

# Food News

April 2024

## Agriculture and Irrigation News

### Finding an Ingredient Supplier

On March 6, Lindsay Sutton, a technical account manager at IMCD Canada, and Shazia Dhanji, a senior compliance officer at the Canadian Food Inspection Agency delivered a webinar to help food companies understand how and why to work with ingredient suppliers.

Sutton explained why food companies need to change the way they source ingredients as they grow, such as:

- Scalability
- Different ingredient choices
- New processes
- Shelf-life stability
- Freeze/thaw
- Package type
- Longer route to customer
- New retailer requirements
- Fine tuning prices and margins for profitability
- Certifications such as organic, natural, sustainable, etc.

When food companies are getting started, Sutton suggested working with an ingredient distributor rather than a direct supplier. A distributor can meet the large minimum orders and extended lead times direct suppliers require. Then the distributor can sell smaller quantities to smaller food companies and offer technical assistance on ingredient functionality and compatibility. Distributors also have food scientists who can help scale up a product, streamline a process or assess proper packaging to extend shelf life.

Dhanji showcased the Supplier Food Safety Assurance Program (SFSA). She said a food company would set up an SFSA with each ingredient supplier as a control measure to receive safe and suitable ingredients. The SFSA establishes a formal agreement with the supplier and defines ingredient specifications.

There were a key takeaways from the webinar:

- quality ingredients equal quality products
- find the right supplier
- working with the supplier's food scientists and technicians is working smart
- setting up an SFSA program builds trust between a food company and an ingredient supplier.

## Alberta Food Processors Association



### Alberta Food & Beverage Awards Nominations Open

Do you produce an outstanding ingredient, beverage or food product within Alberta? Considering entering it in the Alberta Food & Beverage Awards. There are 13 categories to choose from. Products will be judged by an expert panel on four criteria:

1. product quality in its prepared stage
2. taste and appearance
3. packaging and overall appeal
4. unique selling features.

Winners will be announced on June 14 at the Alberta Food Processors Association's anniversary gala in Edmonton.

**Nomination deadline:** April 22, 2024

**Nominate products:** [Follow the instruction in the awards package.](#)

### AFPA 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala and Alberta Food & Beverage Awards

*June 14, 2024*

The Alberta Food Processors Association (AFPA) is hosting a gala event to celebrate its 50-year legacy. The evening will feature the "Best of Alberta" food and beverage awards with winning products from across the province. Attend this special event to honour those who have paved the way for food processors in Alberta and celebrate the best products in the market.

**Location:** Renaissance Hotel, 4236 36 Street E, Edmonton International Airport, AB T9E 0V4

**Register:** [Fill out the registration form and request tickets.](#)

## FPDC gives Seven Spice peace of mind

What started off as a home-made gift for friends and family quickly turned into a viable business for Calgary-based mother-daughter duo Anna and Natalia Lazic. The pair created a chili oil using sunflower oil as a base and infusing it with garlic, pepper flakes, coconut and other aromatic spices. The spicy condiment received rave reviews, which motivated them to seek assistance from the Food Processing Development Centre (FPDC) seven years ago to help establish Seven Spice Ltd. The company name was born from Anna and her husbands' Yugoslavian heritage and love of experimenting with flavours in their kitchen.

As a registered dietitian, daughter Natalia's main goal was to offer a high-quality chili oil – something she couldn't easily find in the Canadian marketplace. The FPDC helped Seven Spice refine the original chili oil formulation on the benchtop. Then they assisted in scaling up production to create inventory for sale at farmers' markets in mid-2017.



*Photo courtesy of Seven Spice Ltd.*

During their time working with the FPDC, the Lazics have developed mild, hot, and extra hot chili oils made with local ingredients. The products only have 30 mg of salt per teaspoon of oil. There is no monosodium glutamate, preservatives, artificial flavorings or additives. With an 18-month shelf life, the Lazics have managed to create a product that is so versatile it can be used as a dip, spice, or base in a variety of cuisines. While most chili oils are developed for Asian cooking, Seven Spice products complement other foods like pizzas and pierogies.

"Fun fact," says Natalia. "Our mild chili oil was a happy accident that was created when one of the first batches of the original chili oil was mistakenly produced with milder chili peppers." The experience taught the Lazics to double check raw ingredients and taste the final product. Instead of rejecting the mild batch, they decided to market it. "Currently, half our sales come from the mild variety," says Natalia. "We

offer a product for everyone, at every heat level, which gives us a competitive advantage."

The company produces its oils using the FPDC's interim processing services based on a daily fee. "When you're first starting off, the FPDC is the best place to process product," says Natalia. "We bring in our own staff and get to work with actual scientists and technologists who help us develop the products and processes."

The Lazics' positive experience working with the FPDC is largely credited to food scientist Craig Bansema. "I really value Craig's expertise," says Natalia. "He's a great problem-solver who's incredibly knowledgeable about condiments and has helped us save money producing our chili oils."

