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2022-23

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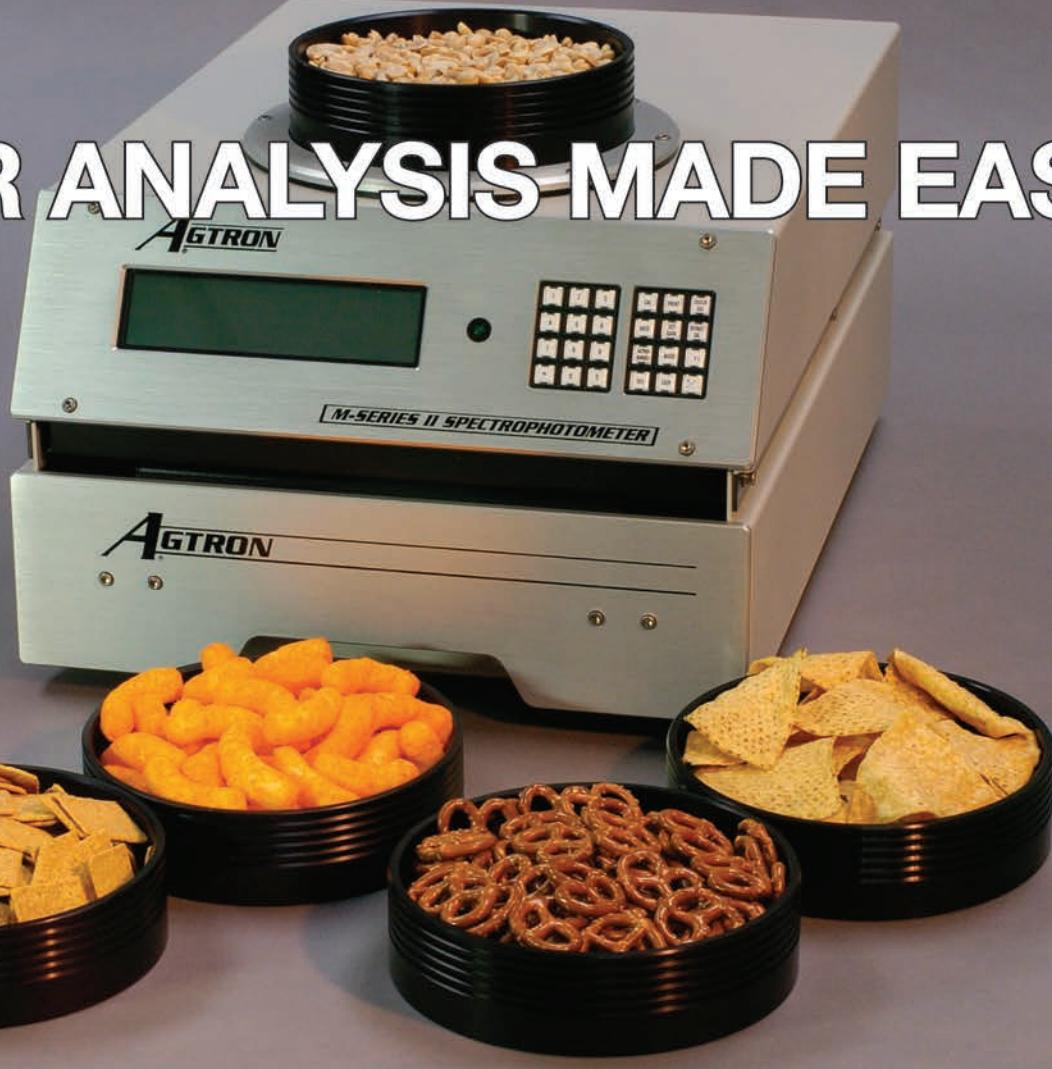


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The official magazine of the Alberta Food Processors Association

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### AFPA in ACTION

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**Eric Haak**  
AFPA Chair  
Sunrise Bakery Ltd.

## Why not help each other to make Alberta a Canadian food and beverage-producing powerhouse, where we will all benefit?

### HELLO AFPA MEMBERS,

Your AFPA has been active over the last year, fielding all kinds of requests and inquiries as we have been shaking off the effects of a dark few years of operation within our industry. We continue to face logistics challenges, both with shipping and the availability of certain supplies, labour shortages, and now cash flow issues with rising interest rates.

For those in our industry, we have seen gains and losses. We have spoken to those who have continued to grow their business as consumer demand has risen in certain realms and others who have been adversely affected by the demanding times.

