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(L to R) Cindy Joe,
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Cover Photo credit:
courtesy of Phillip Chin



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publisher's perspective



Grocery Buyers Shifting Tactics



Deloitte's 2025 annual Retail Holiday Buyer Survey is out just in time for the holiday season. It provides deep insights into how grocery buyers are thinking about how to navigate the current consumer and business climate. The survey was conducted online and polled 50 retail industry buyers, 68 per cent of whom were from retailers with annual revenues of US \$15 billion or more, while 96 per cent were from retailers with annual revenues of at least US \$5 billion.

In short, the survey found that shifts in global trade policy, along with consumer price sensitivity, appear to be reshaping retail's holiday playbook behind the scenes. Many buyers are navigating uncertainty when procuring holiday goods with 78 per cent of respondents expressing concern about securing adequate inventory, while 76 per cent are worried about possible issues with the reliability of suppliers amid geopolitical tensions. Sixty-four per cent of surveyed respondents said consumers have pulled back spending in their category and 76 per cent expect consumers to only make discretionary purchases around promotional periods, putting additional pressure on planning.

The survey found three strategies that buyers are implementing to help navigate today's environment.

First, when it comes to stocking up on inventory, retail buyers reported they are front-loading their orders.

Second, they're not just buying earlier — they're also buying from different places. Nearly 50 per cent of surveyed retail buyers said they plan to increase sourcing from new vendors, with an average of 35 per cent of holiday orders moving to new suppliers or countries.

Third, artificial intelligence is playing a larger role. Respondents who are using AI report improvements in several areas:

- Supply chain management (46%): AI-driven analytics meant to provide deeper insights into supply chain dynamics could help retailers to predict potential disruptions and optimize logistics.
- Pricing optimization (46%): Advanced algorithms designed to analyze market trends and consumer behavior could help set competitive prices dynamically.
- Product assortment optimization (44%): AI solutions could help streamline inventory management, helping the right products to be available at the right time.
- Demand forecasting (28%): Predictive models could help retailers anticipate customer demand, reducing overstock and stockouts.

With the use of AI, grocery buyers can potentially turn uncertainty into opportunity and ensure shelves remain stocked to welcome the holiday rush.

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Canada's Baking and Sweets Show Returns with Halloween Magic — October 18-19, 2025

Canada's Baking and Sweets Show is taking place October 18-19, 2025, at The International Centre in Mississauga. This year's theme is Halloween Magic — a perfect way to get into the spooky spirit ahead of Halloween and the festive season.



Taste, learn, and shop the latest in baking trends, techniques, and tools, all under one roof. Explore a lively show floor filled with passionate exhibitors offering everything from premium ingredients to cutting-edge decorating tools and sweet delicacies. Whether you're a home baker or a seasoned pro, there's something to excite every baking enthusiast.

This year's show promises spooky treats, cozy seasonal classics, and plenty of magic. Sample, shop, and be inspired by the best in baking. Don't miss competitions throughout the weekend that spotlight both up-and-coming talent and industry pros.

Keurig Dr Pepper Canada Leaders Appointed to Board Roles at National Industry Associations

Keurig Dr Pepper Canada has announced two board leadership appointments to national industry associations, which reflect the company's ongoing commitment to advancing the Canadian beverage and coffee sectors.

Cynthia Shanks, Senior Director, Corporate Affairs at KDP Canada, has been nominated Chair of the Board of Directors of the Canadian Beverage Association (CBA). A respected leader, Shanks has made a significant impact through her work in public affairs, sustainability and community engagement. Additionally, her leadership in sustainability has



Cynthia Shanks



Sophie Bélanger

helped advance circular economy for plastics in Canada.

Sophie Bélanger, Marketing Director, Coffee Brands at KDP Canada, has been appointed Vice-Chair of the Coffee Association of Canada (CAC). Bélanger has been an active member of CAC's Marketing and Government Relations committees since 2022 and brings over 20 years of experience in the consumer packaged goods industry. Representing the Keurig system, of over 30 owned, partner and licensed brands as well as the CAC,

Bélanger will help champion the advancement, innovation, and visibility of the coffee industry across the country.

Coca-Cola Canada Welcomes New General Manager

Coca-Cola has announced that Andy Buckingham has been named as General Manager, Canada. Buckingham's leadership will focus on enhancing Coca-Cola's franchise system in Canada, building capabilities to drive sustained growth, fostering strong partnership with Coke Canada Bottling Ltd., and developing future leaders to ensure long-term success. This will reinforce the consistent value Coca-Cola delivers to grocery and retail partners while driving shared success across the business.



Andy Buckingham

"I'm incredibly excited to join Coca-Cola Canada and collaborate with local partners to create sustainable growth and drive meaningful value across the Canadian market. This is an incredible opportunity to connect with vibrant Canadian communities and help build a future that's truly refreshing for all", says Buckingham.



Carbone Moves Production to Italy

Carbone has relocated its production to Italy, placing it closer to the fields where its premium ingredients are grown. This strategic move ensures fresher, higher-quality products, crafted with traditional Italian methods and Mario Carbones, Michelin touch. Bring the Carbone restaurant experience home with Italian-made products that drive consumers to the premium sauce category.

Honouring Wayne Lochart

It is with deep sadness we share the passing of Wayne Lockhart, one of the founding owners of Choices Market.



Wayne Lochart

Together with his brother Lloyd, Wayne opened the first Choices Market in December 1990. From those early days, he helped shape the vision and values that continue to Choices Market today. His unwavering commitment to community, quality, and integrity laid the foundation for everything we do.

Lochart remained a steady and passionate leader until his retirement in late 2017.

He is survived by his wife Carol, his sons Richard and Steven, and four beloved grandchildren.



We extend our heartfelt condolences to the entire Lockhart family and to the many team members who had the privilege of working alongside Wayne over the years. He leaves behind a legacy of dedication,

innovation, and generosity that will be long remembered.

We honour Wayne's remarkable legacy and the lasting impact he made on our people, our company, our communities and the Canadian grocery industry.

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Tight Supply, Premium Quality:
California Prunes Signal Strong 2025 Market

The California Prune Board (CPB) announces its official estimate for the 2025 crop at approximately 65,000 short tons (59,000 metric tons) — a smaller volume compared to recent seasons, with clear implications for supply and trade planning in the months ahead. Growers report a lighter fruit set this year, fruit quality remains strong and consistent — a standard long associated with California Prunes. California remains the global leader in premium prune production, shipping prunes to over 60 international markets, underscoring broad global demand and long-standing commercial relationships.



TC Transcontinental
Acquires Canva Group
Businesses to
Accelerate Growth of
its In-Store Marketing
Segment

Transcontinental Inc. has acquired two Canva Group businesses, Mirazed Inc., located in Saint-Hubert, Quebec, and Intergraphics Decal Limited, located in Winnipeg, Manitoba. This strategic transaction follows the acquisition of Middleton Group in June and strengthens TC Transcontinental's position as a leader in in-store marketing. Mirazed is recognized for its cutting-edge expertise in screen printing as well as large format digital printing, the production of promotional displays and point-of-purchase (POP) signage.



Intergraphics specializes in industrial screen and digital printing. Together, these entities employ more than 200 skilled people and operate state-of-the-art production facilities that will significantly enhance TC Transcontinental's capabilities in Quebec and Western Canada. "This second strategic acquisition in a matter of months not only broadens our offering, but also positions us to accelerate our growth in the in-demand segment of in-store marketing," said Patrick Brayley, Senior Vice President, Retail Services and Printing. "We are delighted to welcome the talented teams at Mirazed and Intergraphics, whose expertise will enrich our value proposition to our customers."

SAVE-ON-FOODS ANNOUNCES NEW
STORE IN PORT MOODY

Save-On-Foods has announced its return to the Port Moody community with the opening of a 13,000-square-foot store later this fall. Located in the heart of one of Metro Vancouver's most vibrant neighbourhoods, the new store is designed with convenience and community in mind, bringing customers the very best of Save-On-Foods in a smaller, easy-to-shop format. The company last operated in Port Moody in the 80s under the Your Mark-It Foods banner. The company's return marks a meaningful milestone in its long-standing relationship with the community. "We're so excited to be back in Port Moody," said president Jamie Nelson. "This new store reflects our commitment to meeting the unique needs of each neighbourhood we serve. It's a great location that will deliver the same great quality, service, and local products our customers know and love — just in a more compact footprint."



The new store will feature a full selection of fresh, high-quality produce, meat, dairy, and grocery essentials alongside local favourites and exclusive Save-On-Foods signature items. Customers can look forward to Save-On-Foods Kitchen offerings like fresh sushi and bento boxes, popular Western Family products including its fan favourite sparkling water, and a variety of freshly baked, locally made cakes and pies. "Port Moody is such a unique and vibrant community and we're very proud that we're going to be part of it soon," said store manager Steve McCue. "Save-On-Foods is well-known in the Tri-Cities and the team can't wait to welcome our neighbours into the store later this fall."

