

Is processed a dirty word?

Learn more about B.C.'s food processors.

Look to the panel

Discussing the future of B.C.'s food production industry

**MEDIA
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B.C. FOOD DIVERSITY



FROM FARM TO FAMILY: WHO PRODUCES THE FOOD YOU EAT?

Why **B.C.'s own food mogul, Rob Feenie** is committed to cooking with locally produced food

PHOTO LARGE: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM PHOTO SMALL: LAURA LEYSHON

Take the B.C. food challenge

■ Question: What's the easiest (and most delicious) way to support B.C.'s economy?

■ Answer: Eat well—go on a B.C. diet and eat foods produced, processed or prepared in B.C.

B.C. Food Industry – So much to celebrate!

Food is the one thing that every British Columbian needs yet few of us are aware of the impact food has on our economy, our environment, our health and social well-being. B.C.'s food industry contributes \$37 billion to the provincial economy and employs over 300,000 people; 13% of the province's entire workforce. In 2009,

food manufacturing surpassed wood products as B.C.'s largest manufacturing sector in terms of sales; shipping 18% of all manufacturing shipments.

Who are B.C. food processors?

From small family owned and operated companies to big corporations, BC has it all! We compete locally, nationally and internationally. With more than 200 commodities to process, and with a wealth of ethnic diversity, BC is known for its creative solutions and cutting-edge products, in more traditional areas like meat, dairy and beverages, and in rapidly growing areas like organics,

vegetarian, vegan, natural health products and functional foods.

We make everything in B.C.

B.C.'s food processors make just about everything and more. While beverages, bakery, meat and seafood are the largest categories, B.C.'s food companies can supply you with virtually anything your heart desires—from specialty dietary products to a vast array of beer and wine, amazing ethnic offerings, decadent confectionaries, desserts and more. We also have a growing natural health products industry that makes cosmetics, creams and supplements. Pet food is another growing category.

Challenges

B.C. processors compete with products imported from all over the world. While B.C. processors abide by rigorous regulatory standards governing food safety, worker safety, environment and animal welfare, imported products come from countries that in many cases have much lower standards and are often made by people paid way less than what we pay locally.

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INSPIRATION

QUESTION & ANSWER WITH ROB FEENIE

At what point in your life did you discover your love for local B.C. food? And why is it so important to you?

My passion for B.C. food, ingredients and products actually began while I was travelling as a young chef. While in France, I was lucky to work with a number of chefs who taught me the importance of sourcing and using the best local products, letting their natural quality shine through. Each day, they left the kitchen to source their own produce, seasonings, and meats, then cooked every dish from scratch. It left a deep impression on me and I returned to B.C., inspired by our region which offers a bounty of local products and farmers that make B.C. a chef's dream.

It's important to me because as a chef and consumer, I have an opportunity to impact the local food economy. For all chefs, I truly believe our responsibilities extend beyond customer satisfaction in a dining experience — we can become influencers of public opinion, buying habits and interest in the food cycle of which we're all a part.

Where do you do most of your grocery shopping? And why?

Nothing beats Granville Island market for fresh produce and seafood. There are also several Farmers markets around as well that I love to go to. Commercial drive has some great little shops and Whole Foods is a fantastic supporter of local farmers and producers. Chinatown has an incredible selection of unique products and strolling through the neighborhood is like walking into another world. Also — popping by our local Fisherman's wharves to pick up fresh spot prawns, straight from the water is one of my favourite things to do during the season.

Name your top 3 favorite restaurants in B.C.?

We as consumers are beneficiaries of the choices we make, particularly when it comes to our food purchases. Buy supporting local producers, farmers, fisheries markets, and wineries whenever possible, not only are we making environmentally sustainable choices, but we're also making economically sustainable choices for ourselves and our families.

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B.C. Agriculture:
Why buy local?

Supporting B.C. farmers contributes to local economies, but it also pays off in greater nutritional, environmental and social benefits.

For the province's farmers, the day starts early and Anthea Archer is no exception. Out in the barns by 6 a.m. for the daily water buffalo milking, Archer says that to be a farmer you need passion. It's something she and her family have in abundance. "At some point we have to become sustainable in our world, and food is the most important part," she says.

Working well with nature

Like other independent B.C. farmers, Archer's Cowichan Valley Fairburn Farm operates in synch with nature, not in opposition to it. Animals are well-treated, well-fed and the size of operations supports sustainability.

The benefits are there in the taste of the vegetables, fruits, meats and dairy but also in the high level of nutrition that natural sustainable local farming offers. "Our animals eat grass with a handful of grain at milking time and they are out grazing from April to October," Archer says.

Nutritional benefits

Benefits of grass-fed animals are well documented. They produce leaner meat that is higher in health-enhancing fats (such as omega-3) and lower in bad fats such as saturated. Grass-fed grazing animals are healthier requiring little or no antibiotic, and they produce much less manure which causes problems in runoff from excess amounts.



Archer's water buffalo dairy farm produces milk that is high in good fats and creamy in texture. "It's perfect for cheese-making," she says,

"and you get a much higher production ratio than from cow's milk." Chad Goertzen's Chilliwack hog farm, Sundance Farms, is a "hands-on operation," he says. "We are working with the animals every day." His is one of many B.C. hog farms that have signed on to an Environmental Farm Plan through the Association of B.C. Hog Producers.

Quality family life

Overall B.C. farmers provide a high level of environmental stewardship keeping rivers clean, forests healthy and local habitats healthy. An often overlooked benefit of local farms is the way they support healthy family life and contribute to the larger community. "It's a healthy place to raise kids," says Goertzen. "Farming and family go hand-in-hand."


