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^{1,2}Based on an independent survey conducted by Rose Research in June 2024 among a nationally representative sample of 1,500 women and men in Canada (English and French speaking) ages 16-75 years

In this Issue

- 12 Back to School and Back to Routine
Tips for retailers to maximise sales
- 20 SIAL Canada Reveals Winner of 2026 Gold Innovation Award: Kunana
A Q&A with Santiago Stacey, chief banana officer at Kunana.
- 35 Retail Council of Canada Announces the Winners of the Canadian Grand Prix New Product Awards
Best new products of 2026 and grocery industry innovators recognized.
- 41 Canadians Are Rethinking Wellness and Demanding Proof
- 43 Standing Tall
Alberta's food industry sturdy and strong.

12



Retail Council of Canada Announces the **Winners!**

Canadian Grand Prix New Product Awards

35



43

Departments

- 6 MARKET UPDATE
- 10 CALENDAR OF EVENTS
- 46 IN THE BAG



41



23

On Our Cover

23 Happy to be Homemade

Even with food affordability top of mind, shoppers are still choosing to buy Canadian.

Cover Photo credit: shutterstock.com



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Publication Mail Agreement No: 40062509. ISSN# 0705-906X. Return Undeliverable Canadian addresses to Circulation Dept. at 675 Berry Street, Unit L, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3H 1A7 e-mail: jmartin@mercurypublications.ca Printed in Canada

Funded by the Government of Canada Financé par le gouvernement du Canada

Canada

publisher's perspective

wg



Driving Loyalty with AI

AI is not only helping the grocery industry with operational logistics. Today, AI is being used to dig deeper into loyalty programs through greater personalization. These programs use AI and machine learning to analyze individual purchase histories, app behaviour, and real-time contextual data. This allows grocers to unify in-store and online shopping records to deliver tailored promotions, dynamic digital coupons, and interactive gamified challenges to increase basket sizes and customer retention.

Loyalty members who redeem personalized offers generate significantly higher customer lifetime value, spending 4.3 times more annually than those who do not.

Programs build comprehensive profiles of shoppers by pulling data from multiple touchpoints such as items added to digital carts, past online browsing history and in-store transactions via a loyalty card at physical checkouts. AI then evaluates profiles against hundreds of decision points to understand unique purchasing patterns.

What is truly amazing is that the algorithms can predict when a customer will likely run out of staples and automatically issue a coupon for that exact product right before your next trip. Systems can even blend a shopper's history with real-time variables like local weather, season, or local events to suggest relevant meal ingredients.

According to McKinsey's 2026 State of Grocery Retail North America report, more than 80% of grocers view loyalty programs as a primary engine of value delivery. The report also found that grocers say 35% of promotions are fully personalized today and expect that figure to increase to 55% in the next two to three years.

For many retailers, personalization means grouping customers into broad segments based on past purchases, demographics or general shopping behaviour. But as more focus is put on targeted promotions and loyalty-led value, grocers may need to address a major gap in how personalization is defined and delivered.

Consumers are constantly weighing trade-offs across cost, convenience, quality and relevance, which means grocers need to deliver value in ways that reflect how individual shoppers are actually shopping, which is shorter, more frequent and more mission-based trips. Value is becoming less about individual levers like price cuts, promotions or loyalty points and more about how pricing, promotions, loyalty and personalization work together as one connected customer experience.

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Buy-Low Foods Expands New Price Position Across B.C. Stores



Several Buy-Low Foods locations have introduced a refreshed price position designed to deliver even greater value to customers in their communities. The following stores are now operating under this enhanced approach:

- Buy-Low Foods Hope, Hope, BC
- Buy-Low Foods Fraser Street, Vancouver, BC
- Buy-Low Foods Royal Oak, Burnaby, BC
- Buy-Low Foods Parkcrest, Burnaby, BC

This update reflects a renewed focus on quality fresh departments, a simplified assortment, and stronger everyday value. Customers can expect improved pricing across key categories, alongside a more streamlined product selection that makes it easier to find great prices on everyday essentials.

In addition to sharper pricing, stores are introducing several customer-focused features, including: Expanded value-driven promotions through a “Drop Zone” for limited-time deals; Fresh produce, meat, deli, bakery and dairy offered at consistently low prices; Bulk food options to help customers save by buying only what they need and A Fresh Guarantee, ensuring products meet quality expectations or are refunded and replaced at no cost.

“Customers are more focused than ever on value, and it’s critical that we continue to meet their needs,” said Pattison Food Group President Jamie Nelson. “This change allows us to offer sharper pricing, a simpler shopping experience and a strong fresh offering, all while staying true to the local service our customers count on in these important communities.”

Living Alchemy Marks 10th Anniversary with Major Expansion into New Richmond Headquarters

Living Alchemy, Canada’s leading fermented whole-food supplement brand, has opened its new 30,000 square foot office and manufacturing facility in Richmond, British Columbia, a milestone that coincides with the company’s 10th anniversary.

The expanded space represents a significant investment in Living Alchemy’s capacity to deliver the highest-quality fermented supplements to natural health retailers and consumers across Canada and beyond. The new facility will house state-of-the-art manufacturing operations alongside a full corporate office, enabling the team to scale production while maintaining the rigorous quality standards the brand is known for.

“This expansion is a reflection of a decade of trust from our retail partners, practitioners, and customers,” said Raymond Lin, CEO and founder of Living Alchemy. “Our new Richmond home gives us the infrastructure to continue innovating and growing alongside the natural health category.”



Great Little Box Company Wins Bronze

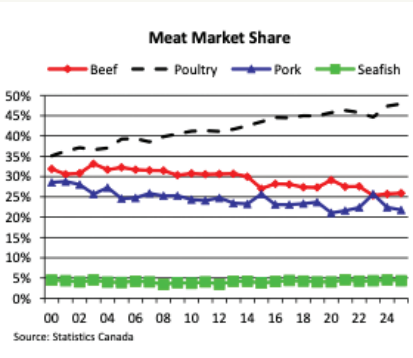
Great Little Box Company Ltd (GLBC) has announced it has won Bronze in the Foil & Specialty Effects Association (FSEA) 33rd Annual Gold Leaf Awards. Judged on design, execution, and level of difficulty, this annual award competition represents the most exquisite works throughout the graphic arts industry. Featuring more than 35 categories, the competition recognizes how specialty finishing processes enhance quality, strengthen shelf presence, and elevate brand recognition in print.

GLBC has won Bronze in the Best Use of Foil/Embossing- Label, (Difficult) category for Tealeaves Masala Chai label. This label was printed on the HP Indigo 6K Digital Press and the AB Graphic International Digicon Series 3 Label Converting machine, which features a 50T hot foil and emboss unit called the “Big Foot”.



Beef Consumption and Demand Higher in 2025

Statistics Canada’s food consumption data is significantly lagged, but it is worth taking stock to see what happened last year. Consumers continued to flock to the beef section of the meat counter in 2025, looking for that perfect cut. The retail beef demand index (2000=100), which measures consumers’ willingness to pay, was up 10% in 2025 to be the strongest since 1982.



Total domestic beef consumption increased 4.5% in 2025, reversing the decline that had been occurring from 2022 to 2024. As supplies fought to catch up with population growth. Imports accounted for 30% of total consumption, supporting availability as the Canadian cattle cycle moves through its smallest supplies.

On average, every Canadian consumed 16.1 kg of beef (retail weight), up 0.5 kg per person or 3.4% in 2025. At the same time, retail prices (deflated) were up 11% in 2025. Overall, consumers continued to see beef as a great source of protein, both for family meals and special occasions.

Total per capita protein consumption increased 3% in 2025. However, at 77.2 kg per person, this remained below the long-term average of 80 kg. Looking at competing meats, per capita pork consumption was steady with 2024, total poultry consumption (chicken, stewing hen, and turkey) was up 4%, and seafish consumption was up 5.3%. Beef and poultry increased their market share slightly in 2025, pulling from pork and seafish.

Cascades Launches Its Fifth Sustainability Plan

Cascades Inc. has launched its fifth Sustainability Plan, which brings together a range of concrete actions and reaffirms the company’s commitment to actively contributing to sustainability by working collaboratively with its customers, suppliers, and business partners. Cascades is also taking this opportunity to announce the signing of several partnerships focused on biodiversity and environmental preservation, a key pillar of its new plan. The company is renewing its agreements with Parc Marie Victorin, the David Suzuki Foundation, and the Granby Zoo, establishing a new partnership with Wildlife Habitat Canada, and continuing its collaboration with Mission 1000 Tonnes.