Hiring Confidence Wavers as Canadian
Companies Reassess Growth Plans for 2025

As the second half of 2025 begins, many Canadian employers are taking a hard look at their hiring plans, and what they see is prompting a more cautious approach. A new survey conducted by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals reveals that, while most hiring managers (69%) still feel positive about their company's hiring outlook for the remainder of 2025, that optimism has dimmed since a year ago (74%). At the same time, concern is growing, with 46% now expressing a negative hiring outlook, up from 38% last June.



While approximately 2 in 5 companies (43%) still plan to increase their workforce in the second half of the year, that is a decline from 49% last summer. For those planning to hire, the top reasons include the need to manage growing workloads (51%), fill newly created roles (35%) and replace employees lost to turnover (42%). The proportion of companies planning to cut their number of employees (13%) has increased, compared to last year (8%). The majority cite cost cutting as the primary driver (67%), followed by adapting to government policy changes (30%) and responding to declining demand (25%). The types of roles companies are targeting are also evolving. Companies are now most likely to hire mid-level employees (46%) as entry-level hiring (43%) has dropped sharply compared to last year (56%). Full-time positions remain the most sought-after (74%), while one quarter of companies (25%) plan to hire part-time roles. "These numbers tell a story of employers recalibrating," said Bob Funk, Jr., CEO, President and Chairman of Express Employment International. "They're still hiring, but with more intention, more strategy and a sharper eye on the future."

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LRQA: The Food Sector Must Make Net Zero a Culture, not a Target

LRQA, an assurance provider, is urging those in the food sector to reframe their approach to decarbonisation, embedding energy efficiency and sustainable practices at the heart of organisational culture. Complex supply chains and reliance on high-emission processes make decarbonising the food industry especially difficult. Challenges include agricultural emissions, spanning fertilisers to deforestation; packaging and transport; and meeting consumer demands for carbon-intensive products such as red meat, cheese and coffee. According to LRQA, the journey to Net Zero must begin with strong leadership. Executive teams play a critical role in setting the tone, visibly championing sustainability initiatives and identifying immediate opportunities to eliminate energy and resource waste. When leaders take the initiative, it sends a clear message that achieving Net Zero is a shared responsibility across the entire organisation. Equally important is the engagement of employees at all levels. All staff must understand the importance of Net Zero and be equipped with practical steps they can take to contribute. Regularly sharing clear metrics, celebrating milestones, and highlighting areas for improvement helps maintain momentum and ensures that sustainability remains a central focus. The impact of these efforts extends well beyond a company's direct operations. Collaboration with suppliers to measure, report, and reduce Scope 3 emissions is a significant part of decarbonisation. These partnerships amplify climate benefits and help embed sustainability throughout the entire value chain, reinforcing a company's reputation as a leader in the food sector.



Mark Morales,
Head of Food and
Beverage Sector
at LRQA

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<https://www.chfanow.ca/toronto/>

**Grocery Innovations
Canada**
October 28-29
Toronto Congress Center
Toronto, ON
<https://groceryinnovations.com/>

The NGA Show
February 1-3, 2026
MGM Grand Conference Centre
Las Vegas, NV
<https://www.thengashow.com/>

**Grocery & Specialty
Food West**
April 21-April 22, 2026
Vancouver Convention Centre
Vancouver, BC.
<https://gsfshow.com/>

SIAL
April 29-May 1, 2026
Palais des Congrès
Montreal, QC
<https://sialcanada.com/en/>

CPMA
April 28-30, 2026
Toronto Congress Centre
Toronto, ON
https://cpma.ca/home_page

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Orange County Convention Centre
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<https://www.iddba.org/>



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70 Years and Counting

By Deb Draper

Freson Bros. Continues to Grow into the Future

The family-owned Alberta grocery chain, Freson Bros., is celebrating 70 years in the business of providing high quality, fresh local food to its customers.

In 1955, 21-year-old Frank Lovsin started a small meat shop in Hinton, Alberta, and from there the company has grown to include 16 successful stores across the province.

Doug Lovsin, one of Frank's sons and currently President of Freson Bros. attributes this outstanding accomplishment to a strong family foundation and commitment to employees.

WHAT IS THE FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN FRESON BROS. TODAY?

I work with my brother, Mike, who is the Chair of Freson Bros. while I serve as President. Two of my dad's grandsons are store managers—my nephew Paul and my son, Michael. In addition, my daughter, Emma, is our Director of Human Resources.

The story of our family is that we've now moved into the third generation taking active roles in the company. I know our parents would be very proud.

WHAT STRATEGIES HAS BROUGHT THE COMPANY TO THIS POINT IN ITS HISTORY? THE STORE STARTED SO SMALL AND NOW LOOK AT WHERE YOU ARE. WHAT WOULD YOU SAY HAS MADE THIS SUCCESS?

Quite frankly and with all sincerity, our growth and development is directly attributed to our people. We are fortunate to have so many long-term folks that work with us, people for whom food culture is important. I would say that is at the core of our success.

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR MOST RECENT SUCCESSES AND WHAT IS ON THE HORIZON FOR FRESON BROS.?

We're always actively looking for expanding and growing. We don't feel that standing still is a good strategy. Moving forward is important to us. We opened a second store in Edmonton in April 2024 in the Glenora neighbourhood and it's doing very well.

Currently, we have a project on-the-go in Edmonton:



(Above) The first Freson Bros. store in Hinton, Alberta, 1955. From there the company has grown to include 16 successful stores across the province.

The second Freson Bros. store in Edmonton opened in April 2024 in the Glenora neighbourhood.

a new brand, a spin-off from our Freson Bros. store. This will be our very first Mother Dough Bread Co. Bakery and Sandwich Shop—a 2500 square foot stand-alone in a strip of shops — named after our sourdough brand. That sourdough starter, Charlie, is famous and now sits in a library with the Puratos Group in Belgium.

We're very excited about this new venture — our new brand — and will be launching the shop in November in Western Edmonton. We will be making high quality sandwiches out of our famous breads, including the very popular cinnamon buns. Customers can sit and enjoy a cup of coffee and one of our baked goods in a casual friendly atmosphere.

We're always actively looking for expanding and growing. We don't feel that standing still is a good strategy. Moving forward is important to us.

WHERE DO YOU SEE FRESON BROS. IN THE FUTURE OF THE FOOD INDUSTRY IN CANADA?

The food industry has changed from when my father started the company. It's changed to mass production, the lowest form of food at the lowest cost. Groceries get beat-up in media, but food today takes about 11 percent of disposable income, which is half of what the average person spent when Freson Bros. started 70 years ago — at 22 percent! Much more money is spent today on technology, housing, travel, goods and services.

But we're seeing a change; people are moving toward food traditions and exploring higher quality foods. At Freson Bros., our mission is to honour the craft of food traditions. That's what drives us and guides the behaviour of everyone who works with us. We continue to dig deep into food and family traditions in Western Canada and will continue to develop our proprietary store brands like we are with Mother Dough. ●



By Robin Brunet

Hands-On Passion

A SMALL GROUP OF COMMITTED PARTNERS
HAS MADE **CITY AVENUE MARKET**
A VANCOUVER SUCCESS

ON OUR COVER

photos courtesy Phillip Chin

Fresh and local have always been the fundamental drivers of Vancouver's many family-run grocery stores, and City Avenue Market is arguably the most well-known of the bunch, having recently augmented the popularity of its four locations by launching online shopping for three of its venues.



While competition is fierce among community-oriented providers of fresh, quality food, one of City Avenue's greatest assets is its five partners. "Each of us has always been hands on, even today — to the point where we'll work the cash if required and don't mind cleaning up messes," says Eric Siu, who is also City Avenue's director of operations.

Siu, who joined the company in 2003 when it was known as Donald's Market, adds, "We've also been known to leave our homes in the middle of the night to go to a store and work on displays or kick about ideas. The bottom line is we love the grocery business, and this has served us very well."

City Avenue is relatively new — the brand

was launched in December of 2019, as part of a commitment by the partners to expand operations — but the grocery began its journey back in 1986 with a small outlet called Donald's Market on Vancouver's Hastings Street. This venue, less than 2,500 square feet with a six-person staff, provided fresh and local produce at a time when large chains were asserting their dominance by winning market share away from neighbourhood groceries.

Then as now, a passion for grocery drove the company's ability to offer customers quality products for an affordable price, and within six years the store doubled its footprint. "I initially joined as assistant manager to Gary Joe, who was

(L to R) Cindy Joe, owner and produce buyer, Glen Joe, owner and director, Eric Siu, owner and director, Fei Lin, owner and store manager, Gary Joe, owner and director (absent)



Driven by a passion for fresh, sustainable food and a deep-seated connection to their community, City Avenue Market's Port Coquitlam location has a reputation for bringing community-focused, quality food to life in the heart of British Columbia.