The Lazics book as much time as they need throughout the year to manufacture, package and distribute Seven Spice products. At this point, the company is able to process its monthly inventory in just one day. Interim processing at the FPDC has given the Lazics peace of mind. "With the facility being federally licensed and inspected, we can trust that every jar meets the highest food safety standards," Natalia says. "That's very important because it gives us the opportunity to sell products across Canada."

While working with the FPDC, the Lazics have received marketing and business development expertise. With this guidance, they have expanded sales from farmers' markets to large retailers. Now consumers can find Seven Spice products on shelves at the Italian Centre, Co-op, Safeway, Sobeys, IGA and Amaranth Foods.

As their products gain uptake in the Canadian market, the Lazics hope to own their own facility or look into co-packing to satisfy increasing demand. For now, they feel like the FPDC is the right place to be. "We feel very lucky and grateful to have been here for as long as we have," says Natalia. "The FPDC has given us the peace of mind and safe, reliable products to grow our business."



*Photo courtesy of Seven Spice Ltd.*

## Webinars, events and programs

### AFPA

#### Workplace Safety Virtual Training

- Hazard Assessment & Control – *April 3*
- Incident & Accident Investigation – *April 10*
- Safety Auditor – *May 7-8*
- SQF Code 9 Internal Auditor – *May 27-28*
- GMP PC HACCP Implementation – *June 5-6*

**Register:** [Email AFPA](mailto:melody@afpa.com) or contact Melody at [melody@afpa.com](mailto:melody@afpa.com) for more information.

#### Municipal Sponsored Webinar Recognizing and Supporting Beneficial Insects in Horticulture

*April 9, 2024 – 7:00 p.m.*

Join this webinar to learn how to recognize and support beneficial insects in horticulture. You will also find out about pollination, pest management, and nutrient cycling. The speakers will discuss how to preserve, conserve, and even augment specific insect populations to support plant and soil health. Pre-registration is required.

**Speaker:** Ken Fry, Entomology Instructor at Olds College

**Registration deadline:** April 9, 2024

**Register:** [Sign up for this free webinar](#) or contact Greenview Agricultural Services Department at 780-524-7621.

#### THRIVE Academy Academy IV Demo Day Alberta

*April 11, 2024 – 4:00-7:00 p.m.*

The THRIVE Academy is 12-week pre-accelerator program designed to support pre-seed and early-stage agrifood tech startups in commercializing their innovations. Attend Demo Day Alberta to engage with 15 agrifood tech companies from around the world and learn how they are using cutting edge technologies to disrupt the industry.

**Location:** 119 12 Avenue SW, Calgary, AB T2R 0G8

**Register:** [Get tickets for the free workshop.](#)

#### AFPA Food Forum: Food Safety & Marketing Conference

*April 17 & 30, 2024*

This conference is aimed at elevating food safety and business brilliance within the food industry. Speakers will address food safety, testing, labelling, and identifying non-conformities in GFSI audits. Participants will also find out how to enhance a company's online marketing presence and deal with cyber-security and artificial intelligence in the digital age. AdFarm will provide the keynote and share new

innovations in ag marketing. The conference will take place on April 17 in Calgary and April 30 in Edmonton.

**Location:** Royal Hotel, 2828 23 Street NE, Calgary, AB T2E 8T4 and Edmonton Expo Centre, 7515 118 Avenue, Edmonton, AB T5B 0J2

**Register:** [Get the conference package, rates and form.](#)

#### Agriculture and Irrigation Course Value-added Poultry Processing

*June 11 & 12, 2024*

Attend this course in person to learn about poultry meat quality, protein functionality, food safety and regulations. During the two days, you will participate in classroom sessions and demonstrations on processing techniques. When complete the course you will receive a certificate.

**Speaker:** American Meat Science Association

**Location:** Food Processing Development Centre, 6309 45 Street, Leduc, AB T9E 7C5

**Fee:** \$950 per person including course materials, two lunches and a group dinner the first day.

**Register:** [Get more information and book your spot.](#)

#### Small Scale Food Processor Association Venture-Capital Ready: Investment Training for Women Entrepreneurs

*Ongoing*

This 12-week virtual program is a new Canada-wide initiative for women entrepreneurs in the agri-food space. You will receive resources and support to move forward with your business plan. There are opportunities to network, find a venture capital investor and prepare your pitch.

The Government of Canada subsidizes this free program. There are two steps to check if you are a good fit: you need to register and complete an eligibility assessment online.

**Register:** [Complete the two steps.](#)

#### Health Canada Awareness Initiative

##### Supplemented Food Labelling

Health Canada is encouraging the food industry to share information about supplemented foods and labels. The goal is to raise consumer awareness by helping Canadians understand what these products are and what to look for on the labels. Get involved and share information by:

- Following Health Canada and sharing its posts on Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn and Instagram, and
- Sharing messages, social posts and posters from [Canada's supplemented foods site.](#)