We, as a board, continue to look for ways as an association to play the best supportive role, and we always have that on our minds. We have added four new members to our board, and we are excited about the additional support in developing programs and events that will be fuel for our members. We are working on getting back to face-to-face networking and events where we can again touch base with old friends as well as make new ones. We are planning upcoming opportunities for members to showcase their products, including associate members as valued contributors to our industry.

Once again, this year we have provided the industry with workplace health and safety training and support,

and we have helped many with their food safety needs. We continue to speak with members on a daily basis, helping them navigate the ever-changing regulatory landscapes with many levels of involvement from various governing bodies. This year will be a year of additional programs fueled by the possibility of government grants, and we will be rolling up our sleeves to produce additional support to the food industry.

We continue to develop online training at our AFPA On Demand portal. We are focusing on co-packing to help bring together Alberta companies that are looking to have products made with the Alberta companies that can make them. Why not help each other to make Alberta a Canadian food and beverage-producing powerhouse, where we will all benefit? We are also focusing on your labour needs to help identify workforce challenges and develop strategies to address these challenges.

As a board, we are excited about moving forward, and we are proud to serve this vital component of Alberta's prominence as an economic force in the nation. Working alongside our members and associates is truly an honour!

**Eric Haak**  
AFPA Chair  
Sunrise Bakery Ltd.



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# THE SECRET'S IN THE SAUCE:

## HOW SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS ARE SPICING UP THE WORLD OF ONLINE MARKETING



With nearly half of the global population currently registered as a user of one social media platform or another, the reach of online influencers has become a global trend no business can afford to turn their eyes away from. It is estimated that 46% of all internet users look to social networks when making purchasing decisions. Social media marketing has become the go-to method for driving website traffic, increasing sales, and building brand recognition.

The ever-expanding pool of online content creators stretches far beyond the vast reach of Hollywood A-listers. Online influencers come in all shapes and sizes and span across every niche and genre. Unlike celebrities, influencers can be anyone. They can be anywhere. Every industry has influential people — those who have developed a reputation for their experience and expertise, whose tastes and opinions are valued by others. Sure, an influencer may be a leading Hollywood actress or a famous fashion photographer, but they may just as easily be a hard-working,



Aqueena Clenett has grown her Instagram account (@aqueenathekitchen) to more than 12,000 followers.

home-cooking housewife with a flare for photography and a passion for sharing recipes online.

Aqueena Clenett is a farmwife and mother of two from East Central Alberta — a world away from those Hollywood hills. A social media influencer in her own right, Clenett has built a dedicated Instagram following of over 12,000 users. Her website <https://aqueenathekitchen.com> is filled with quality, affordable recipes made of simple ingredients that are accessible to everyone.

"As a small-town girl, using locally sourced ingredients is a major focus of mine," Clenett says. "Being an hour and a half east of Edmonton, it simply isn't practical for me to 'run into the city' to buy an ingredient."

She says it all started out quite organically. The oldest daughter of eight kids, Clenett's whole life has been spent making food for large groups. After studying sales and agriculture in university, she moved back to the farm and decided to put her skills to work. Incorporating her love

Did you know that AFPA has an "Ask Me Anything" series for members to learn about social media marketing, HR and hiring, funding, and more! If you have a question about how to put social media to work for your business, email [info@afpa.com](mailto:info@afpa.com) to get the learning started.

for food photography and a passion for teaching others how to create and serve large meals in the field for farm workers, Clenett created her Meals in the Field Guide, a comprehensive handbook of recipes and serving tips, covering everything from what to serve to how to transport it to the field.

She began sharing photos and links of her recipes to her Instagram page (@aqueenathekitchen), quickly amassing a dedicated number of likes

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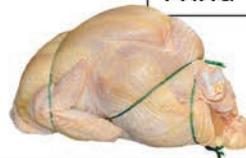
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and followers. Before long, her inbox was full of messages from people she had never met asking everything from which blender to buy to which brand of flour to use. As her number of followers grew, so too did the notice she received from suppliers and retailers looking to her to help promote their products.

In July 2022, she was approached by the retail giant Co-op to act as a brand ambassador. In exchange for monthly gift cards, Clenett produces recipes using Co-op brands and products then shares them online with her followers.

"I'm not going to share something unless it is valuable to my audience," Clenett says. "There are lots of brands out there that post things simply to fill their content calendar. I try to respect my audience's time. That way, they know when they see a post from me that it's something they will want to click on."

"Any product I promote has to be something I would use," she continues. "It's not just about quality and affordability, but accessibility, too."

Although 70% of her website audience is made up of American viewers, much of Clenett's Instagram following is right here in Alberta. As a small-town consumer herself, Clenett is careful to promote quality products that are readily available to her target audience.