Titled “Rising together,” this new 2026-2030 Sustainability Plan is built around four pillars: Protected Nature, Eco-designed Products, Fulfilled Employees, and Engaged Partners. Developed over several months and informed by consultations involving employees, suppliers, customers, partners, and members of executive management, the plan provides a clear roadmap to guide Cascades’ actions over the next five years.

“With ‘Rising together,’ our leadership in sustainability is expressed with even greater conviction. It is grounded in concrete, science-based commitments and extends across every stage of our value chain. Together with our teams, we pursue a shared ambition: maximizing our partners’ potential while minimizing their environmental footprint. Partnering with Cascades means choosing a committed partner capable of designing lower-impact products to support its customers’ objectives, and of demonstrating results with rigor and transparency,” said Hugues Simon, president and chief executive officer of Cascades.



Kate Sprack Promoted to Director of Trade Marketing, CanPrev (Orange Naturals)

Kate Sprack, based in Victoria, British Columbia, brings nearly a decade of experience connecting brands, retailers, and consumers through strategic trade marketing initiatives. Since joining CanPrev four years ago, she has played an integral role in driving growth across key retail partnerships, with a strong focus on expanding the presence and performance of natural health products within the grocery channel. In her new role as director of trade marketing, Kate will oversee national trade marketing strategy and support the continued expansion of the Orange Naturals brand across Canadian and international markets. Based in Western Canada, Kate brings valuable regional insight into evolving grocery trends, consumer preferences, and retailer needs across the market. She collaborates closely with national sales teams and grocery partners to develop and execute retail programs that drive supplement category growth, increase shopper engagement, and strengthen in-store performance across both conventional grocery and health food retail environments. Passionate about nutrition, education, and building high-performing campaigns, Kate is committed to fostering long-term retail partnerships and advancing the growing role of supplements within grocery.



Kate Sprack

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Competition Bureau Advances Investigation into Sobeys’ Use of Property Controls Across Canada

The Competition Bureau has obtained court orders to advance its investigation into Empire Company Limited’s use of property controls in Canada. Empire is the parent company of Sobeys, Farm Boy, Safeway, IGA, Foodland and FreshCo, among others.

The Bureau’s investigation is examining the company’s use of property controls across Canada to assess whether their practices harm competition in the retail grocery industry. Lack of competition in the grocery industry can result in higher prices, lower quality and less availability.

Earlier in the investigation, the Bureau obtained an initial court order requiring Empire to produce information focused on property controls in the Halifax Regional Municipality. The new orders will provide the Bureau additional information about the scope of Empire’s practices in Canada, including how the company negotiates property controls and their potential impacts on competition across Canada.

The investigation is ongoing and there is no conclusion of wrongdoing at this time.

Quick facts:

- Property controls are restrictions on the use of commercial real estate that limit how a property can be used by others. These property controls are common across Canada, especially in retail settings. They can harm competition by making it difficult, or even impossible, for businesses to open new stores.
- In June 2023, the Bureau published its grocery market study, which concluded that property controls can limit competition from new grocers and can deny consumers the benefits of competition including lower prices, greater choice and increased innovation.
- In June 2024, the Bureau obtained two court orders to advance its investigations into the use of property controls by Sobeys’ and Loblaw’s parent companies related to property controls in the Halifax Regional Municipality.

CIGBA/DCI Celebrates Industry Excellence at 2026 Business Summit

CIGBA/DCI has announced the recipients of the 2026 CIGBA/DCI Star Awards, recognizing outstanding individuals and companies that have demonstrated exceptional leadership, innovation, and commitment to Canada’s independent grocery industry.

This year’s Star Award recipients include:

- Retailer of the Year: Pino’s Get Fresh
- Partner of the Year: Maple Leaf Foods
- Leader of the Year: Stephen Carroll, Maple Leaf Foods
- Lifetime Achievement Award: Joe Greco, Greco’s Fresh Markets
- Innovation Award: Denninger’s
- Social Responsibility Award: Powell’s Supermarkets

These awards were presented on June 2, 2026, during the annual CIGBA/DCI Business Summit, which brought together independent retailers, suppliers, and industry partners from across Canada for a day of networking, education, and celebration of industry excellence.

Continuing its commitment to supporting communities across the country, CIGBA/DCI, in partnership with the Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers, proudly donated \$15,000 to Food Banks Canada during the annual CIGBA/CFIG Charity Golf Classic held on June 3, 2026. The event united members and partners in support of food security initiatives nationwide.

Make Happy Tummies 2027 Launches with Record Momentum and Unprecedented Retail Reach

The Grocery Foundation officially launched the Make Happy Tummies 2027 Campaign and Gala this week, bringing together sponsors, retailers, manufacturers, community leaders, and industry partners to celebrate a record-breaking year and set the stage for an even bigger campaign ahead.

The June 10th kickoff event, held in Toronto, highlighted the extraordinary momentum behind one of Canada’s most visible and impactful industry-led fundraising initiatives. With participation from more than 1,800 grocery stores across Canada, the campaign continues to unite the food and grocery sector around a shared commitment to supporting children and families in need.

Western Canadian retailers are once again demonstrating exceptional leadership during the campaign, with participation from industry-leading banners such as Save-On-Foods, Buy-Low Foods, Nesters Market, Freson Bros., and Calgary Co-op, as well as hundreds of independent and national grocery partners from coast to coast.



The scale of the campaign provides sponsors (national and regional brands) with unprecedented visibility, connecting brands directly with millions of shoppers through in-store engagement, retailer marketing channels (on shelf, flyers and no Flipp), brand-tagged TV and social media creative, and by-invite events to school breakfast programs with retail leadership across the country, among the sponsorship benefits.

A highlight of the launch event was a dynamic panel discussion featuring industry and community leaders who shared powerful stories, insights, and perspectives on the growing impact of the Make Happy Tummies program. Their message was clear: when the grocery industry comes together, meaningful change happens.

The campaign’s success is built on the dedication of sponsors, retailers, members, volunteers, donors, and advocates whose support has fueled record growth and expanded impact year after year. Together, they have created a movement that continues to strengthen communities while showcasing the grocery industry’s collective commitment to giving back.

Sponsorship for both the campaign, which returns nationally in January 2027, and the Gala is now open. Companies interested in reaching consumers through a trusted, purpose-driven platform and joining more than 1,800 participating stores are encouraged to explore partnership opportunities.

Cimcorp Named “Food Solutions Company of the Year” in the 2026 SupplyTech Breakthrough Awards

Cimcorp, a pioneer in robotic handling solutions, has won the 2026 SupplyTech Breakthrough Award for “Food Solutions Company of the Year.” Cimcorp was honoured for its modular, scalable Dreamfield solution designed to support fast, efficient, and reliable supply chain networks. This marks the company’s second consecutive recognition as “Food Solutions Company of the Year,” highlighting its continued leadership in advancing the future of food distribution.



Designed for ambient, refrigerated, and frozen environments, Cimcorp’s Dreamfield is a fast, flexible order fulfillment solution ideal for fresh produce, bakery, dairy, and beverage operations. The solution combines advanced robotics with intelligent software to create one seamless flow of products from inbound receipt to outbound shipment, improving efficiency and reliability across the distribution process.

As a result, Dreamfield helps food businesses:

- Maximize product freshness, availability, and shelf life
- Simplify material handling for safer, more efficient operations
- Increase throughput while optimizing storage space
- Support food safety through hygienic system design

Notably, Dreamfield is modular and scalable.

Ishida Canada Welcomes New Hires Across Branches and Departments

As a leading international provider of weighing and packaging line solutions for over 130 years, Ishida has been steadily expanding operations in Canada, becoming a trusted partner to hundreds of businesses in the retail grocery and food manufacturing industries. Reflecting the company’s continued growth across the country, Ishida Canada Inc. has made the following appointments in Western Canada:

Heidi Chan – account manager – Western Canada

Heidi Chan was hired as account manager for Western Canada in December 2025. Holding a bachelor’s degree in Business Management, she is an experienced senior sales executive who has represented global pharmaceutical companies in Hong Kong. More recently, she has been working in B2B sales in the Vancouver area. Heidi’s fluency in multiple languages will help improve Ishida’s business relations amongst the local Mandarin- and Cantonese-speaking clientele and open new opportunities for the company’s growth in Western Canada.