A PASSION FOR GROCERY DROVE THE COMPANY'S ABILITY TO OFFER CUSTOMERS QUALITY PRODUCTS FOR AN AFFORDABLE PRICE, AND WITHIN SIX YEARS THE STORE DOUBLED ITS FOOTPRINT.

reinforced their reputation for bringing community-focused, quality food to life in the heart of the city.

Five years later, another store opened at New Westminster Quayside, extending the partners' reach along the scenic Fraser River waterfront. "That was the year I became a partner," Siu says of a collaboration that would ultimately see him, Gary, Glen, and Cindy Joe; and Fei Lin preside over the company's rebranding.

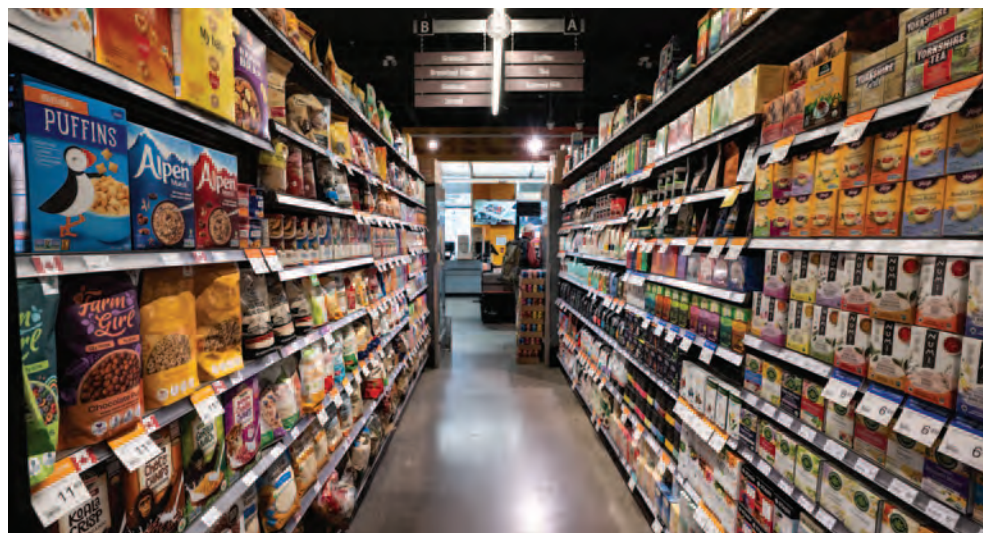
Yet another store was launched further along the Fraser River in 2016, in Port Coquitlam. Then, in 2019, came a milestone: the purchase of a 20,000 square foot warehouse. "That changed everything," Siu recalls. "It vastly improved our operational efficiency and helped us provide a bigger volume of products at a lower price." It helped that Cindy Joe routinely visited wholesalers to examine products first hand and maintained close relations with suppliers.

The City Avenue Market brand was launched that year, and what followed was a fourth new venue under the partners' leadership, in 2022, this time on the high traffic West Broadway area of Vancouver.

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City Avenue Market offers many local and organic produce options for shoppers. The grocery store highlights their organic, gluten free, non-GMO, and local options that consumers love.

really eager to open new stores but keep our business concept as well as the shopping experience essentially the same," Siu recalls.

But it wasn't until 2005 that a new location was opened, and this time on Vancouver's famous Commercial Drive, a hub of eclectic food outlets and bohemian ambiance. There, the partners

As die-hard grocers, the partners are naturally inclined to sink their profits into improving each location. Accordingly, they purchased a property adjacent to their Commercial Drive outlet and in 2023 undertook an extensive expansion and upgrade. "It cost \$1 million and took two years to complete, but we added a full-service deli, more checkouts, upgraded



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the lighting and improved layout flow,” Siu says. “While it was nerve-racking to pay rent on the new portion of the property but not generate any revenue for two years, the outcome was well worth it: our customers love the revamped shopping experience.”

At first glance, each City Avenue location is vastly different from one another. Commercial Drive’s bohemian atmosphere contrasts with the no-nonsense bustle of West Broadway; New Westminster Quayside is a sleek and futuristic neighbourhood, while downtown Port Coquitlam in North Fraser Valley is an urban mecca in the midst of farms and forest.

Also, the stores themselves are dissimilar. “In contrast to our expanded

Commercial Drive store, West Broadway is small and primarily a produce store,” Siu says, adding that this outlet as well as New Westminster recently underwent upgrades (lighting and layout changes in the case of the latter venue).

Apart from seeking high-traffic areas, the partners have deliberately resisted the temptation to acquire big locations. “Keeping our stores small has been one key to our success,” Siu says. “About

5,000 to 7,000 square feet is ideal and easy to manage.”

Locating in high traffic areas also means easy access for Vancouver shoppers, although when New Westminster first opened for business, the partners had to accept the fact that the nearest parking was two blocks away. “Still, that didn’t hurt patronage,” Siu says. “Foot traffic on the Quay has been amazing, and ongoing residential development has resulted in many new customers.”



Another key to success is City Avenue staff, which currently numbers about 150 in total. “We tend to hire people based on their personality and sociability,” Siu says. “Since grocery shoppers have so many choices where to go, customer service has become more important than ever. We make an effort to remember their names and unfailingly help them when required.”

While finding new talent that can interact easily with customers is always a challenge, the eagerness of the five partners to roll up their sleeves and work on the floor seems to be a source of inspiration. “When I was a youth working at London Drugs I would see our manager wearing her dress pants and shirt, lying on the floor on an aisle fixing a display shelf, and that really

David Trinh, one of many City Avenue staff members (which currently numbers about 150 in total) hard at work stocking shelves at City Avenue Market’s Port Coquitlam location in BC.

motivated me to be the best I could be,” Siu says. “I think the same thing happens today when our staff watch us on the floor or find out we’ve been pulling an all-nighter.”

Another trait of die-hard grocery people is their inability to sit on their laurels. The compulsion of the Joe family, Siu, and Fei Lin to constantly improve has resulted in the July soft launch of something they spent an entire year developing: online shopping for customers of the Commercial Drive, Port Coquitlam and New Westminster stores.

Siu concedes that City Avenue was late in the game to provide this shopping option, “But we wanted to do it right, and we found a tech expert who could synch to our POS system,” he says. “We also wanted our online pricing to be the same as it is in each store, which is often not the case with other grocery businesses.”

While City Avenue is now firmly part on the online landscape and all expectations are that this part of the business will become increasingly important to the company’s bottom line, Siu says the hunt is ongoing for new brick and mortar locations. “There’s still plenty of opportunities to thrive in this realm, but at this point we’ll be sticking to locations in Metro Vancouver.

“But wherever we go, one thing is certain: we’ll continue to be hands on. We can’t help it. I often think we were born to be in this business.” ●





THE HOLIDAY
SEASON BRINGS
BUSY SHOPPERS,
HUNGRY FOR
ENTERTAINING IDEAS

By Carolyn Camilleri

Deck the Aisles

The holiday season is the busiest in a grocery retailers' calendar, presenting many opportunities to increase sales through pro-active merchandising strategies. According to Deloitte's 2025 Retail Holiday Buyer Survey, the average year-over-year holiday sales growth is expected to increase by 4.5%, showing high optimism among grocery buyers for the season to come.

Complicating the picture this year, however, are the inflationary pressures on consumers to be more mindful of their spending even as they prepare for holiday gatherings. Many shoppers are expected to prioritize deals, promotions, and bulk purchasing to stretch their budgets further. As such, value-oriented retailers, along with club and warehouse stores, are likely to see an

uptick in holiday traffic as families look for ways to save on essentials without compromising on festive meals and treats. Offering special seasonal discounts and well-timed promotions can help retailers capture price-sensitive shoppers without sacrificing basket size.

As multicultural demographics continue to grow, the demand for culturally diverse holiday foods is reshaping grocery store offerings across Canada. More consumers are looking to celebrate traditions outside of their own, expanding the popularity of diverse holiday foods. For brands, it presents a key opportunity to cater to both multicultural households and shoppers who want to broaden their celebrations with authentic flavours from around the world.

Comfort, Joy and Connection

No matter what cultural traditions are celebrated by your store customers, food is at the centre of it all.

“Food is at the heart of many holiday traditions, bringing people together around the table to share comfort, joy, and connection,” says Angelo Boras, VP of sales for Italpasta.

Boras backs that with stats from Numerator’s 2025 Canadian Annual Holiday Survey: 50 per cent of Canadians plan to cook at home for the holidays, up slightly from 49 per cent in 2024. He further notes that with rising food costs, consumers are becoming more budget-conscious, seeking ways to stretch their dollars without compromising on quality. Additionally, today’s shoppers are more informed than ever, prioritizing value that goes beyond price to include consistency, reliability, and taste.

