :: Experience

If the last two-plus years of the pandemic have taught us anything, it is that humans are social creatures. We create meaning by making bonds, establishing patterns and routines, and by seeking out new and different environments to make them familiar. Novelty and connection are two social qualities we particularly crave, especially after so long without them.

We've been hearing the phrases "pent up demand" and "the new Roaring 20s" lately, and for a good reason. Stay-at-home orders, gathering restrictions, closures and travel bans kept us cut off from one another and from new collective experiences, and as constraints loosen up, the entire world is looking to make up for lost time.

Today consumers are eager to forge connections with friends, their communities, and international cultures and experiences. According to the Bank of Canada, Canadians plan to spend significantly more over the next year. Some of that is due to inflation, but 2.5 years of enforced homestay have also led to a record high level of household savings. People are ready to spend on memorable evenings out: they simply want their dollars to count.

### POP-UPS

Offering the new, the different, and above all the temporary, pop-ups are more relevant than ever. Operators can test local appetites, brands can try new concepts, and guests get to take part in a brand-new adventure. The adventure aspect is key: a pop-up should showcase something truly different in alcohol, service, or experience. For instance:

- In March 2022, the upstairs space at Death & Co's Denver location, Suite 6A, became The House of Suntory, featuring highballs and a concentrated menu of Japanese spirits-based cocktails, gloriously decorated with puffs of cherry blossoms.
- Krug, the renowned Champagne house, has hosted several month-long Champagne pop-ups on the rooftop terrace of the Shangri-la Paris. Each year Krug has a new theme and includes a new special ingredient in their exclusive pop-up Champagne.
- In Atlanta, Chef Arnaldo Castillo tried his first pop-up in 2020 to provide food for essential workers. In 2021, he left his restaurant job to launch La Chingana full time, serving a tasting menu of classic Peruvian dishes. Recently La Chingana evolved into a permanent restaurant, Tio Lucho, focusing on coastal dishes.

### LIMITED TIME OFFERS (LTOS)

If a pop-up seems too complex an endeavour, another way to provide guests with a chance to try something new and different is with a limited time offer. Usually lasting six to eight weeks, LTOs give restaurants, bars and coffee shops a chance to concentrate on a single point of novelty. Long-used to drive customer traffic and incremental sales, LTOs also offer an opportunity to work with local suppliers, distillers and brewers to highlight a particular taste, spirit or beer.

- **Special themes and occasions** LTOs lend themselves well to special events, like jazz festivals, or annual dates, like Halloween. Black Lagoon plans to open nine international, Halloween-themed pop-ups in October, including one in Toronto. But a full-on immersive experience isn't always necessary: a unique drink crafted for a specific date or social or cultural observance, like Halloween, Pride Month or Christmas, can have a surprising impact.
- **Seasonal flavours** Guests are looking for authentic experiences, and that means seasonal and local flavours. According to Kerry Digest, lemon was the top flavour for European LTOs in

the summer of 2022. Strawberry was second, with chocolate in third place—a fine balance between refreshment and indulgence.

- **Premium instead of discount** As consumers look ahead to a year of inflation and economic uncertainty, they want to use their banked savings wisely. They're looking for chances to experience luxury instead of the usual run-of-the-mill. LTOs are a perfect opportunity to introduce high-quality brands or drinks.

### CLASSES AND COURSES

During the pandemic, the adoption of online education exploded. And not merely in schools. In need of entertainment, customers took cooking and mixology courses by the thousands. Establishments that would never have previously conceived or considered the ideas found themselves creating cocktail kits and recording or leading webinars designed as much to help guests interact as to teach them how to mix a specific drink.

That desire to learn still exists, as do the online tools to make it possible. The potential to move those classes in-house is now a bonus.

## :: Classic Cocktails

While classic cocktails never really left the scene, they are currently having a strong resurgence. While perpetually seeking novelty, consumers are also now looking for comfort, and a classic cocktail with a modern twist provides exactly what they're looking for. In erratic times, guests truly appreciate the relief of drinking something simple and straightforward. In particular, 80's favourites are in high demand. Bartenders around the world report that tequila-based drinks are seeing a strong revival, and the passion for uniquely flavoured locally distilled gins still burns brightly.

At the same time, many people became amateur mixologists for fun during the pandemic. They purchased cocktail kits, watched webinars, and took online classes to develop and then improve their skills. Now this group has developed a depth and breadth of appreciation for both techniques and tastes. They know their stuff. When this knowledgeable cohort visits a new or favourite drinking establishment, they want to be wowed.

According to Bacardi, the discerning palates of these accomplished home mixologists are sparking a rise in premiumization across spirit categories. The spirits segment is expected to grow 12.5 per cent in 2023, a swell driven largely by premiumization, as demand volume continues to decline overall. Premium mixers are also on the rise, as consumers increasingly prefer more natural, and even organic additions to their drinks.

## :: Low and No

The low and/or no alcohol trend shows absolutely no signs of slowing down. In fact, the demand for non- and low-alcoholic drinks is steadily growing. In Canada, 24 per cent of guests have tried low and no alcohol options while drinking on premise— that's a three per cent increase over three years. spiritsEUROPE claims the category currently occupies three per cent of the total European alcohol market, and predicts a staggering 31 per cent increase in volume by 2024.