Manak Lehal – inventory control – Western Canada

Manak Lehal joined the BC branch of Ishida Canada’s operations team in an inventory control position as of September 2025. He recently finished his studies at the British Columbia Institute of Technology. Manak is a very enthusiastic new team member looking forward to helping Ishida Canada achieve our goals while embracing the company’s values.



Pattison Food Group Invests in Future-Ready Grocery Fulfillment with Dematic Automation



Dematic, a global leader in supply chain automation, partnered with Pattison Food Group to modernize grocery fulfillment operations at its Langley, British Columbia distribution centre. The 485,000-square-foot ambient grocery facility leverages advanced automation technologies designed to improve split-case fulfillment efficiency, increase throughput capacity and support scalable grocery distribution operations across Western Canada.

“Dematic’s strength extends beyond automation to a deep understanding of the operational realities shaping modern grocery fulfillment,” said Mike Olson, senior vice-president of supply chain and wholesale at Pattison Food Group. “That expertise helped us build a scalable, intelligent operation that improves performance today while supporting the flexibility needed for future growth.”

Supporting Pattison Food Group’s nine retail grocery banners, including Save-On-Foods, PriceSmart Foods and Quality Foods, Dematic developed the automated solution to reduce manual handling, enhance order accuracy and increase fulfillment agility in response to evolving consumer demand.

Halal Expo Canada 2026 Concludes with Record Engagement, Innovation and Industry Collaboration

Halal Expo Canada 2026 successfully concluded its sixth edition at The International Centre, bringing together industry leaders, manufacturers, retailers, certification bodies, trade organizations, investors, and food enthusiasts from across Canada and around the world.

Over two dynamic days, the event reaffirmed its position as Canada’s leading platform for the halal economy, connecting businesses, fostering innovation, and showcasing the tremendous growth potential of the halal market.

One of the highlights of this year’s event was the highly anticipated conference program, which featured expert speakers and industry thought leaders discussing the future of Canada’s halal economy. Sessions explored key topics including halal certification and compliance, international trade opportunities, investment and financing strategies, digital transformation, sustainability, consumer trends, and market growth.

Attendees gained valuable insights from leading experts who shared practical strategies and real-world experiences navigating the rapidly evolving halal landscape.

Visitors discovered innovative food and beverage offerings, specialty ingredients, health and wellness products, Islamic finance solutions, cosmetics, logistics services, technology platforms, and export opportunities. Exhibitors reported strong engagement with buyers, distributors, retailers, and industry professionals who were actively seeking new products and partnerships. The diversity and quality of exhibitors demonstrated the continued expansion and sophistication of the global halal economy.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

CHFA NOW
September 25-27, 2026
Exhibition Place
Toronto, ON
<https://www.chfanow.ca/>

Retail Sustainability Conference
October 27-28, 2026
North Building,
Metro Toronto Convention Centre
Toronto, ON
www.rccretailsustainability.ca

Grocery Innovations Canada
October 27-28, 2026
North Building,
Toronto Congress Centre
Toronto, ON
<https://groceryinnovations.com/>

The NGA Show
January 31-Feb 2, 2027
MGM Grand Conference Centre
Las Vegas, NV
<https://www.thengashow.com/>

Grocery & Specialty Food West
April 20-21, 2027
East Building, Vancouver Convention Centre
Vancouver, BC
<https://gsfshow.com/>

SIAL
April 27-29, 2027
Enercare Centre
Toronto, ON
<https://sialcanada.com/en/>



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Back to School

and Back to Routine

By Carolyn Camilleri

TIPS FOR RETAILERS TO MAXIMISE SALES

Caddle's Back to School Shopper Journey 2026, a report developed in partnership with the Retail Council of Canada, states that price pressure tops the list of parent challenges, with 53 per cent of parents citing finding good prices and deals as their primary difficulty, ahead of staying within budget and ensuring items are in stock. 85 per cent of parents are always or often on the hunt for discounts.

In-store shopping continues to dominate, with 99 per cent of parents planning to make purchase in physical stores. While this report applies to back-to-school shopping in general, categories of interest to grocery retailers include school supplies, backpacks/lunch bags, personal care/hygiene products, and food/snacks for school.

Read the full report here: <https://www.retailcouncil.org/research/back-to-school-shopper-journey-2025-national-consumer-research-caddle-rcc/>

At Community Natural Foods stores in Calgary, back to school is a very busy time of year as customers shift to post-summer routines, which often means a return to a more consistent schedule and healthier eating habits.

"Our in-store sale and flyer programs in August and September are often focused on this shift," says Nathan Froese, grocery and bulk category manager at Community Natural Foods. "Brands often choose these months as a prime opportunity to showcase their products with flyers and instore displays, and there are sometimes promotional back-to-school-themed contests during this time as well."





photo shutterstock.com

Community Natural Foods has a broad range of product offerings to make back-to-school healthier — organic juices, breakfast cereals, snack bars, fresh fruits and veggies, dairy products, multi-vitamins, and immune support.



Nathan Froese,
grocery and bulk
category manager,
Community Natural Foods

“Categories that support both health and convenience are particularly busy during this time of year,” says Froese, listing functional bars and lunch-box snack options, clean and convenient meal solutions, fresh organic produce, and children’s supplements as products that all get a boost heading into September.

Froese’s tip for grocery retailers: “It’s an incredibly busy and sometimes stressful period of the year for parents, so the more you can do to make their shopping experience quick, efficient, and seamless the better! Build displays that are attractive and easy to shop, ensure you have ample stock on staple items, and do your best to offer deals that will soften the budget impact of back-to-school.”

A NATURAL FIT WITH BACK TO SCHOOL

Kate Sprack, director of trade marketing at CanPrev, Orange Naturals, says back-to-school shopping is really driven by a household routine reset rather than the kids’ category alone.

“We see families re-establishing daily health habits across the board, which naturally lifts both adult and children’s vitamins sales,” she says. “At Orange Naturals, that transition tends to show up strongly in daily-use formulas like Bounce Back, Peace of Mind, and B-vitamin complexes that support energy and stress resilience.”

Orange Naturals Probiotics support both digestive and immune health at a time when routines, diet, and exposure patterns all change. From a behavioural standpoint, this is when consumers are most focused on re-establishing consistency in daily wellness habits. Sales are more a phased build than a single spike.

“There’s an early planning and stocking phase in late July, followed by a clear acceleration through August, and it typically carries into early September as households fully settle back into the structure of their routine,” says Sprack. “We also see an important extension of the season driven by parents preparing older kids for college or university, which broadens the occasion from ‘school start’ to a wider ‘life transition readiness’ mindset.”

Sprack’s tip for grocery retailers: “Probiotics perform best when positioned as part of a broader family wellness reset rather than in isolation. Cross-merchandising adult and kids’ vitamins for immune support and daily essentials helps reinforce the idea of supporting the entire family.”

The strongest executions are framed around habit formation and “back to routine” for the whole household, which is when conversion tends to be highest. Family-focused resources — booklets, wellness challenges, and simple educational tools — help drive routine-building at home.

“For grocery partners, we make execution easy with ready-to-go PDQ displays, counter units, and value-add giveaways that support conversion at store level,” she says. “We also work closely with each account to build meaningful, customized activations that fit their space and customer base.”



A display for an Orange Naturals back-to-school giveaway with a kids backpack, a kids stuffed animal & Orange Naturals products like kids zinc + C chewables, kids magnesium chewables, and kids probiotics chewables.

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BUILDING STRONG AND BALANCED IMMUNE SYSTEMS

Returning to back-to-school schedules includes stocking up on essentials like good quality multivitamins, which Caitlyn Vanderhaeghe, president and CEO at KidStar Nutrients says are popular year-round. But back to school also means back to germs.

“Kids interact with more than 20 to 30 kids in a classroom and hundreds of kids in the school as a whole,” says Vanderhaeghe. “Parents want to ensure their children have strong and balanced immune systems. The fewer missed school days due to sickness, the better for both kids and parents.”