Today's social media landscape can be a sales-pitch minefield. It is estimated some 50 million people worldwide consider themselves to be content creators. The instant we log in, online consumers are bombarded with advertisements — companies seeking to sell us products and services we didn't even know we needed. Understanding your target audience and developing content that speaks directly to them is key to sorting through all that noise.

As the industry has expanded, so too has the consumer appetite for authentic, down-to-earth content. A good social media influencer will focus on what they know and what they do best. With so many content creators out there, online consumers



*On her website and social media, Aqueena Clenett shares quality, affordable recipes — like fluffy waffles with whipped cream — made of simple ingredients.*



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have developed a real knack for telling which influencers are genuine and who is only in it for a buck.

For Maddie and Kiki Longo, a sister team of grilling sensations out of the Greater Toronto Area, just being themselves has served as the secret-in-the-sauce behind their barbecue brand from the very beginning.

"It's all about being authentic," Maddie says. "Just be yourself, and an audience that can relate to that will find you."

Ranked among the top 10 barbecue experts in North America, Maddie and Kiki have an energy that translates just as clearly off camera as it does on.

"People are always asking us if we're actually like this in real life, which is funny to me," Kiki says, "because I forget the camera is even on most of the time!"

With nearly 46,000 Instagram followers, a devoted following of YouTube subscribers, and more television and media appearances under their belt than they can count, these BBQ Queens from the Great White North are self-proclaimed "content



*Maddie and Kiki Longo are ranked among the top 10 barbecue experts in North America.*

machines" with major brands like the barbecue retailing giant Weber taking notice.

Growing up with a love of grilling that they inherited from their mother, the sisters say creating recipes and developing their technique

was a side hustle for a long time. Then one day, they pitched the idea of a show to their local television station. They paid for it all themselves and volunteered their time shooting evenings and weekends while still working their full-time day jobs. In 2015, they bought a propane barbecue and started travelling around, grilling up recipes and sharing their content to their Instagram page (@maddieandkiki).

One day at a local barbecue event, the marketing and social media director at Weber approached them. Maddie and Kiki signed a two-year contract and were flown to Chicago to take part in the Weber training program, where they became certified grill masters. As part of the arrangement, the sisters were paid to create social media content and attend cooking events as Weber brand ambassadors.

"It was a slow progression," Maddie says. "But once we started to heat up, we were cooking with gas."

At the end of that two-year contract, the sisters set their eyes on diversifying the list of brands they wished to work with.

"When you work with just one brand, you can't always give your honest feedback on what's the best



*Grilling sensations Maddie and Kiki Longo are self-proclaimed "content machines," with major brands taking notice.*

product to use," Maddie says. "Eventually you start to lose credibility."

"It's important to us to have diversity in the brands we work with," Kiki adds.

Working with social media influencers is a two-way street. When reputation and credibility are the name of the game, it's important for the brand marketing their products as well as for the influencers promoting them that their visions and controls around those products align. With their own line of Great Bear barbecue products and a new web series, BBQ Happy Place, just about to hit YouTube, Maddie and Kiki can afford to be selective with which brands they work with and how they spend their time building their brand.

"If I were a company trying to sell a product, I would ask myself, 'Can I see my product in their hands? Do I feel confident this person is going to reflect my brand in the way I would reflect it?'" Maddie says.

"At the end of the day, people care about people," Kiki says. "Humour, authenticity, personality, and trust — those are the things an audience can relate to."

And if personality is what you're looking for, look no further than Melvin Chmilar Jr., the grill master sensation behind the Dark Side of the Grill. Chmilar's quirky antics (picture his wife's blue bathrobe, a flamethrower, and a lifelong love of anything Star Wars), and mouth-watering cooks have earned him a solid reputation as Canada's BBQ King.

A journeyman welder by trade, Chmilar can also trace his love for cooking straight back to his family kitchen.

"It all started with making pickles in the kitchen with my Baba," he says.

In his early twenties, Chmilar started barbecuing for staff lunches and safety meetings at work. One day, he noticed one of the kids in the wash bay snapping pictures of his creations.

"He laughed and told me, 'Every time I post pictures of your food on Instagram, I get more followers,'" Chmilar says.



*Melvin Chmilar Jr. is the grill master sensation behind the Dark Side of the Grill.*

With that, Chmilar set out to learn from what others were doing. He set up his own Instagram account (@darksideofthegrill) and within a few months had amassed over 4,000 followers.

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Melvin Chmilar Jr. has an Instagram following of more than 80,000 (@darksideofthegrill), nearly 8,000 YouTube subscribers, and endorsements with companies.

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The first brand to approach him was Dalstrong. Chmilar had purchased a few of the company's products for personal use and would often tag Dalstrong in his posts.