“As nostalgic and comfort foods continue to trend in the post-COVID era, simple home-cooked meals offer the perfect opportunity to gather with loved ones,” he says.

Pasta fits that trend beautifully as a standout choice for holiday entertaining. It’s easy to prepare, endlessly versatile, and capable of impressing guests with elevated additions like premium proteins and seasonal vegetables.

“At Italpasta, we’re proud to support Canadian families during the holidays by offering new, on-trend recipes designed for festive gatherings,” he says.

These days, there is even more reason to stock Italpasta. “With the ‘Buy Canadian’ movement still going strong, Italpasta is the ideal option — proudly made in Canada using 100 per cent Canadian durum wheat semolina, delivering consistent texture and performance every time,” says Boras.

You might want to get an early start on your holiday promotions.

“Holiday planning, inspiration, and shopping can begin as early as August, spanning a variety of social platforms, devices, and consumer behaviours,” says Boras.

According to Numerator, most consumers make holiday food prepa-

ration decisions about two weeks before the event, but major holidays like Christmas and New Year’s often prompt planning up to three months in advance.

“With AI tools like ChatGPT becoming more widely adopted, it’s now easier than ever to generate customized recipes and personalized meal plans, bringing convenience, creativity, and confidence to the holiday table,” says Boras.



photo courtesy shutterstock.com

During the holidays, consumers often gravitate toward premium and artisanal products that bring a gourmet touch to festive gatherings.

During the holidays, consumers often gravitate toward premium and artisanal products that bring a gourmet touch to festive gatherings. Recognizing this, Italpasta has expanded its Artisan pasta line to include four specialty shapes in time for the holidays: cavatelli, orecchiette, radiatori, and mezzi rigatoni.

“Inspired by Italian tradition and crafted with Canadian expertise, Italpasta Artisan pasta is bronze-die cut to create a rough texture that holds sauce beautifully, delivering rich, authentic flavour in every bite,” says Boras. “It’s an easy and budget-friendly way to elevate any holiday meal.”

Italpasta’s baked pasta range is also a seasonal favourite, offering both convenience and crowd-pleasing appeal.

“With options like lasagne, cannelloni, manicotti, and jumbo shells, Canadian families can enjoy stress-free entertaining with impressive dishes that are simple to prepare and sure to delight guests,” says Boras.

To maximize holiday sales, Boras says Italpasta products should be featured in secondary displays alongside complementary items or paired with in-store promotions to capture consumer attention and drive purchase intent.



IT’S NOT JUST PASTA.

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Irresistible Splurges

For many people, the holiday season would not be complete without Walker's Shortbread. These tartan-wrapped treats are still baked in the Moray village of Aberlour, Scotland, and follow a recipe developed by Joseph Walker in 1898 that uses only four ingredients: butter, flour, sugar, and salt.

"As in years past, consumers remain content to splurge a little around the holidays," says Lisa Zdunich, Canadian sales and marketing manager for Walker's Shortbread Ltd. "Retailers seem to be recognizing this after a more uncertain holiday season of 2024 and are increasing assortment and volumes for 2025."

Of special interest over the holidays are Walker's Festive Shapes lines.

"Our #5 selling items nationally are our Festive Shapes lines despite being in-store for only three months each year," says Zdunich. "We sell over 130K packets into retail throughout the last quarter of the year. This is a must-have for the holidays and an anchor for any holiday section."

She recommends displaying them in a shipper, if possible, but says they merchandise well on the shelf, too.

Walker's also has gluten-free offerings, as well as niche categories like cakes and tarts.

"Walker's really has something for everyone," says Zdunich.

For best sales results for seasonal products, you want to make sure people can see them.

"As with all seasonal shopping, visibility and assortment are key," she says. "Shippers provide an easy way to get in front of shoppers and display your products out of section. This helps with the impulsive nature of seasonal shopping and translates to greater sales than an in-section display alone."

Zdunich adds that assortment in terms of price points, gifting



occasion, and everyday snacking is also key to meeting the needs of different consumers leading up to and throughout the holiday season. As an example, of a retailer who does an especially good job of merchandising in Western Canada, every day and seasonally, she points to London Drugs.

"They take a large assortment every day and increase that assortment over the holidays to include up to 25+ extra items," she says. "Items are displayed well — in section — as well as in shippers throughout the store, and sell throughs are always strong due to the flawless execution and early planning."



"As with all seasonal shopping, visibility and assortment are key. Shippers provide an easy way to get in front of shoppers and display your products out of section."



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Quick and Easy Tips Entertaining

Whether you are putting together a flyer or setting up in-store holiday or cross-merchandising displays, consider some of these tasty on-trend suggestions for easy entertaining tips from KraftHeinz Canada.

“The holiday season is upon us, and with it comes the joy of entertaining friends and family,” says Daniel Lundberg, head of marketing and strategy, EMMB and HDS, for KraftHeinz Canada. “As we gather around the table to share delicious meals and make memories, KraftHeinz Canada is here to help you stay on top of the latest holiday entertaining food trends. From classic comfort foods to modern twists, we’ve got you covered with our favourite ideas, featuring KraftHeinz Canada’s beloved brands.”

Lundberg offers a series suggestions following the latest trends in holiday entertaining, starting with global inspirations — a culinary journey around the world with globally inspired dishes

“KraftHeinz Canada has the brands that are perfect for creating international flavors, such as Korean-style BBQ beef sliders or Mexican street corn dip,” he says. “Simply use Kraft, Heinz, or Taco Bell sauces and dips to add a convenient and flavourful twist to dishes.”

The comfort food revival is another top trend products from KraftHeinz Canada fit in with beautifully.

“Comfort food is always a hit during the holidays, and KraftHeinz Canada’s Heinz brand is the perfect partner for creating warm, comforting dishes,” says Lundberg.

He suggests a Heinz Ketchup-glazed ham or a Heinz Baked Bean and sausage casserole.

“These classic recipes are sure to become new family favourites,” he adds.



“Set up a hot cocoa bar with Kraft Jet-Puffed marshmallows, a mac and cheese bar with Kraft Dinner, or a slider bar with Heinz Ketchup, Mustard, and Mayo.

Lundberg points to a third trend to capitalize on this holiday season: miniaturized morsels.

“Bite-sized appetizers and snacks are always a hit at holiday gatherings,” he says. “KraftHeinz Canada’s Philadelphia brand is perfect for creating mini caprese salads, mini quiches, or even mini cheesecakes. Use Philadelphia cream cheese to add a tangy and creamy element to your mini dishes.”

Lastly, pull out all the stops with DIY food stations.

“Create a fun and interactive dining experience with DIY food stations featuring KraftHeinz Canada products,” says Lundberg. “Set up a hot cocoa bar with Kraft Jet-Puffed marshmallows, a mac and cheese bar with Kraft Dinner, or a slider bar with Heinz Ketchup, Mustard, and Mayo. Guests will love the freedom to customize their own creations.”



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HOLIDAY TRADITIONS

For the upcoming festive season, Neysa Davies, national senior manager, business insights, for Tree of Life, reminds us not to forget tradition, including traditions from around the world.

“Traditional options will continue to hold strength, especially when made with quality and premium ingredients,” she says.

But be mindful of specialized diets, she adds.

Schär gluten-free Panettone is a perfect example that allows everyone to enjoy this rich Italian holiday tradition.

Protein is another factor to consider.

“Consumers will have protein in the back of their minds — a must-have for sustained energy during a full and hectic season,” says Davies. “Consumers will be looking for hearty appetizers to satisfying desserts for themselves and holiday entertaining.”

Holiday hydration will also be key, and Davies recommends a two-prong approach: for wellness, beverages deliver functional ingredients to boost immunity.

“As well, consumers look to expand their beverage offering for guests to include non-alcoholic options — beer, spritzes, RTD varieties,” she says. “A plethora of quality, unique, and niche flavourings and ingredients are available in non-alcoholic format.”

Shoppers continue to watch size and value.

“Consumers will look for value offerings but will make allowances for special occasions,” she says. “Consider larger value sizes in categories such as snacking, meanwhile smaller portions of indulgent treats might be more accessible to consumers.”

Have a Strategy

With holiday shopping heavily influenced by inflation, brands need to deliver value without compromising quality. Offering discounts and promotions, especially around high-demand seasonal products, can capture price-sensitive shoppers. Instead of generic price cuts, consider value-focused strategies such as family-sized packs or holiday-specific bundles.

Convenience is equally important during the busy season, and brands should prioritize omnichannel shopping options to meet consumers where they are. A streamlined online ordering experience, quick in-store pickups, and rapid delivery are essential to attracting time-strapped holiday shoppers. Additionally, holiday-themed meal kits, pre-packaged sides, and ready-to-serve options are appealing for shoppers looking to save time. Emphasizing convenience-focused offerings in marketing efforts can position your brand as the go-to choice for consumers balancing holiday prep with busy schedules. ●

Emphasizing convenience-focused offerings in marketing efforts can position your brand as the go-to choice for consumers balancing holiday prep with busy schedules.