Immune-supporting products like Moducare, vitamin C, and vitamin D3 are essential shopping cart items, and to prevent tummy troubles, parents also look for child-friendly fibre with probiotics. Nutrient-packed convenience snacks and protein products are also popular categories that make life more convenient for busy parents.

“Parents need ways to support their kids’ health when their families return to routines and back-to-school schedules,” says Vanderhaeghe. “KidStar’s products include multivitamins to help fill in the gaps when busy schedules impact regular meals. We also have vitamin C and D3 for immune support and omega-3s for brain and eye health. For busy mornings, parents can find quick and easy ways to add essential macro nutrients into kids’ diets with our delicious protein powders.”

Supplement sales in the kids’ category are highest from August to November, with back-to-school purchases ramping up in late July/early August. KidStar schedules trade promotions, in-person demos, and online

webinars for late August to coincide with returning to more stable schedules.

Vanderhaeghe’s tip for grocery retailers: “We recommend establishing a primary brand block for KidStar products, as well as having select items in secondary locations to support additional exposure and sales, e.g. including kids-label iron with adult-label iron liquid. We also recommend cross-merchandising KidStar products near or with other essential kid- and family-focused items, like daily essentials, natural snacks, and natural health products and supplements. Each year we do a fun kid-focused giveaway with a display for the store to engage customers and drive sales.”

FREEZE-DRIED FUNCTIONAL SNACKS FOR THE HEALTHY WIN

Jenny Yue, co-founder and CEO at OHME, says back-to-school grocery shopping tends to cluster around a few core needs: lunchbox staples (individually portioned snacks, nut-free options, fruit and veggie alternatives), quick-prep breakfast foods, and after-school fuel parents feel good about.

“We also see strong movement in beverages, granola bars, and portable proteins — anything that travels well in a backpack or lunchbox without refrigeration,” says Yue. “Parents are increasingly reading labels and looking for shorter ingredient lists, so better-for-you options in these categories have really stepped up in prominence over the last few seasons.”

OHME! Foods makes nutritious, shelf-stable, freeze-dried functional snacks from a short list of recognizable ingredients. The current lineup includes freeze-dried fruits made with fruit only and freeze-dried yogurt crunches, which are just fruit and yogurt and great for older kids and teens.



Oh Me Foods yogurt crunch delivers creamy Greek yogurt paired with real fruit, freeze-dried to lock in all the flavour. Available in strawberry, blueberry, and mango.



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“The freeze-drying process locks in nutrients and flavour without preservatives, so parents get the convenience they need without compromising on what they’re putting in their kids’ bodies,” says Yue. “That’s the OHME! promise — healthy snacking that doesn’t feel like a compromise.”

While Yue says late July through early September is the right window, the intensity varies by region with B.C. families ramping up a touch later than Ontario given the school calendar.

“The real spike hits mid-August, with a secondary lift in early September as the ‘we forgot things’ restock wave kicks in,” she says. “For retailers, that means the planogram and display work needs to happen before the August long weekend — the window to capture the intentional, planned shopper closes faster than most people expect.”

Yue’s tips for grocery retailers: Group snacks, pouches, and portable items together as a “build your lunchbox” section. Cross-merchandise with lunchbox staples, placing OHME! snacks alongside sandwich bags, thermoses, or reusable containers to create a natural connection and increase trial. “Shoppers are in planning mode during back-to-school and respond well to curated groupings.”

Because freeze-dried is still an emerging format, eye-level placement in the snack aisle increases visibility, as does secondary placement near the checkout or at the end of the health/natural snack aisle. And sampling!

“Getting the product in someone’s mouth is the single best conversion tool. We’re very supportive of demo opportunities for retail partners.”



Freson Bros. Alberta beef round-up 1970s Chuckwagon.

A TIMELY PROMOTION

The Alberta Beef Round-Up is a Freson Bros. tradition that has been running proudly since 1955. The centrepiece of the campaign is a fixed-weight, 60-lb Alberta Beef Hip Custom Cut Pack, expertly cut and wrapped by in-store butchers to provide practical, freezer-ready, long-lasting meal solutions for busy families. The bulk-buying experience has been successfully modernized with the Freson Bros. App.

“The Alberta Beef Round-Up is far more than a seasonal promotion because it is a direct reflection of our core values and our deep roots in the communities we serve,” says Kerry Waldo, VP retail at Freson Bros. “Since 1955, we have been fiercely committed to supporting local Alberta ranchers and keeping the true craft of the butcher alive in our stores. Providing our customers with exceptional Alberta beef, expertly prepared by a skilled butcher who lives and works in their community delivers a level of quality, trust, and personalized service that remains unmatched in the grocery landscape today.”

The timing of this annual promotion is very popular with customers budgeting for the school year. ●

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SIAL Canada Reveals Winner of 2026 Gold Innovation Award Kunana



By: Frank Yeo

A Q&A with Santiago Stacey, chief banana officer at Kunana



Isabelle Marquis, co-president of the SIAL Innovation jury, Santiago Stacey (center) chief banana officer from Kunana accepting his SIAL Innovation Gold award and Stephane Thuillier, CEO SIAL Canada.

1 What is unique and innovative about your product?

Kunana is Canada's first upcycled banana milk made from rescued bananas that are perfectly good to eat but overlooked because they don't meet cosmetic standards. While most dairy alternatives focus on oats, almonds, or soy, Kunana introduces bananas as a completely new base for the category, delivering a naturally creamy texture with no dairy, no nuts, and no added sugar in our Unsweetened variety.

Beyond the ingredient itself, Kunana combines sustainability, functionality, and nostalgia into one product. It's a modern take on the banana shakes many of us grew up drinking at home, reimaged for today's consumer who wants convenience, better ingredients, and products with purpose.

2 What inspired you to launch this project, and what's the story behind the brand?

I grew up in Ecuador, one of the largest banana-exporting countries in the world. Bananas were part of everyday life, and one of my favorite childhood drinks was a homemade banana shake called "platanada." Years later, after moving to Canada, I kept thinking about two realities happening at the same time: consumers were looking for better dairy alternatives, while millions of bananas were being discarded simply because they didn't look "perfect."

That became the inspiration behind Kunana: rescuing and transforming overlooked bananas into something delicious and functional.

3 What makes Kunana more sustainable than other products on the market?

Kunana helps address food waste by using rescued bananas that would otherwise have limited commercial value due to cosmetic imperfections. We believe food shouldn't be wasted simply because it doesn't fit supermarket beauty standards.

At the same time, food insecurity remains a major issue in Canada, while nearly half of all food produced is wasted every year. That disconnect is one of the reasons we believe reducing food waste should be a priority across the food industry.

Bananas are also one of the most efficient crops in the world in terms of yield per hectare, and by upcycling

fruit already grown within the supply chain, we can create additional value from existing agricultural production rather than requiring new resources. Sustainability for us is not just about ingredients, it's about rethinking how the food system values produce.

4 How does it stack up for nutrition when compared to cow's milk or other dairy alternatives?

Kunana was designed to offer a balanced dairy-free option that consumers can enjoy every day. Our Unsweetened variety contains 5g of plant-based protein per serving with no added sugar, while delivering the creamy taste and texture consumers typically expect from dairy.

Meanwhile, our Chocolate Banana Milk is positioned as a better-for-you treat, made with real cacao and containing roughly half the sugar of the leading chocolate milk brand in Canada.

Compared to many dairy alternatives, Kunana stands out because it's allergen-friendly, banana-based, and offers a naturally smooth profile without relying heavily on artificial flavours. Kunana provides consumers with a dairy-free option that aligns with evolving preferences around sustainability, ingredient transparency, and functional nutrition.

5 How do you plan to educate the consumer on this new addition to the category?

Education starts with storytelling and sampling. Since banana milk is a new category for many consumers, we focus on making the product approachable by connecting it to familiar experiences: smoothies, cereal, coffee, and nostalgic banana shakes people already know and love.

We're investing in in-store demos, social content, and retailer partnerships to help consumers understand both the taste and the mission behind the brand. Once people try Kunana, the reaction is usually immediate: "This actually tastes really good." That trial moment is key to driving repeat purchases and building the category.

6 Where is Kunana available in Canada, and what's next for distribution?

Kunana recently launched across Canada and is already available in more than 100 stores nationwide, including major banners such as Healthy Planet and Farm Boy through our distribution partnership with Jonluca Neal.