"I never had any intention of being sponsored," he says.

Dalstrong offered to send him some knives in exchange for a give-away contest on his Instagram page, and the rest is history. He still works with the company to this day.

"I've always had a strong moral core, which was easy to transfer into online business," Chmilar says. "There's nothing more important than being true to your brand."

Even now, with more than 80,000 Instagram followers, a hugely successful YouTube channel, endorsements with Heartbeat Hot Sauce, and a spot on the Big Green Egg USA Pro Cook Team, Chmilar "tries to keep his plate pretty empty," he says.

"I'm cautious with who I pick up because at the end of the day, I'm lending my brand to them, not the other way around."

Whether it's grilling for the masses or serving homemade meals in the field, these social media influencers have discovered the secret recipe to connecting with people online: know your audience, be authentic, and above all else, stay true to your brand.

Protecting that brand, Chmilar says, goes beyond just watching what you say.

"Who you are standing next to online is who you are," he says.

What do they stand for? Who do they deal with? In this world of online marketing, where image is everything, keeping that circle tight can make or break an online influencer. It can make or break a business, too.

Social media influencers, at their core, are modern-day networkers. It all comes down to who you know and how you represent your brand. Taking advantage of the broad expanse of potential new clients the online space has to offer is just good business, and staying true to who you are and what you stand for is as tried and true a method as a good old-fashioned handshake.

# AFPA UPDATES:

## LEARNING HUB, CO-PACKING PORTAL, LABOUR MARKET STUDY, AND MUCH MORE

Here at AFPA, we are always on the lookout for new ways to bring added value to you, our membership. When you talk, we listen. In fact, we do more than just listen; we take action.

When our members expressed a need for more readily available online training and safety courses, we responded by introducing AFPA On Demand ([www.afpaondemand.com](http://www.afpaondemand.com)). This is a one-stop hub for online learning content. With courses focused on key food processing areas, such as Good Manufacturing Practices, Workplace Health & Safety, Sanitation, Incident Investigation, and Lock Out Tag Out, AFPA On Demand has become the industry standard for worker training and online safety education. Our extensive selection of online courses is tailored to meet the emerging needs of our industry. Members can connect with AFPA's online safety community, download free training templates and plant signage, and will soon be able to shop our exclusive members-only line of products and services.

As an association, we are constantly receiving inquiries looking for connections to local co-packing services. We recognize that for many of our members, the benefits of co-packing can be significant. Whether it's speeding up production, increasing volume, enhancing efficiencies, or saving on costs, there are plenty of reasons why it makes sense to partner with a co-packer. AFPA also has a relationship with numerous co-packers within our industry, making us the ideal facilitator to bring these groups together.

We will be applying that same "Made for Industry by Industry"



philosophy to our latest value-added member service. AFPA's Co-Packing Portal will be an online directory connecting food and beverage manufacturers from across the country with Alberta co-packers. Accessible in one seamless, stream-lined digital platform, members will be able to log in to AFPA's Co-Packing Portal and select their specific packing needs from a list of co-packing categories all laid out within a customized vendor categorization feature. The feature will include a list of categories such as allergens, required food safety certifications, packaging materials and products, production volume, and much more.

This new tool, supported by our funding partner as well as Farm Credit Canada, MNP, ATB, and BDC, presents a win-win scenario for Alberta's food and beverage industry.

It is AFPA's mission to build the competitive advantage of our members through effective programs that

Big things are coming your way from AFPA! Stay up to date at [www.afpa.com](http://www.afpa.com).

meet the needs of our industry. Our new Co-Packing Portal will do just that. Watch for a launch date coming soon, and get involved!

### WHAT ELSE TO WATCH OUT FOR

AFPA, in partnership with our funding partner, has teamed up with MNP, one of Canada's leading professional services firms, to conduct a labour market assessment of the food and beverage industry in our province. It will analyze the current labour market and create a workforce profile for the industry, develop diversity and inclusion initiatives, and identify human resource development tools and strategies. This multi-phase plan will provide a strategic framework to address concerns related to employment and diversity in our industry.

AFPA is looking for individuals interested in taking part in an advisory committee. Please contact Melody Pashko ([melody@afpa.com](mailto:melody@afpa.com)) for more information.

# SAFER BY DESIGN:

## HOW ALBERTA CAN IMPROVE WORKPLACE SAFETY

By Ed DeGroot

### Improving Workplace Safety



**A**new year is just around the corner, and there's no time like the present to reflect on the past year and look forward to the days ahead. Have your efforts made an impact on your workplace? On your employees' health and safety? What key lessons were learned? What, if any, are your occupational health and safety priorities for 2023?