Wellness Reimagined

6 CONSUMER TRENDS
RESHAPING THE CANADIAN
NOW MARKET

Today's consumers are more intentional, more informed, and more invested in their wellness than ever before. But when it comes to their own definition of wellness, it looks as though it's evolving and it turns out, it's no longer just about physical health.

In July 2025, we launched our Health, Wellness and the Canadian Consumer 2025 report, revealing how Canadian attitudes around wellness have expanded and how they're becoming more closely linked to our daily routines and even personal identity. With rising costs, changing work-dynamics, and growing skepticism toward product claims, we've noticed that Canadians are navigating the wellness space with more care than ever before and they're expecting more from brands within the NOW space.

Based on a national survey of more than 2,000 Canadians, our 2025 Health, Wellness & the Canadian Consumer Report takes the pulse of Canada's shifting wellness landscape and summarizes six critical consumer insights that will help both brands and retailers stay afloat with what shoppers want now and what they expect more of in the future.



Lynsey Walker, VP of marketing & communications at CHFA

1 WELLNESS NOW MEANS MORE
THAN PHYSICAL HEALTH

First up, we're noticing a shift in what wellness means across the nation. While it seems, Canadians are no longer looking at wellness as a singular goal tied to diet or fitness, we're now seeing ties to emotional balance, sleep quality, mental health, stress management, and even social connection. So rather



“Wellness isn’t just physical anymore — it’s about how I feel, how I sleep, and how I connect with others.”

than focusing only on functional or clinical benefits, brands are being asked to speak more holistically about how their products help consumers feel overall, whether that's more calm, more energized, or even better able to care for their families.

2 WELLNESS IS NO LONGER A
CATEGORY — IT’S A LIFESTYLE

Wellness has also moved beyond a vertical segment to something that stretches across daily life — influencing not just what we eat, but how we hydrate, clean, care, and relax. For companies operating in the NOW space, this shift opens a tonne of new opportunities and by expanding into adjacent areas like home wellness, hydration, skincare, or functional food and beverage, it can help brands become more deeply integrated into consumers' daily lives.



Wellness has also moved to not just what we eat, but how we hydrate, clean, care, and relax.

3 PRICE SENSITIVITY IS HIGH — BUT VALUE STILL WINS

We all know inflation is squeezing budgets, and consumers remain price conscious. But they're not walking away from the NOW category, they're just demanding more proof and value for money. In this instance, you may want to consider offering tiered product strategies where entry-level SKUs coexist



with premium versions. But, a top tip - just remember to communicate value clearly through storytelling, certifications, and functional benefits because after all, convenience and impact still matter and so does sustainability.

4 CONSUMERS ARE GROWING MORE SKEPTICAL — AND SMARTER

Our research has also revealed that while belief in the benefits of natural and organic products remains strong, trust in product labels is slipping and consumers are showing greater concern for greenwashing which

means, they're reading the fine print. In this case, transparency is everything, so you'll want to lean into clear labelling, back up claims with third-party certifications, and use tools like QR codes or digital platforms to help educate consumers about ingredients, sourcing, and sustainability.

5 'FREE FROM' AND 'MADE IN CANADA' CARRY WEIGHT

Consumers are also drawn to products that promise safety, simplicity, and national pride so as you can imagine "free from chemicals" remains a top attribute while "Made in Canada" has gained new momentum, especially following this year's trade-related headlines. These attributes should be visible across packaging, signage, and digital marketing and it looks as though local pride and clean-label positioning are becoming powerful purchase drivers in 2025.



6 GEN Z AND YOUNGER MILLENNIALS WANT VALUES, NOT JUST BENEFITS

Younger Canadians on the other hand, are expecting brands to reflect their worldview. By that, I mean they're drawn to products that align with sustainability, inclusivity, and self-expression — from cruelty-free to BIPOC-owned brands to planet-positive practices. With that, show up with purpose and proof, whether



that's through authentic social content, influencer partnerships, or user-generated storytelling, these shoppers want more than a product; they want a brand that gets them.

As wellness continues to expand and consumer expectations evolve, it's quite clear that standing still isn't an option. There's a lot of consumer change happening in our industry and both retailers and brands must stay agile, listening closely to consumers, innovating across categories, and leading with transparency and trust.

Our CHFA members are at the forefront of our consumer reports so that we can also provide them with trend breakdowns, demographic insights, and category-specific data to help them make smart decision-making across marketing, innovation, and shelf strategy. ●

The report is available now to CHFA members. Not yet a CHFA member? Visit chfa.ca for a sample report of the findings and learn how you can get access to the full report.



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CHFA Members Exclusive

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Health, Wellness and the Canadian Consumer 2025

Canadians' approach to wellness is evolving—are you keeping up? This exclusive report reveals the latest consumer insights, uncovering how Canadians define wellness today and the growing impact of the natural, organic, and wellness industry.

Wellness by the Numbers: Understanding Canada's Four Key Consumer Segments

Launching Q3 2025

Find out how Canadian consumers are thinking, feeling, and behaving when it comes to health and wellness. This report uses advanced segmentation techniques to help identify key consumer groups, helping brands connect with their audiences more effectively and efficiently. Discover the latest insights behind what drives consumer choices and how you can meet them where they are.

Women's Health & NOW

Launching Q4 2025

A new CHFA study sheds light on the complex, evolving health needs of Canadian women and the expanding role of natural health products in supporting them. From perimenopause to hormonal conditions like PCOS and endometriosis, this research report reveals the key opportunities for innovation, education, and greater accessibility.



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By Carly Peters

Let's Live Life

FOR 42 YEARS, CLOVERDALE PHARMASAVE HAVE PUT PEOPLE'S HOLISTIC HEALTH FIRST

Josephine Leonard is moving a mile a minute. The high-energy marketing manager for Cloverdale Pharmasave is coming off an extremely popular ladies-only event, thinking ahead to the next in-store promotion, all while making sure the buying, merchandising, and social are in place ahead of an extended European vacation with family.



Josephine Leonard,
marketing manager at
Cloverdale Pharmasave

"I shouldn't worry. What I do is not do or die," she laughs.

But, she's selling herself short. Her job ensures people live.

For 42 years, Cloverdale Pharmasave has been supporting their B.C. community, including both people and animals, in finding a holistic approach to health by combining herbal and homeopathic medicine with Western medicine. While the conventional approach focuses on symptoms and disease management, natural options often target the root cause.

When Leonard's father, Dr. Henry Cheng, moved his family from Hong Kong to Canada in

1985, integrated medicine was not well known or practiced. In China, doctors diagnosed, prescribed, and dispensed medicine, but in a new country, he would have to re-do his residency and medical exams to practice again. Not wanting to spend time away from his family in a new country, Dr. Cheng decided to focus on the pharmacy side of his career, starting Cloverdale Pharmasave and merging his knowledge of holistic health with the proper product offerings.



The Pharmasave team enjoying Ladies' Health Night at Cloverdale Pharmasave in BC.

It wasn't easy in the 80s. He navigated many of the "quacks" he met at trade shows and conferences that touted natural products, recognizing that even if a product is natural, there needs to be science behind it to ensure it's effective and safe for customers.

"That's what we've learned from my father — integrity. Yes, we're a business, but the safety and health of our customers is the number one priority.



The store's Black Friday sale is another focal point for the whole community, offering the opportunity to learn more about the products in-store, how they complement conventional medicine, and to get some really good deals.



We don't sell products just to make a buck. This is one way he earned people's trust," she notes.

People started coming more and more to complement their health care and the health of their animals with Dr. Cheng's expertise and offerings. Leonard laughs, noting one of the funniest examples of people putting their trust in her dad was Dr. Cheng being awarded Horse Person of the year from the BC Horse Council. "He never rode a horse in his life," she laughs. "But he saw jockeys as athletes and helped them, and their horses, to perform better with integrative care."

Dr. Cheng has retired. Leonard, her sister Christine Cheng and brother Frederick Cheng took ownership of the family business in 2014 but never stopped practicing their dad's patient-first approach to care. "We are a pharmacy, but we don't push pills down your throat. We work with people to support the medication they're on, help them decrease it, or get off it all together. We're wanting to help people get their life back."

Several years ago, the store was acquired by Neighbourly Pharmacy, which has been expanding its network of independent pharmacies across Canada. Leonard says the model allows each store to operate with a bit of flexibility, giving entrepreneurs the freedom to adapt to their community rather than follow a rigid cookie-cutter approach. For example, Cloverdale Pharmasave is the only store to sell veterinary medication and supplements across the brand, making a unique niche for themselves in terms of knowledge, products, and community relationships.