Part of the increase could be linked to a larger worldwide trend: the widespread increase of interest in health in general. Not surprising, there's nothing like a pandemic to galvanize large populations into making healthier life decisions. For instance, another ingredient consumers now want less of in their drinks is sugar. In the end, the trend boils down to choice, and today's customers want all the options.

Guests want to be able to enjoy an evening out with friends or colleagues without everything that comes along with alcohol. They might not be drinkers at all, or deciding to lessen their intake temporarily, or simply be interested in trying something new. They want to participate, to take advantage of all the care and craft bar staff put into their cocktail creations, and they want the ability to opt out of high ABV levels.

It helps that the marketplace for low and no alcohol offerings has dramatically improved in recent years. When Ben Branson launched Seedlip Spice in London, England in 2015, it was the first major alcohol-free liquor on the market. Now there are hundreds of choices, even thousands, including wines, beers, spirits and pre-packaged alcohol-free/reduced cocktails. Bar staff are spending serious time and effort to create inspired low- and no-ABV options for patrons all around the globe. Perhaps we'll finally be able to move away from the term 'mocktail' for good.

***The spirits segment is expected to grow 12.5 per cent in 2023, a swell driven largely by premiumization.***



## :: Transformational Technology

Some trend-driven forms of technological invention aren't especially well suited to the bar and beverage scene. NFTs, for instance, are not the most natural fit: the purchase of a unique virtual asset does not compare to the reality of drinking an ice-cold beer, a perfectly paired wine or an exceptionally mixed cocktail. But that doesn't mean digital transformation has left bars behind.

Instead, technological adaptations have improved other areas of the sector, notably in ordering and delivery, where drinking establishments are following the path taken by restaurants a few short years ago. COVID-19 also unleashed a wave of e-commerce, as operators who could not open to the public rapidly created new ways to sell their wares. While less edgy than the fragile bubbles of crypto and NFTs, e-commerce in restaurants and bars is equally transformative, and likely of more long-term use.

Demonstrating the same kind of nimble creativity that leads to extraordinary beverages, drinking places also turned to technology to deliver cocktail kits, and to teach online classes and courses. In-house technological innovations are advancing the spread of self-service systems. With an eye on health and safety, such systems will continue to be of use in the future. Special time and labour-saving innovations like Suntory's highball machine continue their march into bars around the world. On the consumer side, there are a plethora of apps to help find specials and bargains or even to track drinking habits for health or financial reasons.

## :: Coffee and Tea

When the WHO declared COVID-19 a global pandemic in March 2020, the shutdowns that immediately followed affected the sellers of coffee and tea like everyone else. But after the initial chaos, a sense of routine established itself among newly remote workers, and coffee and tea sales had an extraordinarily rapid and powerful comeback.

The term "coffee break" took on a new and profound meaning, as people working from home could access coffee and tea to go. People still needed their caffeine fixes, even if they consumed their beverages outside or at home. Sales have leveled out now but remain at a higher level.

In addition, as part of the larger health-minded lifestyle, consumers began looking for low-caffeine options, meaning sales of low- and no-caffeine choices are also up. The U.S. remains the main destination of coffee sales, with Germany second, but sales across Asia continue to rise steadily.

That said, tea is still the world's second most popular drink (water is in first place). More than three billion cups of tea are drunk every single day, and annual tea consumption around the globe is more than 40 million litres. China is the world's largest producer of tea, followed by India, Kenya, and Sri Lanka. Turkey is the world's largest per capita consumer.

The search for international tastes extends to coffee and tea, especially among millennials. Buttered coffee persists, and both coffee and tea are making their way into cocktails around the world. Sales of iced drinks are on the rise as temperatures increase, particularly in cities—Europe, for instance, suffered through a dramatic and dangerous heat wave.

Such extreme weather events are likely to cause some volatility in coffee and tea production around the globe. The International Coffee Association, which produces monthly reports on global coffee exports, warns there may be some unpredictability in supply if severe weather events persist.

## :: A Place to Be

Shaped by neighbourhoods and informed by larger cultural imperatives, bars have different atmospheres around the world. But in one respect they are the same: they offer an important 'third place' for people to meet, one where customers can relax, have a drink and either unwind or energize themselves. And today, guests around the world are looking for the same things from their favourite drinking establishments: adventure, comfort, luxury, choice and above all, environmental sustainability.

After so long apart, people are looking to make their now-treasured evenings out into full-fledged occasions, and bars can be ready to help. With seasonal drinks, experiential classes, and cutting-edge technology and processes, exclusive drinking establishments can provide a sense of novelty and adventure for their guests. Exclusive and limited offers, premium options for special occasions, and a concentration on classic recipes offer extra luxury, comfort and value.

There's no denying that times have been tough. The resilience and innovation of bar operators and staff around the world provided many new ways for guests to enjoy libations even during stringent shutdowns. Now they stand ready to provide enjoyment and experience in equal measure, with an eye on a sustainable future for all.





# *La Tablée des Chefs: Feeding people today, developing food autonomy for tomorrow*

BY CHRIS SZEGO

The mission of La Tablée des Chefs is simple but profound: **Feed. Educate.** Their staff and volunteers combat food insecurity on multiple fronts, with an innovative food recovery program designed to feed people today, coupled with creative educational programs which provide skills and training to help young people develop food autonomy for the rest of their lives.