Health and safety is a company value, not a competing priority. I encourage you to generate enthusiasm and focus on your health and safety commitments over the months ahead.

Alberta Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) legislation sets the minimum standards for all workplaces in the province. When it comes to maintaining safety in workplace environments, so much can change very quickly. It is imperative our industry embraces implementing a formal health and safety program/management system immediately, as it is now an OHS legislated requirement.

Competency requirements are tied into minimum Alberta OHS legislation for workers and supervisors.

Supervisors, or those who direct the work of others (such as the foreman and shift/team lead), are expected to attend hazard assessment and control, incident investigation, and OHS roles and responsibilities training as a foundational competency requirement. They are to lead the hazard process and ongoing reviews, must conduct investigations when required (includes work refusals), and have many legal, ethical, and moral obligations to Alberta OHS, not to mention to the health and welfare of their employees.

Workers must also be provided with adequate job and safety training, and an annual review must be conducted to ensure their safety competency.

Contact AFPA to learn more about these OHS compliance requirements and/or related training.

#### NEW THINGS TO NOTE ABOUT THE NEW LEGISLATION

Any workplace with 20 or more employees is required to establish a formal health and safety program/management system, as well as a health and safety committee. If your workplace has between five and 19 employees, you must designate a

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worker health and safety representative and include hazard assessment and control, employee training, emergency response, inspections, investigations, and other worksite parties.

#### BASIC WORKERS' RIGHTS

Alberta's new OHS legislation includes the following basic rights for workers:

- 1. The Right to Know** (be informed) of worksite hazards, means to control such hazards, emergency response plans, and results of inspections and investigations;
- 2. The Right to Participate** in health and safety activities pertaining to their worksite such as the ability to

express concerns, attend meetings, be involved in inspections, investigations and/or ERP drills, exercises, and development, and to serve on the H&S committee; and

### **3. The Right to Refuse** dangerous work.

## **DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION**

It is now an expectation in all Alberta workplaces that diversity, equity, and inclusion are properly recognized for workers, and that this philosophy further ties into the updated company harassment and violence protocols. There is very specific content/wording required in your company's documentation.

## **THE NEED FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY**

Think there's too much emphasis on health and safety? AFPA believes there is no such thing, but ask your family for that answer and get back to us.

When you address the issue of workplace safety, you must understand that your employees are on loan to your organization from their families. You have legal, ethical, and moral obligations — regardless of any production protocols or customer needs — to provide a safe and healthy working environment for your employees. Above all, you are expected to return them home safely — each day. Training, knowledge, education, evaluating competency, and management support is your responsibility every day.

It is AFPA's mission to assist companies in achieving their necessary and workplace-specific safety program goals. This includes the implementation of a formal health and safety program as well as meeting minimum provincial OHS compliance requirements. AFPA is also here to help you maintain or formally attain the Certificate of Recognition (COR).

AFPA not only advocates on behalf of our members but also is the leading safety resource for Alberta's food and beverage industry. We provide programs that ensure the continuous improvement of workplace health and

safety programs, tied into organizational performance.

AFPA can build a fully compliant, detailed, and comprehensive health and safety management system for your organization, implemented through company leadership with active employee involvement at all levels. Our four-month program provides specific information, training, and program development. Contact us for your safety training, development services, resources, and various materials needs.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY VERSUS FOOD SAFETY (HACCP): WHICH IS MORE IMPORTANT?**

It should be noted that these programs are not in any competition with one another and will often dovetail when it comes to the specific overall requirements within each.

Only Alberta OHS has a legislated and mandatory compliance requirement for all food or beverage operations and organizations. Simply put, it's the law. Other management systems, while meeting very specific regulatory requirements, are still adopted voluntarily. They cannot be and are not legislated, and as such are not the law.

First you implement a safe and healthy working environment, then you produce your safe food products. Alberta OHS is now, was before, and always will be number one, because that is the law!

## **AFPA'S FOOD AND BEVERAGE HEALTH AND SAFETY OFFICER PROGRAM**

AFPA's Food and Beverage Health and Safety Officer designation is for individuals wishing to achieve formal

recognition for their efforts and commitment to workplace safety in our industry. If you or anyone in your organization is interested in earning this designation, contact AFPA for more information.

## **NEW IN 22: FARM SAFETY PROGRAM AND MORE**

Coming soon, AFPA's new Farm Safety Management Program will develop a formal, customized safety management system that covers details such as farm safety policy, OHS/farm and ranch legislation, and basic farm safety requirements. The program will focus on a wide variety of topics, including animals and their environment, dust, dust control, horses, zoonotic disease, ammonia and emissions, methane/silo gases, H2S, respiratory protection, chemicals and their use, air quality, transport of farm equipment, harvest, ATVs, tractors, rollovers, worker safety, working alone, and hand signals.