It's also afforded Leonard freedom in her own career. Despite having grown up in the pharmacy, her post-secondary school took her into hotel management, which didn't suit her. Coming back to do marketing for the family business, she spearheaded innovative initiatives, like creating a website for the store before Pharmasave even had their own, and doing in-store events.

Her biggest passion project — her third baby, as she puts it — is Ladies' Health Night. Her dad had started community health seminars 35 years ago, and people would come to listen to him lecture. He was charismatic, entertaining, but most of all, he ensured people left with knowledge and felt empowered about their health.

Listening to her community and identifying an unmet need, she saw an opportunity to focus on women's health, especially as they age. What started as a few vendors and a single door prize has grown into an event with nearly two dozen companies offering products from natural beauty and supplements to hormones and other tailored items for women to live their best lives. The event also features talks — just like her dad's — with experts and hands-on experiences, such as cupping, chiropractors, and consultations with a naturopathic doctor, allowing guests to experience comprehensive homeopathic care. "And, it's just a really fun time."

While the women party behind closed doors, the store's Black Friday sale is another focal point for the whole community, again offering the opportunity to learn more about the products in-store, how they complement conventional medicine, and to get some really good deals.

During and after COVID, Leonard states they focused on ensuring affordability where they could: adding monthly customer appreciation days with 20 per cent off discounts and increasing the discounts for the weekly senior Tuesdays.

"We are so grateful to be in business for so many years, so this is a way to say we appreciate you," she says, adding, they also realized in a post-pandemic world, they are a point of connection for many people. "We have always just wanted to help our community and build those relationships. If we can provide that,



Ladies' Health Night — what started as a few vendors, and a single door prize has grown into an event with nearly two dozen companies offering products from natural beauty and supplements to hormones featuring talks with experts and hands-on experiences allowing guests to experience comprehensive homeopathic care.

there will always be a place for us."

These community-focused initiatives recently earned Leonard Neighbourly's Excellence Awards for Community Impact, while Cloverdale Pharmasave celebrated its third "The Clovies Award," recognizing business excellence from the Cloverdale Chamber of Commerce. Leonard attributes these accomplishments to her incredible team.

Integrative Health Pharmacist Lyle Sunada has carried on Dr. Cheng's legacy as a leading integrative health expert in the community and recently celebrated his 35 years with Cloverdale Pharmasave. "He's like a brother to me," Leonard says. Alongside Sunada, her husband Martin Leonard plays a vital role in the success of their events and the overall health of the business, though he prefers to "stay in the shadows."

Recently, Registered Pharmacy Technician Shelley Sidhu was featured on the cover of the BC Pharmacy Association's The Tablet for her advocacy work. Leonard reflects, "It's truly a wonderful team effort behind all our achievements. I love my staff, community, and store, and I guess that comes through. I'm just doing what I love. We're all just doing what we love." ●

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BAKERY & DELI



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By Malaika Costa

FROM FRESH BAKES TO DELI DELIGHTS

Bakery and deli departments are cornerstones of grocery store success, not only boosting sales but enhancing the overall shopping experience. As consumer preferences shift and competition increases, these departments must continue evolving to stay relevant. The International Dairy Deli Bakery Association (IDDBA) highlights how these sections drive revenue and bring customers through the doors, underscoring their importance in modern grocery operations.

Bakery and deli sections are major revenue drivers, offering higher profit margins than many other departments. Freshly baked bread, pastries, rotisserie chickens, and deli sandwiches remain top sellers. IDDBA notes strong performance in the fresh prepared food category, where convenience meets quality.

The global chilled and deli foods market size is expected to grow to \$370 billion by 2031. Prepared foods and grab-and-go options are driving significant growth, representing over half (55.8%, +5.6% in dollars) of deli sales, according to 52-week data ending Oct. 6, 2024, by Circana OmniMarket Integrated Fresh, a Chicago-based market research firm. Traditional items like cheese and meats are less dominant, with cheese at 17% and meats at 16%. Over 60 percent of Canadians purchased prepared entrees such as fried chicken, sandwiches/wraps, and sushi at the grocery store as of



photo courtesy shutterstock.com

HOW THESE DEPARTMENTS FUEL GROCERY STORE GROWTH



From artisanal loaves and cakes to vegan and allergen-friendly products, staying on top of trends is essential for Calgary Co-op.

February 2025. The revenue in the ready-to-eat meals segment of the food market in Canada was forecast to continuously increase between 2025 and 2030 by 34.21 percent reaching over \$10 billion U.S. dollars. The performance of the market is forecast to accelerate, with an anticipated CAGR of 5.1% for the five-year period 2022 - 2027, which is expected to drive the market to a value of \$1.72 billion by the end of 2027. The Canadian bakery product market is expected to grow at a compound annualized rate of 3.5% to 2026 (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Sector Trend Analysis, 2021).

Driving Sales and Enhancing Experience

Angela Mock-Neis, Bakery Manager at Calgary Co-op for over 16 years, sees the impact daily.

“The bakery plays a big role in bringing people in. Fresh is always top of mind, and when customers walk in and smell bread or see a beautifully decorated cake, it adds to their experience and keeps them coming back.”

Beyond sales, these departments shape the in-store atmosphere. The aroma of baked goods or sizzling chicken can trigger impulse purchases and repeat visits. “Our products bring comfort and celebration,” says Mock-Neis. “There’s nostalgia in what we do. The bakery should feel like a treat — whether it’s for a special occasion or just a fresh loaf for dinner.”

Responding to Modern Consumers

Today’s shoppers want more than freshness — they’re looking for convenience, wellness, and value. Deli and bakery teams are responding with plant-based options, gluten-free goods, and organic selections. Ready-to-eat items and meal kits continue to grow in popularity. According to IDDBA, 82% of grocery shoppers buy meal kits to save time and reduce stress.

“Fresh, in-store baked breads are huge right now — they smell amazing and look great,” says Mock-Neis. “Customers are reading ingredients and looking for



Angela Mock-Neis, Bakery Manager at Calgary Co-op.



better options. Value isn’t just low price anymore — it’s freshness and quality.”

In a cost-conscious climate, customers seek premium in-home meal solutions. Elevated deli sides, sauces, and upscale breads like brioche and sourdough are gaining traction. “Summer 2025 has been crowned the Summer of Sauce,” according to IDDBA, with spreads and condiments playing a key role in merchandising.

Visual appeal matters too. “With social media, people want those ‘Instagrammable’ moments,” says Mock-Neis. “We try to make our offerings stand out visually.”



Building a Strong, Capable Team

A department’s success hinges on its people. Bakery and deli teams require product knowledge, attention to detail, and strong customer service — especially during peak times.

“If your team sees you involved, willing to do every task they do, that builds respect and trust,” says Mock-Neis. “A great team has each other’s backs. If one person is helping a customer, someone else keeps things moving.”

With hiring challenges ongoing, many grocers are focusing on training unskilled workers into skilled roles. Referral programs help with recruitment, but culture and development drive retention. “I spend a lot of my day coaching and training,” she says. “When people feel supported and heard, they show up differently — and that builds consistency.”

Training remains a challenge across rotating shifts. Still, successful departments are using structured programs, peer shadowing, and on-the-job learning. Digital upskilling is also becoming critical for employees on a leadership track.

“We set clear expectations, communicate openly, and make sure everyone understands their role,” adds Mock-Neis. “When the team is part of the process, they take ownership and pride in what they do.” Cross-training between bakery and deli also builds flexibility and strengthens operations.

Balancing Cost and Quality

Managing perishables requires a delicate balance between minimising waste and delivering consistent quality. Rising ingredient costs make this more difficult — but cutting corners risks customer loyalty. “Rising costs and inflation are definitely top of mind,” says Mock-Neis. “We stay creative to add value and ensure the programs we bring in are easy to execute.”

IDDBA recommends transparent pricing and strategic promotions instead of reducing quality. Limited time offers





photo courtesy shutterstock.com

or bundle deals can move inventory without damaging brand perception. “Technology and newer equipment also help take pressure off day-to-day tasks,” says Mock-Neis. “That lets us focus more on delivering quality.”

Staying Relevant and Innovative

Bakery and deli departments continue to evolve with consumer demand. From artisanal loaves to vegan and allergen-friendly products, staying on top of trends is essential.

“Listening to customers is key,” says Mock-Neis. “When they ask for something unique, that’s our chance to pivot and get creative. We use the best ingredients — real whipping cream, butter, buttercream icing — because that’s what they’ve come to expect.”

Not all trends will suit every store, so IDDBA encourages regional focus and calculated risk-taking, with agility to pivot as needed.

Looking Ahead

As online shopping expands, the bakery and deli sections remain vital for in-store differentiation. Customers still crave the freshness and craftsmanship of these departments. IDDBA sees a future where convenience, sustainability, and local sourcing become even more central.