The growth and evolution of La Tablée des Chefs is due in large part to the passion and drive of founder Jean-François Archambault. As a student of hotel management, Archambault was struck by the amount of food wasted during the practical cooking lessons that were part of the curriculum. After graduating, he went on to work in the hotel industry, and saw more of the same in the hotel kitchens. Mentally multiplying the amount of waste by numbers of hotels sent him in search of facts and figures, and he spent time learning about food waste patterns and initiatives, trying to make sense of it.

Then in 2000, Archambault's mother died of cancer. It was personally devastating, but also a trigger for action. "My mother was so involved in the community, so full of empathy. And I was not doing anything about the ideas I had. Losing the person I loved the most made me ask 'What am I going to do?' I realized I had to live my life to the fullest, to make the best of every day. It changed my perspective."

Driven by that perspective shift, and the determination to push the limits every day, Archambault founded La Tablée des Chefs in 2002. The goal was straightforward: to collect the food that would otherwise go to waste in hotel and commercial kitchens, then make it available for local food distribution programs. For the first few years, it was an entirely volunteer endeavour, and he worked to grow the project on the sidelines of his full-time job. In 2005, Archambault stepped down as the chair of the volunteer board to take the position of general manager. "I quit my job, sold my house, and left everything to take this opportunity."

## New Directions

Since then, La Tablée des Chefs has grown in scope, reach and breadth. Their food recovery program liaises between food donors like hotels, stadiums and restaurants, and local community food distribution programs to ensure that a) food safety and security

standards are met, and b) the food reaches those who need it most. To date they've distributed more than 13 million cooked meals.

In the 20 years since its inception, La Tablée des Chefs has expanded its outreach in ways that Archambault did not originally expect. Food recovery had always been his objective. Then he met the head of Montreal's health department while on the executive board of the city's food bank. She had launched a study on the loss of culinary skills from generation to generation in low-income areas, and reading it expanded Archambault's vision for La Tablée in a new but complementary direction.

Education, Archambault realized, was another powerful way to combat food insecurity. "That's where it clicked for me. We needed to get chefs to share skills as well as food." La Tablée des Chefs started their first food literacy programs in 2006-07, with pilot programs in four Montreal schools in the most economically depressed areas, giving students elemental food preparation skills and nutrition education. "Today we have programs in more than 215 schools," he notes.

Today, La Tablée des Chefs offers diverse programs with different aims. The Kitchen Brigades, an extra-curricular workshop offered in high schools for students aged 12-17, teaches basic cooking techniques as well as healthy eating habits. The "Cook Up Your Future" culinary training program goes further. Designed for youth in care and in group homes, it has three distinct components and initiatives: a culinary kit, to equip young adults leaving care with tools they'll be able to use for years; a series of 24 culinary workshops led by culinary and education professionals to provide the fundamentals of technique, hygiene and nutrition; and even socio-professional kitchen training support for participants who show real interest and aptitude.

Unilever has been a partner of La Tablées des Chefs since 2018 when they first learned what Archambault was doing to fight food insecurity and educate young people. Unilever first partnered with La Tablées des Chefs with their Hellmann's mayonnaise brand, on a program to feed a stadium using food that would have otherwise been thrown out. "We are proud to continue our relationship with La Tablées des Chefs with both our Hellmann's and Knorr brands as our missions are clearly aligned," states Gary Wade, President, Unilever Canada.

Wade continues, "Hellmann's purpose is to "Make Taste, Not Waste" with the ambition to inspire and enable millions of Canadians to be more resourceful with their food and therefore waste less. Hellmann's Fridge Night app has been proven to reduce household food waste by one third, so we are thrilled to integrate this into The Kitchen Brigades curriculum to help more Canadians reduce their household food waste."





Jean-François Archambault

"Knorr's purpose is "Eat for Good" with the mission to inspire everyone to eat better for themselves and the planet. Knorr is a national partner in "Cook Up Your Future", a culinary training program for young people. We hope that through the partnership young people will learn to make better food choices through greater variety, eating more plants and veggies and less meat," says Wade.

## Food Insecurity in a Global Pandemic

Like other foodservice operations, the pandemic forced La Tablée des Chefs to pivot, but in an entirely different way. Archambault knew that he and his staff would be busier than ever. "We knew food insecurity would only go up. There was no question that our staff would be laid off—our work was needed more than ever." As restaurants were shuttered and restricted, food banks were hard-pressed in every direction. Not only did food needs increase, but seniors, who were more vulnerable to severe cases of COVID-19, were not allowed

to volunteer. In Quebec, where people 65 and older represent more than half of all volunteers in food banks and community organizations, this left food distribution organizations understaffed in a time of great need.

La Tablée des Chefs was uniquely positioned at the start of the pandemic, as they were connected with chefs and engaged in addressing ever-increasing food needs. But their usual methods were no longer appropriate. Speaking with chefs who had closed their dining rooms gave Archambault the insight on how to adapt. "The wage subsidy gave me an idea. The operators could get 75 per cent of the wage if they kept cooks in the kitchen, and I would find a way to fundraise the other 25 per cent. That's when we started Solidarity Kitchens."

Solidarity Kitchens was a massive, multi-organizational success. Professional kitchens provided the space and skills, and La Tablée des Chefs provided the recipes and all the raw materials needed to prepare them, including containers. La Tablée liaised between the kitchens and local food distribution programs, arranging to have the prepared meals delivered to those in need. In addition, La Tablée gave the kitchens $1 for every meal prepared as part of their 25 per cent pledge.