Included are a manual and an Employee and Operations Farm Safety Handbook with the entire program. These supporting documents make for easy and consistent orientations, training, and operational reference.

In addition to our Farm Safety Management Program, AFPA also provides critical farm safety program documents, such as Emergency Response Plans, Inspections, Investigations, PPE Care and Use Training, 20+ Safe Farm Practices, Basic Fire Exiting Training, Code of Practice-Respirators, Training Posters, Glossary of Terms, Key References, and more.

This program usually takes four to six months to complete, including implementation.

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

**Training Schedule:** Visit [https://afpa.com/whs\\_courses](https://afpa.com/whs_courses) to view the schedule.

**Day of Mourning:** On April 28, 2023, if possible, take a moment of silence at 11 a.m.

**North American Occupational Safety and Health (NAOSH) Week:** Taking place May 1–7, 2023, this event is intended to focus on workplace safety for all operations, which includes office staff. The company can involve their HSC and hold safety meetings, ERP drills, PPE demos, equipment reviews, and more that further recognize the company's H&S program.

**Alberta OHS:** More changes are expected prior to the end of 2023. AFPA will communicate updates as they are received.

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# FOOD SAFETY CERTIFICATION:

## WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GMP, HACCP, GFSI, AND SFCR?

**F**ood safety is an important concern for every food business. When you have a food safety program, you greatly diminish the risks and expenses of a product recall because you can quickly identify what batch of your products are affected by bad quality and only recall those products.

### SAFE FOOD FOR CANADIAN REGULATIONS (SFCR)

Most Canadian food companies needs to comply with the Safe Food for Canadian Regulations (SFCR), a federal standard introduced by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency in January 2019. SFCR covers consumer protections requirements for labelling, packaging, standards of identity, grades, and net quantity.

As the new benchmark for food safety across the country, SFCR applies to food for human consumption (including ingredients) that is imported, exported, or traded across provincial borders for commercial purposes.

"If you have any retail aspirations across Canada, you need to get SFCR licensed," explains Rowda Mohamud, Senior Business Advisor, BDC Advisory Services. "It's a binary scenario: either you have an SFCR licence and are allowed to sell your food products interprovincially, or you don't, and then you stay at home in your own province and you don't grow."

If a major supermarket chain wants to stock your products, then your business must comply with SFCR, as the supermarket chain will likely distribute the product across multiple locations in different provinces. The SFCR licence is like a business permit — you wouldn't want to operate without one — and it helps you grow your business.

To be SFCR licensed, companies must have a rigorous food safety program based on the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) methodology. However, your company doesn't need to be HACCP certified; it only needs to demonstrate that you have implemented the right controls.

### GMP, HACCP, AND GFSI

Think of the different food quality programs as climbing up the stairs. At the foot of the stairs are the GMP, which stands for Good Manufacturing Practices, which is the minimum that any business should have.

GMPs lay the groundwork for the production and preparation of safe food in several general areas, such as pest control, sanitation, and employee hygiene. GMPs can be seen as the equivalent of the prerequisite programs to HACCP.

The main difference between HACCP and GMP is that HACCP adds requirements for risk mitigation around your products and ingredients, as well as requirements for traceability requirements.

HACCP is mostly equivalent to the new government food safety regulations. If you have HACCP certification, you will be well prepared for the SFCR licensing. You don't need to be HACCP certified to be government licensed for export outside your province; you only need to show compliance with SFCR, which are largely HACCP-equivalent.

The next level up from HACCP is the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI), which is a series of norms. The three most popular for Canadian retailers are BRC, SQF, and FSSC 22000. The three are considered equivalent, but businesses will prefer one or the other based on their experience and geographical location.

AFPA has you covered for all your food safety and training needs! In partnership with Food Safety Solutions, we also offer consulting services at discounted members rates. Learn more at [www.afpa.com](http://www.afpa.com) or email [info@afpa.com](mailto:info@afpa.com), and flip to page 22 to learn more about AFPA's custom safety templates.

GFSI norms are even more stringent than those for HACCP, so, for example, they require verification of medical antecedents for employees and a food defence plan. GFSI also has additional requirements for suppliers.

GFSI certification will often open doors to large international clients. "The idea of the GFSI is to facilitate trade by ensuring you have a food safety system that is internationally acceptable and can give confidence to your customers in foreign markets," says Mohamud.

### AN INVESTMENT THAT PAYS OFF

Getting food safety-certified is not just important for keeping your consumers safe and healthy — it keeps your business safe and healthy as well.