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NEWS

Question: Is Processed a dirty word?

Answer: “To process” can mean many things: to subject to a routine procedure, to prepare by special method; nothing dirty ...

B.C. processed food; Taste the quality

Misperception

The word “Processed” has really got a bad rap when it comes to food. Many believe that processed means food that has been chemically altered or manufactured in some way to make it unhealthy or unnatural. But is that really the case?

Food processing involves transforming crops, fish or livestock into food products that can be transported and sold—virtually everything we buy is processed. In fact if we grow or catch it ourselves, we usually process it before we eat it! Processing has made our food supply safer, it kills pathogens (disease causing germs) and extends the shelf life of food.

Benefits of processing food

Processing food began when our distant ancestors discovered how good food tasted cooked over the fire. Fermenting, drying, salting

led to other means of ensuring a year round food supply. Food processing innovation provides advanced storage and packaging techniques and processing technologies to improve the shelf life of foods. An example is a fermentation process developed by Canadian researchers to expand the shelf life of the Korean dish kimchi from one month to a full year without pasteurization or preservatives. Modern food processing enables us to enjoy an abundant supply of affordable, nutritious and safe food.

In support of food processors

Food processors make products that consumers want to buy. Producing safe, quality foods in a sustainable manner is critical to their success. In Canada, food processors abide by rigorous regulatory standards governing food



B.C. DAIRY COWS
graze the farmland.
PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM

safety. Food processing plants are meticulously designed, routine procedures strictly adhered to and processes carefully monitored through detailed food safety programs. Quality assurance and quality control professionals implement these programs. Many processors take additional steps to satisfy growing customer demands and global food standards with regard to workplace safety, sustainable practices, animal welfare standards, product authenticity and traceability.

B.C. processors offer their best

British Columbia's food processing industry is as diverse as its geography and people. We are home to some incredible entrepreneurial

activity as evidenced by the vast array of products processed in our province. From nutrient rich beverages, decadent confectionaries, innovative dairy and non dairy products, award winning healthy cereal and grain products, to sustainable meat, poultry and seafood products, B.C. processors prepare it all. Comprised mainly of small, family owned and operated companies, B.C.'s food processors are passionate about using their special methods to prepare you the best food possible.

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Question 1:
How can food processors
increase the value of their
business?

Hire the appropriate professionals to provide financial, sales and human resource advice to prepare management for growth and prosperity. For example, take advantage of the Food Innovation Centre of BC to leverage those resources and expand your company’s capabilities. Utilize a Balanced Score Card approach to determine the critical elements of sustainable business growth. Owners need to bring in effective management to run the business. Owners must feel confident that the business can operate for two or more weeks while on vacation. Remember that an exit strategy starts years ahead of the decision to sell. You’ll maximize your value in the business when new ownership “buys the management team.”

Farmers, retailers and chefs collaborating on new product ideas that meet consumer demand will be the way of the future. Understanding the issues of all involved requires discussion, then planning and sharing of resources. These types of relationships are only possible when a level of trust has been established. If a food processor has a steady source of supply and a market channel that is committed to the success of both the processor and the farmer, this makes for a winning combination.

Food processors need to have a clear product strategy that aligns with their strengths and unique capabilities. Ideally, this strategy is consistent with a few key market trends, such as health, convenience, ethnic, local, sustainability etc. Deloitte has identified several strategies to increase value in a recent report called Lessons Learned from Food & Beverage Private Equity. These include: extending the brand in relevant categories; growing the business geographically into the U.S. and/or Eastern Canada; completing selective add-on acquisitions; building the depth in management for the next stage of growth, and, lastly identify and track key performance indicators that drive value.

Question 2:
What can you or I do to help
secure locally produced food
for the future?

Support your local producer/processor first by purchase locally made products. If not available then choose Provincial than Canadian foods as indicated by the address on the packaging. Shop at retailers or food service establishments that have a reputation for supporting local or Canadian made products.

Ensure the infrastructure to preserve the food is in place. If we want to ramp up production, we need the infrastructure in place to handle the increase. Adding warehousing, processing plants, new strategies for distribution and willingness of buyers to not only source local, but collaborate with local businesses to ensure the industry can incrementally add capacity as demand grows for more sustainable options. Get engaged, understand the issues and then invest — investment funds are a way for the average citizen to participate in the food system. Ask your financial advisor what investment funds are available that provide capital to the local food system. If they don’t know of one, maybe it is time one was set up!

In response to an overwhelming demand by consumers for local products, retailers have increased the amount of B.C. based brands and local produce that they sell. As long as consumers continue to purchase these local brands and continue to ask their retailers to stock more local products, the retailers will respond to the consumers’ needs. In addition, there are certain processors and growers that offer direct-to-consumer shipping by ordering online, sometimes even on a subscription basis. Finally, greater collaboration is required between retailers and local growers and processors to ensure a win-win partnership for both parties.



**Food Innovation
Centre of BC**

Where ideas find opportunity

We serve the food processors, functional food and natural health products businesses of British Columbia. Our mission is to facilitate access to commercialization and technology solutions, specialized knowledge, expertise, and business partnerships to create a more profitable and globally competitive food industry.

FICBC is a hub for creative business solutions, bringing people and organizations together. By linking you with the resources you need, FICBC helps you reach your goals. We look forward to working with you.

The Centre gratefully acknowledges the financial support of *Growing Forward*, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative.

www.foodinnovationcentre.ca

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