One thing we discovered early on is that Kunana froths exceptionally well, making it a natural fit for baristas and specialty coffee applications. Since our humble beginnings started with cafés in Toronto, we're



In 2026, Kunana was awarded the SIAL Innovation Gold award for their plant-based banana milk.

also investing heavily in expansion through coffee shops and smoothie bars nationwide.

The response from retailers and consumers has been extremely encouraging, and we're focused on expanding nationally, growing foodservice distribution, and continuing conversations with larger grocery retailers as the category gains momentum.

The recognition accelerated conversations with retailers, distributors, and strategic partners, while also increasing consumer curiosity around the brand.

7 What did winning the SIAL Innovation Gold Award change for Kunana?

I'll make a confession: I didn't initially plan to participate in the innovation competition, but my friend Eric from the City of Toronto encouraged me to apply, and I'm grateful he did.

Winning the SIAL Innovation Gold Award was a major validation moment for our team. It confirmed that retailers, buyers, and industry leaders see banana milk not just as a novelty, but as a meaningful innovation within the beverage category.

The recognition accelerated conversations with retailers, distributors, and strategic partners, while also increasing consumer curiosity around the brand. For a young company launching an entirely new category, that credibility has been incredibly valuable.●

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Happy to be Homemade



By Carly Peters

**EVEN WITH FOOD AFFORDABILITY TOP OF MIND,
SHOPPERS ARE STILL CHOOSING TO BUY CANADIAN.**

If you're talking about food in Canada, it's most likely about the cost.

As of writing, groceries were up 4.3 per cent compared to a year ago, and for the 16th month in a row, food rose faster than inflation overall — a streak that has steadily eaten into household budgets. Despite provincial and federal strategies to provide relief for consumers, prices aren't expected to come down anytime soon.

While affordability remains the dominant driver of food purchasing decisions, despite some of the sticker shock at the shelves, support for Canadian products remains remarkably resilient.

“More than 60 per cent of Canadians told us they are willing to pay a premium of five to 10 per cent for Canadian-made products, and local food purchasing frequency has increased compared to six months ago,” explains Dr. Sylvain Charlebois, senior director of the Agri-Food Analytics Lab at Dalhousie University and coauthor of the lab’s spring 2026 Canadian Food Sentiment Index. “What we’re seeing is not the end of



Dr. Sylvain Charlebois, senior director of the Agri-Food Analytics Lab at Dalhousie University.

food patriotism, but rather a more pragmatic form of it. Canadians want to buy local and Canadian when they can, but persistent food inflation is forcing households to balance values with budgets.”

While retailers should recognize that affordability remains essential, it is no longer the only story. Canadians still want local products, care about nutrition, and are paying closer attention to where their products are coming from.

According to the Retail Council of Canada, for retailers, this creates an important opportunity. Canadian products, Canadian ownership, and local sourcing can be powerful differentiators,

particularly when they are clearly communicated and easy for consumers to identify. However, the “Buy Canadian” message cannot stand alone, notes the organization. It needs to be supported by a strong value proposition, reliable supply, competitive pricing, and a clear reason for consumers to choose that product over another option.

SENSE OF PLACE

Over the last year, Loblaw has added nearly 270 new Canadian suppliers across its banners. But beyond expanding its assortment, Canada’s largest food retailer has committed to helping showcase entrepreneurs and emerging brands to customers.

This summer, the brand will be featuring 28 suppliers from across Canada at the Calgary Stampede, where



they will sample products, share their stories, and engage directly with consumers. The showcase builds on similar initiatives at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair and at Loblaw’s flagship Maple Leaf Gardens store in Toronto.

The food retailer is also using their platforms to help customers learn more about the people and business behind the products they purchase. Earlier this year, Loblaw launched The Feed, a podcast telling the story

Younger Canadians, especially Gen Z, continue to show the strongest interest in buying local products, according to Dalhousie University’s spring 2026 Canadian Food Sentiment Index.

of products on its shelves by the people who made them, and creating digital content featuring entrepreneurs, suppliers, and industry leaders who are shaping the future of retail in Canada to better serve customers.

“As a Canadian retailer, we’re proud to work with businesses in communities across the country. One of the most important things we can do is use our scale to help smaller businesses get discovered by customers.

continued on page 28



PROUDLY CANADIAN

OVER 45 YEARS OF MAKING DELICIOUS FRIES





PRODUCT SHOWCASE

MADE IN CANADA:

New products that need a place on your shelf

TO THE MAX

Leclerc is famous for its Canadian-made cookies - including Celebration, the number one cookie in the country — but Quebecers know they also make a good bar. Now the rest of the country will too. The brand is expanding its Muffinmax line across Canada. Soft and chewy, Muffinmax combines the best of muffin texture with the convenience of a bar format. Available in six flavours, including ones with fillings, Muffinmax is a source of fibre and whole grains for a healthy made-in-Canada option.



A SLICE OF CANADA

As a proudly Canadian company with Italian roots, OGGI Foods brings authentic, premium products to consumers across North America while representing Canadian innovation and entrepreneurship. The company, seeing an opportunity to combine its award-winning, gluten-free crust with a high-protein offering, recently launched High Protein Pepperoni Pizza across major grocery retailers in Canada and the U.S. It's a natural evolution of the OGGI brand and another example of how the Canadian company is continuing to innovate within the frozen pizza category.



A LOT LIKE IT HOT

The newest offering from BeeMaid will have customers buzzing — a chipotle hot honey.

The co-operative, owned and operated by over 300 Western Canadian beekeepers, recently partnered with Winnipeg-based RRC Polytech's Prairie Research Kitchen to develop the blend of smoky heat and 100 per cent pure Canadian honey.



FEEL AT HOME

Kruger Products' commitment to Canadians has been part of its story from the beginning and remains central across the business today. Their new Scotties Original Canadiana Design Series, scheduled to be launched later this summer, celebrates Canadian heritage, featuring six box designs inspired by Canada's natural landscapes. This new series, created in collaboration with House & Home, is ideal for those looking to bring a sense of Canadian pride into their everyday spaces, while maintaining a cohesive and stylish look. This launch reflects the brand's ongoing focus on combining meaningful design with functionality and delivering beautifully crafted products that are both practical and personal.



MAKING IT HERE

For almost 30 years, Calgary-based Teja Food Group has supplied products across Canada and North America under its own brands and through private-label partnerships. The company is committed to creating Canadian-made — launching three new brands this year alone. Products like Made Foods Holy Fudge brownies — winner of the Alberta Food Processors Association best new snack item in 2026 — and soon-to-be-released Cocoa & Coconut Energy Bites; Bigger Bites Grab & Go line of premium sandwiches; and Let's Pasta new Wagyu Beef, Carbonara, and Cheddar & Bacon ravioli, are just a few examples of new skus that highlight the innovation and quality of Canadian-made.



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(Above) Sarah Bennetto O'Brien, founder of The Handpie Company (PEI), appearing in Loblaw's podcast, The Feed.

(Left) Three Farmers is a family business with a shared desire to connect consumers to the farmers who grow their food now at Loblaws.

Whether it's bringing innovative products to our shelves, showcasing entrepreneurs and emerging brands, or sharing their stories through our owned channels, we're focused on helping customers discover great products from businesses across Canada," says Danni Peirce, chief sourcing officer for Loblaws.

Across Pattison Food Group's stores, you'll see "Made in Canada" and "product of Canada" callouts featured through eye-catching signage, shelf tags, and digital screens, often paired with quick snapshots of the producers behind the products. Many locations have also introduced dedicated "Shop Local" sections or

rotating features that make it easy to find homegrown brands and discover new emerging Canadian talent, and posters with QR codes that allow customers to scan and learn more directly from suppliers as they shop.

"Add in tastings, demos, and seasonal showcases, and it all comes together to tell the story of the freshness, quality, and community impact of choosing local, making it easier and more fun for customers to support Canadian whenever they can," says Jainam Shah, category manager, local for Pattison Food Group. "Being a Canadian retailer today means continuing to champion local in a way that feels accessible. We know customers are facing financial

pressure, so it's about making it easier to choose Canadian through strong value, promotions, and everyday options. At the same time, we are deepening our partnerships with suppliers across the country. We're supporting local innovation and helping build a more resilient food network that can better withstand global disruption."