*BDC is the bank for Canadian entrepreneurs. It promotes Canadian entrepreneurship with a focus on small and medium-sized businesses; it works with 72,000 entrepreneurs across the country. With its 123 business centres from coast to coast, BDC provides businesses in all industries with financing and advisory services. Its investment arm, BDC Capital, offers equity, venture capital, and flexible growth and transition capital solutions. BDC is also the first financial institution in Canada to receive B Corp certification. To find out more, visit [bdc.ca](http://bdc.ca).*

# FRESON BROS. AN ENDURING LEGACY OF FAMILY, COMMUNITY AND HERITAGE



**F**reson Bros. Ltd. began on October 20, 1955, when Frank Lovsin opened a butcher shop in Hinton, Alberta, with his two partners, Frank and Leo Resek. What started out as a 24 ft. wide by 30 ft. long building on skids with a power plant in the back has grown into the Freson Bros. chain that currently includes 16 stores province wide.

Lovsin's enduring commitment to family, community, and heritage has

served as the driving force behind the Freson Bros. brand these past seven decades. It's a legacy as fresh as the bread on its shelves and as down-home Albertan as the products it sells.

Freson Bros. is not your typical grocery outlet. A visit to one of the stores feels like taking a trip back in time. From the traditional butcher shop and bakery, to the made-from-scratch restaurant and deli department, right down to the vintage vibe and packaging — it's an all-in-one food experience.



*The original store of Freson Market Ltd. opened on October 20, 1955.*



*A visit to Freson Bros., with its traditional butcher shop and bakery, made-from-scratch restaurant and deli department, and vintage packaging, feels like taking a trip back in time.*

In a retail environment where most are focused on doing whatever they can to keep costs down, Freson Bros. has doubled down on its commitment to offer traditional means of preparing food. The company's long cure, long smoke, prepared-from-scratch mentality resonates down to nearly all the products it sells. From its organic whole-grain flour sourced from Sexsmith, Alberta, to its commitment to selling only Alberta beef, pork, and poultry, supporting local is a mainstay behind the Freson Bros. brand.

Of course, staying true to this formula has meant some inevitable challenges, particularly when it comes to the cost of labour. Developing strategic co-packing partnerships has done much to help alleviate that burden. Removing the in-house production of labour-intensive items, such as scratch soups, cookies, and salad dressing, has allowed Freson Bros. to maintain the integrity of its Alberta-based products while keeping costs down. Co-packing allows the company to control the supply while staying true to the values and traditions that give its unique marketplace advantage.

When you are in the game of keeping things local, establishing a trusted network of suppliers and partners is of the utmost importance. Beyond serving as Freson Bros. go-to source for training and food safety training, AFPA has been instrumental in helping the company establish connections

with Alberta suppliers and food processors.

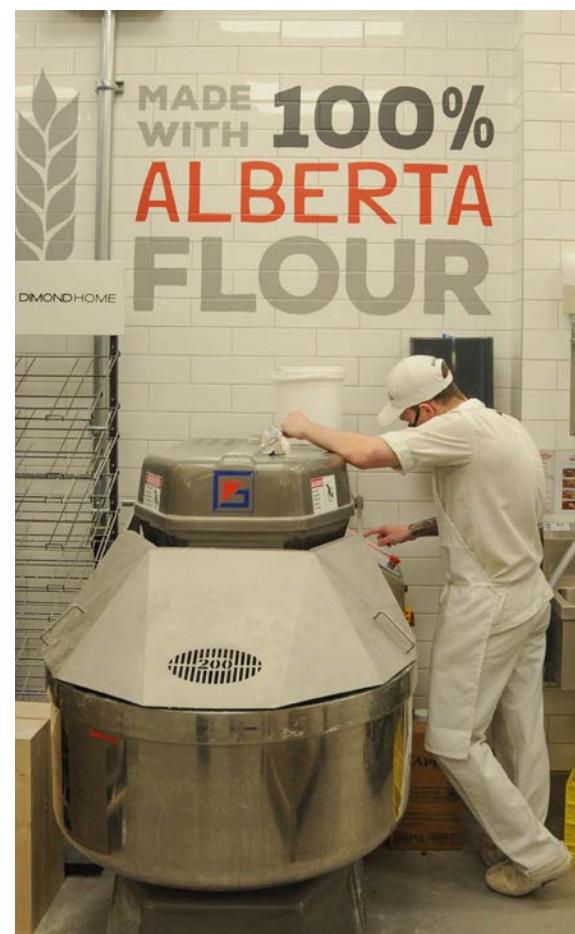
"If I ever need to find who does what in Alberta, AFPA is my go-to source," says Freson Bros. Director Jay Cummings. "They have been a very good partner to us because they are Alberta."