It was truly a group effort. Archambault credits everyone involved for their generosity and flexibility. "With the hospitality industry down, I knew there would be food not going to kitchens. I got on calls with CEOs, with executive producers, and everyone I spoke to said, 'everything you need'. We had 600 tonnes donated in the first year, and double that in the second year. Altogether, Solidarity Kitchens made 4 million meals for food security and distribution organizations."

The pandemic affected their educational arm as well. Like other schools, La Tablée's educational programs had to go virtual. Attendance dropped, and 175 different programs were trimmed down to 65. But La Tablée persevered, because food insecurity was only accelerated by the pandemic. "Chefs brought food to the schools," says Archambault. "Kids picked it up, then brought it home and followed lessons online." Now that schools are back in person, so are La Tablée's programs, though they maintain an e-learning platform.



## Les Grandes Tablées

La Tablée des Chefs relies on donations of ingredients, money and time. Archambault brings all the business development skills he gained in his hotel career to the task of acquiring those donations. "I used to convince people to choose my hotel properties to book their meetings or conventions. I was good at that. Applying those skills to social good and justice, being the voice that can step into the CEO's office to ask for money, or to deliver something we know is needed—it's what drives me. It brings me joy, happiness, adrenaline."

Not that he does it alone: Archambault is forthright about his admiration for his team. "I've never had the luxury of having a team like we do now. I would not change the way it was set up for anything. Every experience we gained has made us stronger." He is also very clear about the ultimate goal. "La Tablée isn't mine. It's a charity. It doesn't belong to anyone—it belongs to everyone."



Les Grandes Tablées is the charity's only fundraising series, a gala event where they raise money, gather like-minded individuals together, and shine a light on everything they do. It's a chance for the local business community to enjoy an evening out, dining in fine style while supporting La Tablée's mission and programs. It's a showstopper of an event, full of local food and produce, cooked by passionate and generous chefs for a room full of epicureans who understand that gastronomy is best shared.

"It's a celebration of La Tablée," says Archambault. "A way to bring it to people who love good food, good wine, and are generous. We select chefs who share the values of La Tablée, have them work together in the kitchen to create an enchanting evening of local food and produce prepared by passionate chefs."

Sobeys, a long-standing partner of IGA in Québec and in English Canada since 2018, is an enthusiastic partner of La Tablée des Chefs, supporting its Kitchen Brigades and Cook Up Your Future programs, as well as La Grande Tablée Gala. Jana Sobey, SVP Fresh Merchandising at Sobeys, is Co-Chair of La Grande Tablées organizing committee. The grocery company understands the importance of the underlying issue. "Food security programs are an important way that we invest in our communities to build healthier tomorrows for more Canadians. La Tablée des Chefs is especially



meaningful to us as it directly supports vulnerable young people in our communities."

Each Grande Tablée event is a window into what La Tablée des Chefs is all about. "Every year we involve the next generation," says Archambault. "Culinary schools—students, chef instructors, teachers—they are all on hand to help. We also bring in students from our Kitchen Brigades programs: they get experience as a stage in the kitchen." Most of all, having them in the room helps the attending epicureans truly understand the significance of their mission. "Gastronomy isn't about spending alone, without any social impact. When you take something, you should give something."

## Looking to the Future

Funds raised at Les Grandes Tablées galas will go directly into their programs, so La Tablée des Chefs can continue to reach as many people as possible. Archambault wants to get more people excited about the project and the mission. La Tablée des Chefs was founded in Quebec and their base is there, but food insecurity spreads from coast to coast. "Let's take what we've got and grow the movement, bringing it to more and more cities across Canada."

Archambault sees communication as La Tablée's next big challenge. "Surprising as it may seem, it's not always easy to reach the people who need it the most. Building the workshop, testing the recipes – that's not the hard part. The hardest part is delivery: making sure the right people, who need it the most, are getting the most."

In the end, Archambault's past will inform the future of La Tablée des Chefs. "I worked in hotels for years. My father was the legal advisor to the chefs' organization. I saw the chefs' generosity and passion, and knew I could create this social movement. My saddest moment turned out to become something that drove impact. My mom would have wanted that."

### 2022 Grande Tablée Events:

**Toronto: Monday, October 17 | Fairmont Royal York (Chef jW Foster)**
**Quebec City: Monday, November 14 |Fairmont Château Frontenac**
**Montreal: Monday November 21st | Hôtel Bonaventure Montréal**


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SPOTLIGHT: EDMONTON

# BUTCHERY:
## THE CUTTING EDGE OF LOCAL

**Having long played the role of "protein consigliere" to chefs and operators, butchers are experiencing a renaissance as consumers seek to connect with the local food community, and to better understand the food supply chain as a whole. Edmonton butchers Elyse Chatterton and Corey Meyer share their thoughts on sustainability, the art of their trade, and why everyone should trust their local butcher.**



Finessed over hundreds of years, the art of butchery is a blend of primal philosophies and modern techniques. Once a means of survival, butchery became the cornerstone of main streets and local markets. Spurred on by increasing urbanism and market demand, the butchery was slowly replaced by industrialization and mass production. The resurgence of butchery is a long time coming and can be attributed to the shift in consumer behaviour to local, farm-to-table and to sustainability. There's now a heightened importance on sustainable sourcing and consumption—including the need for viable local food systems, environmentally conscious production methods and a respect for quality over quantity. Foundational pillars that echo the philosophy of modern-day butchers.