IN THIS TOGETHER

As the association representing Canada's natural, organic and wellness industry, the Canadian Health Food Association is encouraged by the federal government's recent commitment to invest \$3.2 billion over the next decade to strengthen Canada's food security.

CHFA's late 2025 research found that even amid cost pressures, **Made in Canada emerged as one of the strongest purchase drivers in the wellness category. A separate study noted 41 per cent of Canadians were looking for a locally-sourced claim.**



Save-On-Foods makes shopping Canadian easier with their Canadian product displays. They offer over 2,500 locally made products from more than 2,000 local growers and producers.

"Food and beverage manufacturing is a critical part of Canada's economy and food supply chain. We have an opportunity to process more of the food grown and harvested here at home, creating jobs, supporting local communities and strengthening Canada's food sovereignty," says Lynsey Walker, vice-president, marketing and communications at CHFA. "Many of our members are small- and medium-sized businesses that face challenges

continued on page 32



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A Homegrown Case Study

Italpasta's New In-store Activation Helps Consumers Connect to the Canadian-made Story

Pasta served with a side of patriotism. That's what Vancouver Island shoppers saw when they entered their local Country Grocer in June.

The retailer's 11 stores participated in Italpasta's newest in-store activation — Fettuccin-eh! — a playful twist on their popular pasta format that reflected both national pride and summer entertaining. The limited-edition product featured bold, red packaging with a maple leaf design, underscoring what's inside: pasta made with 100% high-quality Canadian wheat and a commitment to local ingredients and quality.

With consumers' continued interest in understanding where their food comes from, displays that tell the Canadian story with quick visuals and information are likely to perform well.

"We feel these displays do, in fact, impact the customer shopping experience. In a competitive market like Vancouver Island, it's nice to know our customers will see something different shopping at our stores compared to our competitors," says Justin Berthold of the B.C.-based, family-owned and -operated retailer, which also included Fettuccin-eh! in their weekly flyer. "Even though customers' first thing is to read the labels to find out where it's made, the Canadian flag with the red colour on the package [was] the first thing they [saw]. It was a no-brainer to take part in this promotion with such a great partner like Italpasta."

"Canadian-made products resonate with many shoppers, and Co-ops proudly source and offer locally-made products in stores across Western Canada."

Italpasta also provided retailers with a range of flexible merchandising solutions, including end caps, pallet displays, dump bins, and shelf talkers, to help create high-visibility placements to drive shopper attention.

At Federated Co-ops across Western Canada, this provided stores an opportunity to pull products out of the pasta aisle and create a consumer experience ahead of Canada Day.

"We encouraged stores to complete the display with complementary items such as pasta sauce to inspire quick and easy meal solutions," explains Nicole Hanna, category manager, food department for Federated Co-operatives Limited. "When grocery end cap displays are paired with promotional pricing or complementary products, they can help shoppers solve a need rather than simply buy an item. We do see an increase in sales when displays are paired with promotional



As a Canadian manufacturer, Italpasta understands the importance of calling out Canadian-made products. An Italpasta display at Country Grocer in Nanaimo, BC.

pricing because it drives awareness, trial, and makes the path to purchase easier for the customer."

Hanna notes that today's consumers want to know where their food comes from and actively seek to support local businesses. Having a company like Italpasta provide ready-made, in-store promotional materials and easily identifiable 'Canadian-made' packaging helps bridge that gap.

"Canadian-made products resonate with many shoppers, and Co-ops proudly source and offer locally-made products in stores across Western Canada. Displays like Fettuccin-eh! are one way that retailers and suppliers can work together to highlight Canadian products and help consumers make informed choices." ●

Celebrating Canada in the Pasta Aisle

Italpasta's limited edition **Fettuccin-eh!** is designed to stand out – from its bold red pack to its unmistakably Canadian personality.

While the design drives attention, the product inside delivers what matters most: premium pasta made with 100% Canadian wheat and the consistent quality consumers trust.

Thank you to our retail partners – **Country Grocer, Fairway Markets** and **Federated Co-op** – for your support in bringing this **Canada Day** program to life and driving strong in-store presence in the West.

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HERE'S THE BEEF

More than 60,000 Canadian farms and ranches raise beef cattle.

To help grocery meat departments better understand Canadian Beef's quality message, production systems, and environmental standards, Canada Beef created the Certified Canadian Beef Training Program for retailers. Available on the organization's website, the modules help participants develop their expertise and build customer confidence in the beef with the leaf.



accessing capital and expanding their operations, so targeted investments could make a real difference.”

For many of CHFA members, “Made in Canada” is deeply personal. Much of Canada’s natural, organic and wellness industry is made up of family-founded and entrepreneur-led businesses that started with a passion for creating products that support healthier lifestyles.

“When consumers choose Canadian-made products, they’re often supporting real people in their communities—local entrepreneurs, family businesses, and Canadian jobs. Many of our members have grown from a single product or small local business into brands found on shelves across the country,” says Walker, adding the focus at CHFA is helping create the connections and opportunities for those businesses to succeed—whether that’s through advocacy, industry connections, market insights, or opportunities to connect with retailers and consumers.

Whether it’s a grocer, supplier, or association, Charlebois notes one of the most encouraging findings from the index is the increase in trust across the food sector.

“At a time when Canadians continue to face economic uncertainty, confidence in food producers, retailers, and institutions has actually improved. That’s an important signal. It suggests consumers are not just looking for lower prices; they’re looking for reassurance, transparency, and reliability from the organizations that help put food on their tables.”

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CANADIAN INDEPENDENTS

In early June, the Federal government announced its national food security strategy — a \$3.2 billion commitment to improve access to affordable food over the medium and long term, while strengthening domestic food production. The strategy also included new investments to make grocery retail more competitive; a positive step towards helping address some of the issues that independent grocers have been very vocal about.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers (CFIG) was instrumental in having those concerns addressed through actionable items in the strategy.

One of those elements is the decision to expand the Ontario Food Terminal, build another two food terminals, and construct at least 10 regional food hubs, or mini terminals, across the country.

“The expansion of the Ontario Food Terminal is a recognition of just how important the terminal is to independents not only in Ontario, but in other areas of the country such as Manitoba, Quebec, and the Maritimes,” explains Gary Sands, senior vice-president of public policy and advocacy with the CFIG. “About two billion pounds of product goes through the terminal every year, and there are close to well over 4,500 independent buyers who access the terminal. That allows them to buy direct, accessing fresh product and without the costs of buying through a wholesaler. This helps make those independents more competitive.”

Sands notes the organization also pointed out to the government that independents serve a myriad of rural, northern, and remote communities. More terminals and food

hubs will reduce the distances required for transporting food to those areas, lowering costs and providing more choice outside of buying everything through a wholesaler.

“This is good for independent grocers, the industry, and for Canadians living in rural and Northern areas of the country,” says Sands. “Is the food security strategy a silver bullet that solves all of the challenges faced by independents? No. But it is a long overdue strategy by government that commits significant funding to address long-term systemic issues.”

While nothing will ever level the playing field for independent grocers, the CFIG is advocating for measures that can at least afford independents the opportunity to stay on the playing field. Sands points to the Grocery Code of Conduct, a goal that was realized through the collective voice of the organization and its membership. However, he notes to ensure the operational sustainability of members and the industry, the call to action is not over.

“Independent grocers, through CFIG, were the first in Canada to call for a Grocery Code of Conduct. But now that the goal has been realized, they need to make it work for them,” he says, adding members can’t do that if they have not signed up as members of the Code, and far too many have not. “Independent non-CFIG grocers also have to understand that we are their voice. The more members, the stronger that voice is. CFIG membership is not an expense, but an investment in their future. Independents who are members of CFIG can rightly claim to have helped make legacy changes to the industry. But there is more to be done. So to all those non-CFIG members, I say, you need us, and we need you.” ●

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Retail Council of Canada Announces the

Winners!



Canadian Grand Prix New Product Awards

BEST NEW PRODUCTS OF 2026 AND GROCERY INDUSTRY INNOVATORS RECOGNIZED

Retail Council of Canada (RCC) proudly announces the winners of the 33rd Annual Canadian Grand Prix New Product Awards. Honoured at the Canadian Grand Prix New Products Gala, this year’s 41 category winners represent a cross-section of Canadian food and grocery innovators delivering quality and creativity that is reshaping what ends up on Canadian shelves.