Keeping things local has served as an advantage in many respects for Freson Bros. As it, like all retailers, has been forced to contend with the challenges of the COVID pandemic, sourcing products locally has allowed it to sidestep many of the supply chain issues felt by other retailers. Where 10 years ago only 30% to 50% of their products were locally sourced, now upwards of 80% to 90% of the company's bakery and deli department is sourced right here in Alberta. Things become a lot easier to control when your suppliers are just down the highway, as opposed to thousands of miles away in India or China.

On the labour front, "COVID served to amplify issues that have always been there," says Cummings. "We were able to retain many of our employees, simply for their love of the craft. If you've got a good baker who loves to bake, he can only do that in our stores. If you've got a butcher who loves to cut beef, he can't do that anywhere else."

Without question, an enduring approach to family, community, and heritage continues to serve the company well as Freson Bros. adapts to

the ever-changing grocery landscape. Not unlike Alberta itself, staying true to core principles — quality, hard work, passion, and integrity — has proved a winning formula for Freson Bros. over the years. These are all sentiments alive and well in the very modern business model of this traditional, family-run business.





# HONEY BUNNY INC.

## MAKING A BUZZ BEYOND THE GROCERY STORE SHELVES

**N**estled in the Smoky River Region of Alberta's Peace River Country is the somewhat unassuming town of Falher, Alberta. At first glance, this small community of 1,000 residents may appear like every other sleepy rural town, but take a closer look and you will find a vibrant and buzzing agricultural community.

Known as the "Honey Capital of Canada," aptly named for its cool climate, abundant fields, and long daylight hours allowing more time for bees to forage, Falher is home to a giant 22 ft. high by 22 ft. wide bee statue (the world's largest), which flies high above the town's Main Street. Its annual Honey Festival attracts thousands of visitors for four days each year, paying tribute to the sweet nectar that helped put Falher on the map.

Just outside of town, you will find the base of operations for Honey Bunny Inc., a vertically integrated, farm-to-table, family-run operation making a real buzz in the retail and industrial honey market. With a 40,000 sq. ft. processing

facility, 5,000 hives, and an export business serving domestic and international markets, Honey Bunny Inc. stands as a tribute to the sweet success of one family's hard work.

Owned and operated by the Wolfe family out of Guy, Alberta, the Honey Bunny Inc. apiary offers organic, non-GMO honey through the Peace River Honey brand. It all got started when at the age of 16, Marcel Wolfe purchased 50 beehives for his son Gilbert. More than 25 years later, Honey Bunny Inc., employs 15 seasonal beekeepers, is equipped with full production, packaging, and distribution capabilities, and offers retail and bulk sales, as well as bulk packaging and private label opportunities. With a goal to grow to 8,000 hives and further expand into the American market, with a particular focus on the expansion of its food service sector, Honey Bunny Inc. is currently taking the honey market by storm with its award-winning products such as the Peace River Hot Honey.

In this family, everyone has a part to play. From overseeing facility operations, to business development and

logistics, all the way down to brand development and marketing, the Wolfe family has found a groove as sweet as the honey they sell — and proof of that can be found well beyond the grocery store shelves.

Getting the message out to consumers about the company's unique vertical integration business model is critical, says Sales and Marketing Manager Paige Wolfe.

"People know where their honey is coming from, who it's coming from, and can better understand the source of their honey," Paige says about Honey Bunny Inc. products.

This is especially important, she says, with all the toxic adulterated honey and fake honey that has hit the market over recent years.

The development of an engaged and comprehensive social media strategy has been instrumental in reaching the company's target consumer market. Whether by promoting its award-winning products or speaking to the important message of bee sustainability, the company's effective leverage of platforms like Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok has given Honey Bunny Inc. a competitive edge, gaining the attention of major social media influencers like Canadian celebrity Jillian Harris.



As the youngest member of AFPA's Board of Directors, Paige aims to share her talent for social media and marketing with the association.

"For more than a decade our company has gained value from AFPA's training and food safety programs as well as industry networking," she says. "Now is a good time for a new beginning, and I am excited to bring what I'm passionate about to the industry."



**"People know where their honey is coming from, who it's coming from, and can better understand the source of their honey."**

— Paige Wolfe



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Big things are happening at AFPA, with you, its members, in mind! We have a special announcement coming up — you won't want to miss it! Stay in the know by visiting [www.afpa.com](http://www.afpa.com).

## AFPA'S SAFETY TEMPLATE HELPS CREATE CUSTOM PLANS

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