Edmonton's own Corey Meyer and Elyse Chatterton are both long-term players in the art, working to perfect their craftsmanship, developing their businesses and representing Canada on behalf of the industry.

## DRAWN TO THE TRADE

As a Protein Specialist for Sysco Canada, Elyse Chatterton reveals the draw to the profession that had her hooked from the age of 14. "It's the process of taking something large and unruly and making it into something that looks good enough to eat…even raw," says Chatterton.

Growing up helping out in her family's butcher shop in the northwest of England, she always loved how the industry championed a 'nose-to-tail' mentality. As butchers are skilled in each phase of the technical butchering process—hanging, breaking, trimming and finishing—there's an emphasis on low-waste and ethical consumption.

Once the animal is drained, it's first broken down into its primal and subprimal cuts, meaning each part of the animal is accounted for. The "trimming" phase involves further strategic division to ensure the lowest waste possible, while the "finishing" stage entails value-adding with marinades, rubs and more to ensure a beautiful presentation. It's this process that not only guarantees a product that has been handled with precision, technique, and standards throughout the process,

> "YOU EAT WITH YOUR EYES FIRST"
>
> 
>
> *– Corey Meyer*

but is aesthetically pleasing to boot.

Technically trained at NAIT in Alberta, Corey Meyer has owned and operated ACME Meats in Edmonton for over 15 years. He has always had a passion for the food industry, after all, according to Meyer, "You eat with your eyes first." Being able to see a product through from start to finish and create something impressive is the draw. Corey takes pride in "introducing consumers to more foreign cuts or historically less-favoured meats - It's part of the fun."

## GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR PROTEIN

Much like the rest of the industry, Meyer and Chatterton believe conscious local consumption is the key to a prosperous food system. Conscious local consumption accounts for not only a consumer's acquisition of a product but their understanding of its journey from beginning to end. Canada's robust agricultural laws ensure our local farmers are held to the highest standards, producing the best quality products possible. It's these same farmers who supply your local butchers, creating a cycle of internal agricultural support and excellence.

Both Chatterton and Meyer express their concerns when it comes to the sustainability of the industry. Consumers are trained to favour seeking out the highest volume for the lowest possible price and, though this concept initially presents itself as "getting the best bang for your buck", the central value and craft behind the market-ready product are often overlooked and under appreciated.

When asked what consumers should consider when purchasing their proteins, Meyer addressed a pressing issue in the trade: "There are only so many animals and so many pieces per animal available." Chatterton agrees, "Consumers need to understand what the true cost of meat is. Why paying more for the best meat you can afford and eating it less is vital for the sustainability of the industry and all farming practices."

How can restaurateurs harness and benefit from these challenges? The secret to maximizing your output is as simple as making use of the expertise of a trained butcher.



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"CONSUMERS NEED TO UNDERSTAND WHAT THE TRUE COST OF MEAT IS. WHY PAYING MORE FOR THE BEST MEAT YOU CAN AFFORD AND EATING IT LESS IS VITAL FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE INDUSTRY AND ALL FARMING PRACTICES."



*– Elyse Chatterton*

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**PROTEIN VARIETY**
**Encyclopedic knowledge of protein varieties, edible cuts, and strategic division.**

**VALUE-ADDING**
**Coupled knowledge of protein varieties and edible cuts allows for unique dishes that may not otherwise be known or feasible. Additionally, making the most out of each cut's inherent flavour without overuse of finishers and/or pairings.**

**CONSISTENCY**
**Technically trained to uphold standards and perform with accuracy.**

## WORLD BUTCHERS' CHALLENGE

The World Butchers' Challenge unites the industry by bringing together like-minded butchers to showcase their skills and talents. This year's competition was Canada's first, with a team of seven of the nation's best butchers heading to Sacramento, CA in early September. The team included Chatterton (Finisher) and Meyer (Trimmer) as well as Damian Goriup, Taryn Barker, Dave Vandervelde, Brent Herrington, and the team's captain, Peter Baarda. Together, Team Canada competed against 12 other countries and, while they didn't place, Chatterton and Meyer were excited to be selected as team Canada members through a tough try-out process and to compete in a global competition.

Though it was a nerve-racking, fast-paced competition, Meyer shares that the experience as a whole was "beyond anything I could've imagined. Meeting like-minded butchers that I've only ever seen or interacted with online was such an amazing feeling. Everyone was fantastic and seeing how we all share the same experiences was a really nice feeling. To see all our hard work presented so beautifully on our display tables made me well up with pride."

Chatterton and Meyer look forward to educating consumers and the industry, about the benefits of a sustainable butchering industry.



## EDMONTON SPOTLIGHT

As a parting gift, the two are spreading some love by sharing some of their favourite local restaurants.

**Biera / 9570 76 Avenue**
"Delicious food and delicious beer that they pair beautifully together. Also a huge bonus that it's right next door to ACME"
**– Corey Meyer**

**the NEXT act / 8224 104 Street**
"Amazing burgers and a really great selection of local craft beer!"
**– Elyse Chatterton**

**Drift Food Truck / Edmonton**
"A simple food truck with the most delicious sandwiches."
**– Elyse Chatterton**

**RGE RD / 10643 123 Street**
"Their food philosophy from their amazing in-house butcher and local ingredient sourcing makes this place a go-to"
**– Corey Meyer**

# *Does a handful of stars define Toronto's local food culture?*

BY BRIGITTE FOISY
VP, CHEFS CANADA



After much speculation from chefs and Toronto foodies alike, it's (finally) here: The Michelin Guide Toronto edition was revealed on September 13th. Of the 18,000ish food vendors in Toronto, 74 eateries are included in the guide and a total of 30 made the cut for a star or a Bib Gourmand distinction. Of these, thirteen establishments snatched coveted stars including 12 earning one Michelin star (and a single restaurant garnering two) from the century-old Parisian rating system.