“For 33 years, this program has been the benchmark for food and grocery innovation in Canada, and the standard keeps rising,” said Kim Furlong, president and CEO, Retail Council of Canada. “This year’s winners reflect exactly what Canadian companies are capable of: products that meet consumers where they are, with quality and ingenuity that earns a place in the basket.” ●

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MEAT, EGG & SEAFOOD FARMER'S FINEST FREE RUN DARK YOLK SPARKS EGGS 	FRESH AND REFRIGERATED PREPARED FOODS LADLES OF LOVE SOUP VICTORY'S KITCHEN LTD. 	COFFEE & TEA MEXICO COFFEE CAFÉ WILLIAM 	SNACK (SWEET) FREEZE-DRIED YOGURT CRUNCH OHME! 
BEVERAGES HAPPY PLANET FRUIT SMOOTHIE HAPPY PLANET 	DESSERTS DEMETRES ICE CREAM DEMETRES 	SNACK (SAVORY) HARDBITE POTATO STICKS HARDBITE POTATO CHIPS 	CONDIMENTS & SAUCES HEINZ MAYONNAISE-STYLE SAUCE KRAFT HEINZ 
BAKING NEEDS AND DRIED BAKERY READY-TO-BAKE MIXES COLLECTION MAISON ORPHÉE 	FROZEN ENTREES ZABIHA HALAL FIRE CRISP SPICY CHICKEN NUGGETS MAPLE LODGE FARMS LTD 	NON-FOOD WINNERS	PAPER, PLASTIC, FOIL & WOOD CASCADES FLUFF EXCELLENCE CASCADES 
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NEW PRODUCT AWARDS**

WINNERS



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By: Lynsey Walker, VP Marketing & Communications, CHFA

Canadians Are Rethinking Wellness — and Demanding Proof



Lynsey Walker, vice-president, marketing & communications, CHFA.

From functional foods to targeted supplements and emerging wellness products, consumers are being presented with more choice — and more claims — than ever before. WGSN predicts the global health and wellness industry will grow by more than \$542 billion between 2023 and 2030, reaching a market size of 10.06 trillion USD.¹ But as the category grows, so does consumer scrutiny — bringing in a new era of accountability for wellness brands and retailers alike.

Earlier this year, CHFA commissioned new research to better understand how Canadians are navigating this growing wellness marketplace. We wanted to find out what builds trust, where confidence is breaking down and what consumers now expect from brands and retailers.

What's becoming increasingly clear is that consumers are no longer responding to wellness marketing at face value.

Terms like “natural” and “clean” may once have signalled credibility, but many Canadians now view vague language as marketing unless it is backed by proof. In fact, 20 per cent of Canadians say their trust in product claims has declined over the last two to three years, with nearly two-thirds citing the overuse of wellness buzzwords as the primary reason².

While 53 per cent of Canadians say they trust product claims, only five per cent strongly trust them — revealing how fragile consumer trust has become in an increasingly crowded wellness marketplace.³

At the same time, consumers are becoming much clearer about what actually builds credibility. When asked what would most increase trust in product claims or certifications, 44 per cent of Canadians pointed to scientific evidence or clinical research supporting claims. Other leading trust-builders included brand reputation, transparency around ingredients, sourcing and production practices, endorsements from qualified health professionals and the ability to verify certification details online.⁴

The message from consumers is clear: proof matters more than positioning.

Canadians increasingly expect transparency around ingredients, sourcing and formulation — and they want claims backed by evidence. For brands and retailers alike, trust is no longer a nice-to-have; it is quickly becoming one of the industry's most important competitive differentiators.

That also creates a growing responsibility for retailers. As consumers navigate this crowded marketplace, retailers are often helping bridge the gap between product

claims and consumer understanding. Shoppers are asking harder questions — about ingredients, sourcing, efficacy and verification — and retailers have an opportunity to provide educated guidance they can trust. In this environment, transparency, product education and credibility matter not just for brands, but for the retail partners helping consumers make informed decisions.

That shift is also reshaping how retailers evaluate the brands they bring to shelf. Retailers need confidence not only in the products themselves, but in the founders, sourcing practices and claims behind them. Product knowledge and direct access to brands have become critical.

That's one reason trade shows like CHFA NOW continue to play such an important role across the natural, organic and wellness industry. They provide retailers with unmatched opportunities for direct conversations, deeper product education and the ability to ask questions that can't always be answered through packaging or online research alone.

Events like CHFA NOW help retailers discover emerging products, have face-to-face conversations to better understand brands, ingredient sourcing and formulation, evaluate the credibility behind product claims and build the confidence needed to make informed purchasing decisions for their customers.

The wellness industry is entering a new phase — one where transparency, education and accountability truly matter. The opportunity ahead is not simply to meet consumer demand, but to rebuild trust through authentic connection and credible information.

CHFA NOW returns to Toronto September 25–27, 2026, bringing together retailers, brands and industry leaders. Through CHFA's VIP Retailer Program, retailers gain exclusive opportunities to connect directly with brands, discover innovative products and deepen the product knowledge needed to confidently support today's wellness consumer.

Retailers can register by August 28 to access VIP Retailer benefits at CHFA NOW Toronto.

Visit chfanow.ca/Toronto to learn more.



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¹ Cano, A., & Medeiros, C. (2025, July 8). Global consumer sentiments: Health & wellness. WGSN. <https://www.wgsn.com/insight/article/6821b5f4746cc9742afe6853>
² Canadian Health Food Association. (2026). Trust, transparency and trade offs.
³ Canadian Health Food Association. (2026). Trust, transparency and trade offs.
⁴ Canadian Health Food Association. (2026). Trust, transparency and trade offs.





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Standing Tall

Alberta's food industry sturdy and strong

The Alberta food industry remains robust, thanks to a combination of industry innovation and ongoing government support.

"Agriculture is a massive economic driver for our province, and our agriculture exports remain strong," says Ken Gossen, executive director, food and bio processing branch, Alberta Food Centre. "We continue to see a growing demand for Alberta's agricultural products."

Nurturing Development

The Alberta Food Centre plays a key role in the province's ag industry.

"Through product and process development, interim processing, incubation, industry driven applied research and business development services, the Food and Bio Processing Branch supports growth of Alberta's value-added food

and bio product sectors using Alberta's primary agricultural commodities," says Gossen.

Gossen cites global geopolitical developments as helping to drive demand for Canadian food products and food affordability, with tech also playing an increasing role. He also identifies high-protein and high-fibre products as hot commodities, along with increased demand for local foods.

"Alberta is focused on supporting farm productivity, strengthening supply chains and building long-term security to help increase affordability for consumers," says Gossen. "Investments in innovation, irrigation and value-added processing improve supply stability, reduce production risks, and may help moderate food prices in the long term."

According to Gossen, Alberta has attracted \$4.4 billion in new investment

in agri-food processing since 2022. Nearly half of that is due to the province's Agri-Processing Investment Tax Credit.

"A big part of what we do is promoting Alberta's welcoming business environment and the services and incentives we offer," says Gossen, who adds that a Growing Greenhouses grant program, designed to increase domestic fruit and vegetable production, has just been added to the mix.

Geared for Growth

The Alberta Food Processing Association (AFPA) is another entity focused on nurturing development and innovation in the province's \$28 billion+ food and beverage industry.

A couple AFPA programs designed to foster this growth include the Made In Alberta and SCALE programs. The former underlines the fact that \$66 of every \$100 spent locally remains in the province.

“We’ve seen a real uptick in the use of our Made in Alberta web site traffic,” says AFPA Executive Director Bianca Parsons. “After the U.S. tariffs were announced, we saw our web traffic jump from 5,000 hits a month to over a million.”

The AFPA’s Made in Alberta app has also seen significant adoption since its launch in December 2025.

“People still want the comfort of knowing where that product comes from,” says Parsons.

The aforementioned SCALE program is an AFPA-led initiative designed to boost the competitiveness of Alberta’s food and beverage processing SMEs. Funded by Prairies Economic Development Canada and Alberta Innovates, the program provides coaching, training, technology adoption support and tiered funding opportunities to help processors improve productivity, access new markets, strengthen food safety systems and prepare for growth.