Technology will continue shaping operations — from inventory tools to mobile ordering and predictive analytics.

“We drive ease and consistency for our team and our customers,” says Mock-Neis. “Whether it’s custom cakes or daily staples, our goal is to give customers something they can’t find anywhere else. That’s what keeps them coming back.”

As these departments evolve with shifting demographics and consumer habits, their success will rely on balancing innovation with core values: freshness, quality, and great service. ●

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*In the milk category, based on the 2025 BrandSpark Canadian Shopper Study.

The Start of a Brew-tiful Friendship

COFFEE AND TEA SALES IN CANADA HAVE BEEN UNDERGOING VOLATILITY BUT REMAIN STRONG

If you didn't already know, coffee is the number one beverage in Canada by sales and consumption. Consider these statistics: On average, Canadians consume 5.03 million 60 kg bags of coffee per year and is more popular than tap water in Canada with 71% of Canadians drinking coffee regularly compared to 67% for tap water. Canadians spend on average \$35.21 per month on coffee and drink 2.8 cups of coffee per day. The coffee market in Canada is expected to reach \$6.2 billion by 2030.

While tea is nowhere near as popular, Canadians also are still big consumers. The value of tea sales in Canada is US \$271 million and is expected to reach a projected revenue of US\$ 403.9 million by 2030 — a compound annual growth rate of 6.9% and projected revenue of US \$403.9 million.

While sales are increasing, challenges remain.



By Brennah Doyle

HOT BEVERAGES

photo courtesy shutterstock.com

TRADE DISPUTES COMPLICATE THE PICTURE

Ground coffee prices in Canada have surged by 19% since the start of 2025, according to Statistics Canada — making it one of the fastest-rising food items on grocery store shelves this year. Part of the problem is that since March Canadian importers have been paying an additional 25% tariff on coffee imported from the US- a counter-tariff, introduced as part of Ottawa's retaliatory measures even though Canada doesn't even grow coffee. This has lead many industry analysts saying they are punishing Canadian consumers and businesses.

The same 25% tariff remains on tea imports routed through the U.S., even when the product originates from the Global South. For example, tea grown in Malawi but warehoused or processed in the U.S. is still hit with the full tariff — penalizing African producers rather than American exporters.

Green coffee beans imported directly into Canada from origin countries — including Brazil, Colombia, and Vietnam — are not subject to duty fees on importation into Canada. In North America and specifically in Canada coffee is imported through specialized US or International based importers who integrate highly complex supply chains. Green Coffee is generally contracted / bought through a US based importing company.

It is thus very hard to avoid importation from the US and until the trade disputes are resolved retailers can continue to expect a volatile market.



COFFEE SALES STILL STRONG

This year, Level Ground Coffee Roasters based in Victoria B.C. saw an increase in sales and brand loyalty. The company was started in 1997 with a mission to trade fairly and directly with small-scale farmers in developing countries and has grown to import the annual harvest of 5,000 farmers from 10 countries in South

America, East Africa and South Asia.

Since the company sources directly from small scale farmer cooperatives, they have been largely unaffected by trade issues as none of their incoming shipments travels through the USA.

Stacey Toews, co-founder, says the company experienced a significant lift in sales from existing accounts resulting in the hiring of multiple staff to assist with the increased sales. Much of the increase can be attributed to a boost in local consumerism.

"Being a 100% Canadian owned and operated business has attracted consumer's attention, especially in BC where we are supporting the local economy with jobs and many contracts as we source our operational supplies." says Toews. "It seems more

people are wanting to support Canadian brands, and I sense we may be feeling 'extra love' from consumers because Level Ground has always been known for championing small-scale coffee cooperatives."

Meanwhile Level Ground Coffee Roasters continues to run strong with one of their most sought-after products, the Swiss Water decaf, processed in Canada without chemicals. The dark roast coffee includes hints of dried fruit, dark chocolate and baking spice. Products like Level Ground's Swiss Water decaf and medium roasts have been gaining momentum and are in strong double-digit growth in 2025. The company continues to succeed despite the challenges of rising cost.



GROUND COFFEE PRICES IN CANADA HAVE SURGED BY 19% SINCE THE START OF 2025, ACCORDING TO STATISTICS CANADA—MAKING IT ONE OF THE FASTEST-RISING FOOD ITEMS ON GROCERY STORE SHELVES THIS YEAR.

"During recent unprecedented global coffee prices, our sourcing and quality assurance teams have been working especially hard, to source premium beans for our single origins & blends that deliver ongoing value to our customers while keeping the price within reach." says Toews.

A variety of medium roasts are available like Andes, Peru, and Ethiopia blends. A fair-trade certified company with unique roast flavours it is no wonder that Level Ground continues to thrive in the hot beverage market.



TEA SALES ALSO ON THE RISE

Rod Sinclair, managing director at Traditional Medicinals considers wellness teas as a way to influence the growth of tea sales in Canada.

"The Tea category has been relatively flat to low single digit growth over the past several years. Wellness teas are sparking some growth as consumers seek out the many different health benefits of teas," notes Sinclair.

Health and wellness have become important components for shoppers choosing their beverages —

and not only for tea products. Functional beverages and ready to drink beverages are trending too. Shabnam Weber, president of the Tea & Herbal Association of Canada shares that consumers are looking for a versatile beverage that does more than just one thing.

Weber highlights the importance of innovation, encouraging retailers to think outside the box — tea is more than just a traditional hot beverage.

Shabnam Weber, president of the Tea & Herbal Association of Canada



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HOT CHOCOLATE HEATS UP TOO

Often overlooked in the hot beverage category, hot chocolate is a perennial favourite with consumers. For 2024, Chocolate Drink Consumption per Capita in Canada slightly declined to 4.14 Liters from 4.2 Liters—effectively a stable market. However, by 2028, it is projected to be 3.92 Liters. This represents a year-on-year decrease starting from 1.69% in 2025, tapering to 1.01% by 2028. The five-year CAGR indicates an average annual decrease of approximately 1.38%.

Maheep Bedi product development and QA assistant at Medallion Milk, who produce powdered milk products, says they have noticed a few new customers due to their company being 100% Canadian.

“We source all parts and anything else needed for the business from Canadian companies” Bedi adds.

With the success of their premium chocolate milk powder, Medallion Milk is looking onwards to new products that provide shoppers with more options. For instance, the brand-new banana milk from Medallion Milk is coming soon, along with other fruit milks and unique flavour combinations.

In addition to new milk flavours, the company is introducing many new Medallion Milk coffee creamer flavours, including the iconic pumpkin spice flavour making its’ debut this fall. French vanilla and caramel flavours are set to release after the pumpkin spice launch. The development of a new high protein and enhanced powder milk is also in the works. The powder milk contains 18g of protein per 250mL serving and catch the eyes of buyers due to its longer shelf life, lower cost, and no need for refrigeration.

“We are producing many desirable products that are niche but innovative in the shelf-stable with clean and minimal ingredients market. It tastes great while only having 3 ingredients. No gums, no emulsifiers or stabilizers, no sugar, no stevia.” Bedi shares.

Bedi advises that grouping products that go well with coffee together in the same line of sight helps sales. “For example, our coffee creamer will be coming in a few different flavours. Grouping these with coffee beans or coffee machines, tools, etc., will help the consumer see the connection that a new flavour of coffee creamer will have.” says Bedi. ●

“I always recommend cross-promotion - placing tea products with cookies for example or doing a cheese pairing with the cheese aisle. Think of ways people can think of tea outside of their habitual use and you can get them to purchase when they weren’t expecting to. Tastings in store are also truly important - get a customer to taste a product, and I guarantee they will make the purchase.”

“Tea sales are somewhat seasonal, with a slight uptick over the winter months as consumers seek the comfort of a warm tea or to help relieve symptoms of the cough & cold season. This is the ideal time to promote & display!” adds Sinclair.

For independent wellness companies like Traditional Medicinals, social media can make all of the difference.

“The impact of social media can be very positive and very disruptive. A major Tik-Tok trend can easily wipe out our supply, especially when you source herbs from Europe or Asia.” says Sinclair. “These trends are almost always related to sharing the health benefits, last year Spearmint took off, this year it’s Dandelion.” states Sinclair.

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For more information contact Adam: adam@medallionmilk.com



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Activia, the pioneer in gut health and the #1 doctor-recommended probiotic food and beverage brand in Canada, has unveiled Activia EXPERT — its most advanced yogurt yet. Backed by Activia’s over 35 years of global research in gut health, this new product line is the first of its kind in Canada, combining an exclusive blend of probiotics with prebiotics.



Developed for health-conscious consumers seeking elevated gut health support, Activia EXPERT offers an updated nutritious profile tailored to meet the needs of modern lifestyles: Like the original Activa, EXPERT contains more than 1 billion probiotics to support gut health. Plus, each serving of EXPERT provides prebiotics, along with 6g of protein and 35% less sugar. Powered by an enhanced formulation, it’s the ideal choice for those looking to elevate their digestive health routine.