The total number of entries in the Guide came as a surprise since cities like New York, Tokyo or Paris have close to 500 results on the Michelin's website. The mentions seemed far too little to accurately paint a picture of the city's rich culinary diversity for travelers in search for the latest in gastronomy.

"Toronto can boast to being home to thirteen Michelin-star establishments and 74 mentions in the fine-dining Bible, shares Thomas Delannoy, President of Chefs Canada. We're proud to see some of our Ambassad'Ors on that list! Being a

"Michelin city" will definitely help the restaurants who garnered recognition but will also lift the entire city's hospitality sector still recovering from the pandemic."

I'm certain that the Guide will help boost tourism in the city, explains Dan Craig, Executive Chef at The Westin Harbour Castle in Toronto. "At the same time, it will add a tremendous amount of pressure to the top performing establishments to try to achieve and/or maintain them. When working in France I remember the feeling and atmosphere in the kitchen when we achieved our fist Michelin star! It was pure celebration followed then by relentless push and pressure to go for 2 stars the next year

While it was the city's unsung chefs who ignited the crowd during the award ceremony, all the usual suspects made the cut; a few with less stars than expected, while, shockingly, some of the city's most prominent chefs were totally omitted, stirring questions and long chains of heated comments online.

"There are so many amazing restaurants in the city that were very deserving of at least one star, adds Chef Dan Craig. I was surprised that restaurants like Canoe, Richmond Station and Actinolite were not on the list. I think there is a great opportunity for growth here. I hope the Michelin guide will expand geographically in the GTA and surrounding areas since there are so many great restaurants that are just outside the Toronto Guide's "zip code"; establishments like Langdon Hall in Cambridge should/would have two stars, no question."

"Michelin is here. There has been a lot of praise and equally a lot of skepticism", says Ron McKinlay, Executive Chef, Canoe Restaurant +Bar who was among those expected to earn his star. "At the end of the day, they are here because they see Toronto for what it is: an amazing city with world class culinary talent. It heightens awareness of the rest of the world that we are here pushing and will only get stronger and better. It's a total positive in my books. That being said, do I feel our team deserved a star? Damn right I do! Will it change how we operate? No."

"The selection of Michelin underscores the restaurants, local flavors, international inspiration, and creativity that makes Toronto's dining scene world-class," adds Daniele Corona, Executive Chef at Don Alfonso 1890 in Toronto. "Yet, there are many deserving who were not named, to whom I say, "Do not be discouraged—continue to offer each individual guest a unique culinary experience to achieve success and further our city's reputation as a global dining destination.".

While no three-star rankings were given, a single two-star was awarded to one establishment—Sushi Masaki Saito, whose reservation site crashed following the announcement. Though well deserved, most expected celebrity Chef Patrick Kriss of Alo Food Group to be recognized in the double-star category as he has consistently dominated the Canada's 100 Best restaurants list for many years and previously held the 98th position on the World's 50 Best.

Perhaps due to recent critiques for being too focused on Japanese and French fare, the Toronto Michelin Guide demonstrated an effort to represent the multiculturalism of the world's most diverse city with 27 types of cuisines featured in this first edition. But is that enough for a city like Toronto with a global identity rooted in its diversity? Contemporary Japanese cuisine earned top honours, drawing 40 per cent of the stars, with the remaining spread across Italian, French and Mediterranean menus. The absence of Chinese, Jamaican, Thai or even Greek food was a noticeable omission with female chefs like the beloved Nuit Regular (Pai & Kiin) not even honoured with a Bib Gourmand. In fact, only two of the 13 restaurants selected in Toronto have head chefs who are women—both standing alongside male counterparts.

"We have such a diverse culinary landscape that is filled with small take-away food, casual restaurants, and establishments where the focus is on preserving traditions of a community rather than table linens and polished cutlery," explains Chef Eric Robertson of the Restaurant Pearl Morissette and RPM Bakehouse. "These are the places where I bring hospitality professionals from abroad when they're visiting Toronto; these are the temples to be celebrated in our food community. While the Michelin-starred establishments were mostly predictable, these are the places that are truly in the spirit of the Bib Gourmand award but sadly, were overlooked for more European or Japanese-style restaurants. This is not the diversity that Toronto's food landscape is known for. I think there's a lot of growth to be done for Toronto and the Michelin Guide; I just hope that it grows together rather than Toronto growing toward Michelin acceptance."

"I want to congratulate the city of Toronto for bringing the Guide as well as the 74 establishments who made the cut," Chef Romain Avril shared. "I celebrate your hard work and dedication to the craft. It's a start and there's room to grow, but do I think some places were left out? Yes. I thought restaurants like Actinolite, Canoe and The Beverley (to name only a few) should have been rewarded. With that said, it's only the beginning, there is a list every year! For those like me who aspire to be in the next one, this is a cue to do what we do best!"