Since launching, SCALE has generated strong industry interest, with 114 companies registered so far. Through 2028, the program aims to support more than 100 Alberta food and beverage SMEs, facilitate technology adoption projects, unlock between \$5 million and \$10 million in new sales, and contribute to the creation and

sustainment of approximately 150 jobs across the province’s food processing sector.

New Directions

Innovation can often be hard to define. And according to Parsons, it is no different in the province’s food and beverage industry.

“Innovation is so unique in our industry,” she says. “It can be a farmer now using drones or a company using eye scan technology to gauge employee fatigue.”

Current growth areas, according to Parsons, include new non-alcoholic drinks, hot sauces, gourmet-style frozen foods and pet foods.

“Many consumers have opted to switch to different brands or cuts of meat in these economic times but very few people are willing to switch their pet foods,” she says. “Consumers remain loyal to pet food brands

so we’re seeing that market, among others, continue to grow.”

Insider Insight

Although the industry felt a big loss when Nortera closed its Lethbridge frozen and canned vegetable processing facility in June of this year, it also experienced some big gains with new opening and announcements.

Factor Meals, one of Canada’s ready-

to-eat brands, officially opened a new 50,000 square foot kitchen and distribution centre in Calgary in June of this year. The state-of-the-art facility establishes localized production in Western Canada. It represents a major economic investment in the region and creates 400 new jobs.

Construction is also underway on a new Edmonton-area facility for Crust Craft. The artisan bread and baked goods company is investing \$51 million in a 120,000+ square foot facility that will increase production capacity, integrate advanced baking technologies, and open new market opportunities worldwide across North America. The project is expected to have a total economic impact of \$70 million and to contribute an estimated \$29 million to the region’s GDP.

Alberta’s food and beverage industry is also seeing growth on the retail side. Loblaw recently announced a \$2.4 billion investment in the country’s economy in 2026, with plans to build 70 new stores and to create over 9,000 jobs.

The investment is part of the company’s five-year plan to invest a total of \$10 billion in Canadian communities by 2030.



Recently opened No Frills store in Lloydminster, Alberta.

The 2026 investment will include 24 new stores and more than 3,400 jobs in Western Canada alone.

“Alberta is a key market for Loblaw and an important part of our long-term growth strategy,” says Sharla Paraskevopoulos, SVP Loblaw Real Estate. “We continue to see strong demand for affordable food, pharmacy services and healthcare offerings province wide.”

Canadian Superstore is close to opening a new 99,459-square-foot location situated in Tsuut’ina Nation, marking Alberta’s first Superstore in collaboration with an Indigenous community. It is set to open in Fall 2026.



Alberta grown and Alberta owned, Freson Bros. provides fresh food and convenient options.

Last September marked the 75th anniversary for another long-time Alberta grocer. Founded in 1955, Freson Bros has expanded from its humble beginnings as a small and modest butcher shop into a thriving family grocery chain with stores all across the province. The family-run grocery company currently has 16 locations.

Indeed, in response to explosive population growth in the last several years, Alberta is undergoing a major grocery expansion. Costco has opened a new location at Bingham Crossing, located between the western edge of Calgary and Harmony. A brand-new 40,000-square-foot Calgary Co-op store is under construction as part of a mixed-use development, expected to be completed in 2027. A new Walmart Supercentre located in Tsuut’ina Nation just outside Calgary, is expected to begin construction in 2026 for a 2027 opening.

In Edmonton the Real Canadian Superstore now has a building permit issued in June 2026 for a store located at 20111 Maskêkosihk Tr. NW, with an anticipated opening in late 2027. Andy’s Valleyview IGA, a beloved west-end grocery store, is making a comeback at its old home (9106 142nd St. NW). Following the closure of L’Oca Quality Market, new IGA signage has been approved and the store is currently under construction to reopen.

In Canmore, a new 22,000-square-foot IGA is expected to open this summer at the Gateway at Three Sisters.

Tried and True

The current geopolitical climate is certainly adding more confusion to an already complex environment. Other factors are also at play.

Despite this, Parsons continues to believe in the strength and endurance of an industry built and nurtured with strong support and leading-edge innovation.

“These are complicated times for the industry,” concludes Parsons, who cites Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), tariffs and Artificial Intelligence (AI) as examples of pressing issues. “But the one thing that our industry has shown time and time again is our resiliency and our ability to grow towards different opportunities.” ●



Bianca Parsons, executive director, AFPA.





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Doritos Ketchup is Back!

After four years off shelves, Doritos Ketchup is back as a true Canadian favourite from Doritos, part of PepsiCo Canada's portfolio of brands — one that never lost relevance



or purchase intent. Kept alive across comments, DMs and social feeds, the flavour has maintained continuous consumer pull, signalling demand that didn't need rebuilding.

Now back and bolder than ever for a limited time, Doritos Ketchup delivers the flavour Canadians have been waiting for, with a sharper tang, sweeter tomato taste and more flavour packed into every chip. That sustained momentum converts into immediate action at shelf,

driving trips and encouraging stock-up behaviour across formats, from single-serve to Costco packs.

For more information: www.doritos.com

The Little Potato Company Launches New “A Little Homestyle Ranch Microwave Ready Kits”

The Little Potato Company is adding a new staple to its beloved Microwave Ready Kit lineup: A Little Homestyle Ranch.

“Ranch is the number one dressing flavour in the country, and potatoes are the number one side dish — it's the perfect pairing,” said Angela Santiago, CEO and co-founder of The Little Potato Company. “Our new kit makes it easy to get a family-friendly dish in five minutes, leaving more time to enjoy the little moments together.” Like every kit in The Little Potato Company's Microwave Ready lineup, A Little Homestyle Ranch is made for ease. Each tray comes with one pound of pre-washed, perfectly sized Little Potatoes and a classic ranch seasoning pack for a comforting, family-friendly flavour in a steamable tray.



For more information: www.littlepotatoes.com

Kraft Dinner Ramen

Kraft Dinner has been the unofficial taste of Canadian comfort for generations. Now, the iconic brand is entering its ramen era...

Meet KD Ramen: KD's newest product drop that takes its iconic signature flavour beyond mac n' cheese and into an entirely new category. Available ONLY in Canada, the new lineup brings the unmistakable taste of KD to the ramen aisle in a surprising new format inspired by one of the internet's favourite food obsessions: cheesy ramen. Unexpected? Absolutely. One thing's for sure: KD Ramen is bound to get Canadians talking.



The new KD Ramen lineup includes three craveable varieties:

- **Cheesy Ramen:** A perfect blend of the unmistakable cheesiness of KD and savoury, bold ramen flavour, packed with umami and a subtle spice.
- **Extra Cheesy:** For those who love KD, but don't like spice. The same familiar comforting flavours of mild ramen combined with even more of the KD cheese you know and love.
- **Extra Spicy:** For fans who want to dial up the heat. KD Ramen Extra Spicy features just enough spice for ramen lovers, then cools it down with the creaminess of KD, so you keep coming back for more.

Ramen has emerged as a growing food obsession among Canadians, with cheesy ramen gaining traction on social platforms like TikTok and becoming a popular food trend. Inspired by this flavour combination that consumers have already embraced, KD Ramen is the brand's take on the cheesy ramen experience, combining the familiar cheesy flavour of KD with the comfort and convenience of ramen.

For more information: kraftdinner.ca

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AFPA	45	Elman's Food Products	32	OGGI Foods Inc	33
BeeMaid Honey Ltd	34	Great Little Box Company	42	OHME	39
Biro Manufacturing Company	7	Guru Lucky Snacks	9	Olaf Packaging Group Inc	44
Biscuits LeClerc Lte	28	Italpasta Ltd - Italpasta	31	Pattison Food Group Ltd	39
California Prunes	3	Keurig Dr Pepper Canada	IBC	Spark's Eggs, division of Golden	
Canada Beef	22	KidStar Nutrients	18	Valley Foods Ltd	40
Canprev & Orange Naturals	OBC	Kraft Canada	1FC, 15, 17, 19	Teja Foods Group	29, 42
Cavendish Farms	25	Kruger Products	27	The Ice Cream Depot Ltd	32
CHFA	11	Maple Lodge Farms Ltd	37	Uncle Hemmy BBQ	45
Discovery Organics	7	Medallion Milk	24		



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