Now available nationwide in Two 750g tubs: Plain and Vanilla and Three 4-packs of 100g: Cherry, Blueberry, and Strawberry.

For more information: Activia.ca

Que Pasa Launches Organic
Rolled Tortilla Chips

Que Pasa, the organically great to share chip brand from Nature’s Path, is rolling out a new snack experience that delivers on heat and real flavor: Que Pasa Rolled Chips — in Chile & Lime and Spicy Queso.

“At Nature’s Path, we’ve always believed real, organic ingredients make great food,” said Arjan Stephens, President of Nature’s Path. “With Que Pasa Rolled Chips, we’re bringing bold flavours to the table — flavours that live up to the talk. No artificial dyes, no flavor disappointments — all organic, real taste and serious crunch.”

Que Pasa Rolled Tortilla Chips are the Chatty Chip That’s Built Different:

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For more information: asell@naturespath.com

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Dairyland / Neilson Chocolate Protein Beverage delivers 18g of protein, 2x more protein than regular milk. It is a delicious source of 9 essential nutrients and is an excellent source of calcium. Made with Canadian milk for a fresh taste and with 50% less sugar than Dairyland / Neilson regular Chocolate Milk. It is perfect in smoothies, overnight oats, or on its own as a high protein snack! A delicious, nutritious innovation made for modern lifestyles.



For more information: Tina.Galluccio@saputo.com or visit <https://www.dairyland.ca/en/products/protein>

WISELY Chocolate Changes
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WISELY WELLNESS is revolutionizing the health and wellness industry with its innovative line of functional, sugar-free chocolates infused with premium mushrooms and natural ingredients. Each carefully crafted chocolate bar supports specific wellness goals through seven distinct experiences: CHARGE for energy, BOOST for vitality, DESIRE for passion, FOCUS for mental clarity, GLOW for radiance, RELAX for stress relief, and SLEEP for restful nights.



Made with premium dark chocolate and powerful functional mushrooms like Lion’s Mane, Reishi, Cordyceps and Chaga these products deliver targeted benefits without compromising on taste. Each formula combines ancient wisdom with modern science, creating a delicious way to support your daily wellness routine.

Currently available at Pure Pharmacy locations across Canada, WISELY WELLNESS is actively seeking distribution partners to expand availability nationwide. This Canadian-made, vegan, and all-natural product line represents the perfect intersection of indulgence and intentional wellness.

For more information: wiselywellness.ca

Harvest Meats Unveils Three Bold
New Flavours: Polish, Cheddar
Cheese, and Philly Cheese

Harvest Meats has launched three exciting new wiener flavours: Polish, Cheddar Cheese, and Philly Cheese wieners — a bold twist on the classic favourite Canadians know and love.

“We’re proud to continue our tradition of crafting high-quality, delicious meats with these new offerings,” says Geoff Propp, President at Harvest Meats. “Each flavour brings something unique to the table, and we can’t wait for our customers to try them all.”

Made in Canada with the same dedication to quality that has defined Harvest Meats for nearly 100 years, these new wieners contain no by-products and are gluten-free, making them a trusted choice for Canadian families.

The new flavours are now available in 500-gram packs.



For more information: www.harvestmeats.ca

NESCAFÉ Debuts First Liquid
Espresso Concentrate

NESCAFÉ is changing the game with new Espresso Concentrates, a first-of-its-kind liquid espresso concentrate made for iced coffee lovers who want café-quality drinks. Just Pour it. Mix it. Hack it — your way.

Made with premium coffee beans, the concentrates dissolve instantly in water or milk, giving you a smooth base for crafting everything from an iced vanilla latte to an iced americano creation, no machine required.



For more information: www.corporate.nestle.ca/en

**New Spin on a Breakfast Stable,
Sustainability in Mind - Joosy**

Meet Joosy — a fresh take on your morning glass of juice. Made in British Columbia, Joosy is 100% pure mandarin juice that’s naturally sweet, vitamin-packed, and brimming with antioxidants. What makes it extra special? It’s crafted from upcycled mandarins — perfectly good fruit that’s simply a little too “imperfect” for store shelves. By giving this fruit a second life, Joosy helps fight food waste while offering a deliciously refreshing way to start the day. With no added sugars, no concentrates, and no artificial flavours, it’s just pure sunshine in a bottle. Plus, every sip supports a financial contribution to BC Children’s Hospital. From breakfast tables to afternoon pick-me-ups, Joosy makes sustainability simple — and tasty.



For more information: karen.law@freshdirectproduce.com

RM Essentials - Premium
Cold-Pressed Oils Launch in Canada

RM Essentials has introduced a line of small-batch, cold-pressed oils crafted in Vernon, BC. The artisanal collection features culinary oils perfect for both cooking and finishing applications.

The premium line includes Organic Cold-Pressed Peanut Oil with a high smoke point ideal for stir-frying and sautéing, along with specialty finishing oils like Black Seed Oil, Flax-seed Oil, and Pumpkin Seed Oil that add distinctive flavors to completed dishes.

“We press our oils in small batches to preserve their natural flavours and nutritional integrity,” says Marlow Deiter, founder of RM Essentials. “Our commitment to quality starts with carefully selected seeds and traditional cold-pressing methods.”

RM Essentials’ Black Seed Oil recently earned recognition in the “Top 10 in Grocery” for Best Condiment at the prestigious Grocery and Specialty Food West 2025 show in Vancouver this April. The distinctive oil impressed judges with its unique flavour profile and versatile culinary applications.



For more information: www.rm-essentials.ca

HEINZ Launches Irresistible New
Mayonnaise-Style Sauces, Bringing
Flavour to Every Bite

HEINZ turns up the flavour for Canadians, with the launch of new HEINZ Mayonnaise-Style Sauces, expanding its range of delicious condiment options in Canada. The new lineup is crafted for sauce lovers and made to satisfy consumers’ growing craving for more adventurous options in the kitchen. With more than half of Canadians saying they need at least 2-3 sauces with their meals, this new lineup delivers a flavour-forward and delicious way to elevate any at-home meal and meet Canadians’ sauce needs.



For more information: kraftheinzcompany.com

Tocha Foods Heats Things Up — Without Burning You Out

Say goodbye to scorching sauces and hello to Tocha — the Vancouver startup shaking up the condiment game with its spiced sauces: bold, zesty, and just a kiss of warmth. Think ingredient profiles of a hot sauce, but more flavour forward.



Branded as “Hot Sauce Without the Heat,” Tocha was born from a fiery truth after their research — nearly 75% of folks can’t handle the heat. And bland food? That’s a no-go.

So, Tocha turned up the flavour, not the flames. No vinegar bomb, no tongue-scorcher — just rich, vibrant sauces that go with everything.

For more information: vytas@tochafoods.com

Little Bellies Expands Canadian Lineup

Little Bellies, Australian-founded baby and toddler snack brand known for its wholesome, age-and-stage appropriate snacks, is further expanding its Canadian range with seven new products designed to support key developmental milestones from 10+ months to toddlerhood.



With its existing line catering to babies from 7+ months — including the well-loved puffs, Pick-Me Sticks, and Round-a-Bouts, the lineup has now grown to offer more variety for the 10+ and 12+ months stages. These new additions bring more shapes, flavours and textures that encourage independence and confident self-feeding skills.



For more information: <https://littlebellies.com>

Putter's Poised to Capture Market Share

As American pickle brand Bick's scales back its presence in Canada — a change influenced by broader trade dynamics between Canada and the United States — proudly Canadian company Putter's is stepping in to help meet the growing demand for high-quality, locally made products.



Founded in Quebec in 1948, Putter's has earned a loyal following for its flavourful recipes, premium ingredients, and unwavering commitment to freshness. With Bick's exit from the market, Putter's is ready to significantly expand its reach, ramping up production and widening distribution across the country without delay.

“Our mission is simple: to provide Canadian consumers with a local, delicious, and affordable product that keeps the pickle tradition alive,” said Daniel Jurkovic and John Tartaglia, co-presidents of Putter's, headquartered in Sainte-Sophie, Quebec.

For more information: <https://putterspickles.com>

Mars and Ben's Original Serve Up New Tasty, Accessible and Healthy Mealtime Solutions

Ben's Original brand, proudly part of Mars and a trusted name in kitchens for more than 75 years, is redefining mealtime convenience with the launch of two exciting product innovations in Canada and the United States: Ben's Original Single-Serve Cups and expanded flavours in the Ben's Original Street Food line.



These new offerings are designed to meet the needs of today's busy consumers who crave options that are tasty, accessible, and healthy, while still maintaining the quality and flavour Ben's Original fans know and love.

For more information: [BensOriginal.com](https://bensoriginal.com)

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