## *The List:*

**Sushi Masaki Saito**

**Edulis**
**Quetzel**
**Alo**
**Don Alfonso 1890 Toronto**
**Alobar Yorkville**
**Osteria Giulia**
**Enigma Yorkville**
**Aburi Hana**
**Yukashi**
**Shoushin**
**Frilu**
**Kaiseki Yu-zen Hashimoto**

**Toronto saw 17 restaurants specializing in everything from sushi to fried chicken featured as part of the Guide's Bib Gourmand section, which recognizes great quality restaurants that offer two courses and a glass of wine or dessert for less than $60. The list included The Ace, Chica's Chicken, Alma, Enoteca Sociale, Favorites Thai, La Bartola, Fonda Balam, Campechano, Bar Raval, Grey Gardens, R&D, Fat Pasha, Cherry Street Bar-B-Que, Wynona, Indian Street Food Company, Puerto Bravo, SumiLicious Smoked Meat & Deli.**

**Check the entire list here: https://guide.michelin.com/ca/en/selection/canada/restaurants**

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With 60 Guides promoting cuisines of 38 countries and six North American cities, the arrival of Michelin in Canada is part of a multi-year funding deal with tourism boards to help promote travel and that's awesome. And though the guide is tremendous for business, it shouldn't be "the be-all-end-all", ESPECIALLY for a city like Toronto whose beef patties and dim sum restaurants have more traffic than our fine dining establishments.

In a recent article, Toronto Star reporter Karon Liu wrote: "The Michelin Guide is what it is. It's a guide that caters to affluent diners and offers a peek into places many of us will never step into (and perhaps only dream about going to one day.) We shouldn't be surprised that its inspectors would rather go out of their way to eat in Yorkville than at a plaza in Etobicoke or North York."

"It's an exciting and historic day for Toronto's gastronomy scene!" concludes Jason Bangerter, Executive Chef, Langdon Hall. Some of our chefs woke up with their hard work, commitment and excellence recognized by Michelin stars, Bib Gourmand and the recognition of the prestigious Michelin Guide. I volunteered, worked and dined in Michelin star restaurants and understand the rigorous standards and the commitment to culinary and hospitality excellence that makes an unforgettable experience. Our numbers in Toronto may look small compared to other cities, but I have no doubt we are just getting started. Canada has so many talented culinary and service professionals, diverse identities, geographies, cultures and foods that it will be exciting for Michelin to travel outside of Toronto in the coming years."

So, for now, let's congratulate those 74 who made the Guide and are contributing to promote culinary tourism in Toronto (and Canada). We applaud your accomplishments and hope that together we will continue to be inspired by what truly defines us: our creativity, our devotion to culinary excellence, our terroir, our producers and our stellar ingredients. May the Guide encourage us to continue to promote our industry from fine dining to the hot dog carts across the country while we expectantly wait for the second edition, as well as the upcoming announcements for the Vancouver edition.

# 2022 RC Show INNOVATION AWARD WINNER

BY SHANNON MURPHY



Hunger is such a powerful word. Hunger is what drove Craig McIntosh to join forces with Carissa Campeotto to create Trendi, a company that uses robotics to help the farm and food industry rescue and upcycle food waste into valuable products. Growing up, McIntosh experienced some challenging times, and being hungry was a daily occurrence. Out on his own at a young age, he quickly found himself homeless and eating food he scavenged in dumpsters. It wasn't until he was discovered in one of those dumpsters by a chef, who offered to feed him in exchange for doing the dishes, that he discovered his love of feeding people. After years of working in the restaurants all over the world, from Michelin Star restaurants to jerk chicken stands in Jamaica, he got to a point where he became frustrated with the food waste he was seeing. "I was opening fancy restaurants and bars and I realized that I needed more purpose in my career and I couldn't figure out where that purpose was. It turns out it was still to feed people, just in a different way."

Today Trendi nourishes all layers of the food industry by concentrating on how to rescue otherwise unwanted food. Globally, 2.5 million tonnes of food is wasted every year while over 800 million people are food deprived.[1] That is enough food to feed the hungry four times over. Canada is unfortunately one of the worst offenders in the world, wasting approximately 58 per cent of food and costing Canada's economy over $49 billion annually.[2]

Trendi's innovative technology serves all levels of the food distribution cycle with a focus on achieving zero hunger, good health and well-being, and responsible consumption and production, three of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals as laid out in the

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development[3] adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015.

This technology is why Trendi won Restaurants Canada's 2022 Innovation Award. This award is given to a company who created a game-changing Canadian product that made a significant positive impact on foodservice operations. At this year's show Trendi featured their upcycled powders, made out of rescued fruits and vegetables, then rehydrated into smoothies. The reaction from attendees was overwhelming. "Coming away from the show with the Innovation Award was so heartening," says Christine Couvelier, Trendi's Chief Product Innovation Officer and a veteran of the food industry with over 40 years' experience in roles such as Executive Chef, President's Choice, Loblaws Companies and the Chair of the Chef School at George Brown College. "Everyone that comes to the Restaurants Canada show is passionate about what they do and you can feel it, it's palpable, but I think we stood apart because we're thinking way into the future and about what's possible."

"What's possible" is Trendi's mantra, aiming to make healthy plant-based foods more accessible, rescuing avoidable food loss at the source and upcycling it into nutritious shelf-stable products. Based out of Vancouver, British Colombia, Trendi was founded in 2019 by Craig McIntosh, a former chef and restaurateur and Carissa Campeotto, a cold-pressed juice and smoothie entrepreneur and digital marketer. Bonded by the sharing of a crucial concern, "How can all this food be wasted while so many people go hungry?" The two developed an ambitious idea on the back of a napkin in 2018—use robotics and automation in the food industry to rescue, revive and redistribute nutritious food. They started with purchasing a smoothie machine with the end product made from rehydrating powders. They decided to launch it at the Canadian Health and Food Association show in February 2020. Then, COVID-19 hit. "Just like our fruit, we got crushed," says McIntosh. Realizing the powders used in the machine were full of fillers and often hard to find, they set out to make their own.

Selling everything apart from their mattress, a TV and a fold-up plastic table, they invested their last few dollars into the development of Trendi's BioTrim units—a fleet of trucks that aim to reduce food waste at the farm level. The BioTrim units go directly to the source to rescue food when it's freshest and process it on site, reducing both size and weight more than 80 per cent, reducing emissions during transportation and more importantly ensuring farmers don't have to dispose of truckload after truckload of their product and hard work.

"Carissa and I drove 6,000 kilometres across Canada, knocking on doors of farmers to understand their challenges and these guys were in tears as they told us stories of having second and third jobs just to keep the lights on," says McIntosh. "We would watch 800-pound totes go by every 15 minutes full of product to be hauled off to the landfill." In Canada, farmers have a legal obligation to destroy otherwise wasted material because of the fear of infestation. For the farmers, being able to convert the food at the source into a shelf stable dry material, which Trendi calls BioFlakes, to be shipped off to the end users for hydration was ground-breaking. "Think about the uses – anything from ketchup to salad dressings, to rehydrated drinks that can be used by manufacturers and restaurants," says McIntosh. "Imagine how these dry materials can serve those in areas that have experienced natural disasters or even war-torn countries, the possibilities are endless."

With their BioFlakes and BioTrim concepts, McIntosh and Campeotto joined Canada's $20-million Food Waste Reduction Challenge, an initiative launched in November 2020 under Food Policy for Canada, winning the semi-finalist role and $100,000. They then raised additional funds to support their concepts, something which neither one of them had much experience in, so they joined an incubator in the U.S. to learn how to raise venture capital. It wasn't long before they locked in their first investor who continues to be their lead investor to this day. While grateful for the U.S. interest in their product, the team does hope to finally lock down some Canadian investors.

In addition to creating the powders, Trendi has also introduced purées and expanded the uses of BioTrim flakes to serve other industries—imagine calcium sourced from eggshells used in pharmaceuticals or corn waste from food processors converted into polylactic acid (PLA) by bioplastic producers. Another option is BioBlends, which can be produced when either the source itself is already mixed, or multiple sources are blended into one ingredient, for example processed fish silage



**Trendi founders, Craig McIntosh & Carissa Campeotto**






from fishery waste for animal feed. Regardless of the end product, the goal is to convert waste into saleable products with the profits being shared directly with the farmers.

So what does the future hold for Trendi? Currently the company is focused on promoting their products and educating people about the food waste challenges facing the world and Canadians. "We continually reach out to innovators and food influencers and are very encouraged that so many want to be a part of our solution," says Couvelier. "We know we're not going to get all the answers by ourselves." Trendi is kicking off a Round Table in 2023 to further the conversation and Couvelier even envisions a Food Waste Summit. "I see bringing in experts from all over the world, farmers, restaurateurs, and government leaders, to learn from each other." Couvelier also focuses on engaging the next generation of culinary professionals. "We host food waste challenges with culinary colleges and challenge them to make products out of our powders and purees." Most recently they worked with the Canadian Food and Wine Institute at Niagara College. "The variety of products they came up with at the end of the semester, using our upcycled products was inspiring," she says.

At the 2023 RC Show, Trendi along with the Canadian Hospitality Foundation will be awarding five scholarships to culinary and hospitality students from across the country. "We hope they will take up the challenge and share with us their ideas for the future of dealing with food waste," says Couvelier.

The Trendi team of approximately 60 full-time staff and 100 contractors are constantly working on food waste solutions, most recently finalizing the development of a made-to-order beverage kiosk using reusable packaging that will hit the market soon. "Trendi is a really special place," says McIntosh. "We're made of incredible minds and many of us have faced tons of adversity." However McIntosh does admit that Trendi cannot do it alone. "Our goal has always been to create fairness in the system and decrease the gap of disparity. But we need customers to demand rescued products." Couvelier echoes this thought, "Food waste is not something that we can put aside any longer. Together we have to think about the future and figure out how to feed everybody."

## To learn more about Trendi's solutions visit: www.trendi.com

**To listen to Carissa Campeotto's Ted Talk visit:**

**www.ted.com/talks/carissa_campeotto_how_i_found_my_bloom_in_a_world_that_grows_garbage**

**1. www.wrwcanada.com**
Circular Innovation Council, Waste Reduction Week in Canada 2022, Food Waste in Canada: The Facts

**2. www.sdgs.un.org/goals**
United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Sustainable Development

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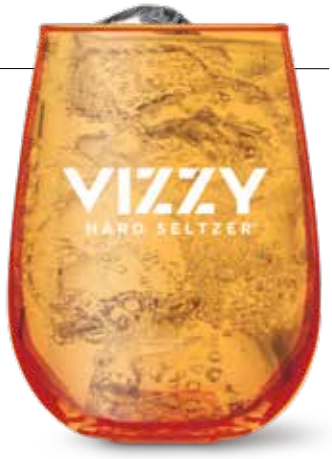
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