



TOP 10 INNOVATORS

PASSION AND PURPOSE

To be an entrepreneur takes more than just a great idea and a support system to back it up. It means having the passion and the drive to see that idea through to fruition – something that separates the true innovators from, well, the rest of us. • This year, in researching the companies we would feature in our annual Top 10 Innovators report, we came across a select number of operators we felt captured the spirit of what it meant to be an entrepreneur. To be an entrepreneur means being committed to achieving your goals. It means spending long hours researching and developing prototype products, conducting consumer studies, and working with manufacturers and designers until your formulations and packaging are just right. And finally, it means tirelessly promoting your products at industry trade shows and in retail markets. • Regardless of the differences in their products, all of the entrepreneurs profiled in this year's Top 10 are true originals – trailblazers in their respective sectors and product categories – and all have a genuine passion for their product, their company and their vision.



PRAIRIE ORCHARD FARMS
WINNIPEG, MAN.

Nutritious and Delicious

BY MYRON LOVE

Prairie Orchard Farms has a simple goal – “to produce delicious and nutritious pork and other meat products for today’s healthy lifestyle.” Now, Prairie Orchard founder and president Willy Hoffman is about to do for chicken what he has already done for pork and bacon.

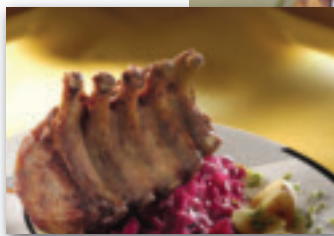
“I was looking for a way to add value to meat,” says the Winnipeg-based entrepreneur. “I looked into organic and natural products, and I decided that I wanted to do something a little different.” Hoffman chose to start a business selling designer meat – a premium, value-added cut containing omega-3 and sold under the name Just Pork. The pork products, including the first federally approved omega-3 bacon, are processed from hogs raised on a diet rich in minerals and vitamins (particularly vitamin E), and feed containing omega-3 fatty acid. Omega-3 is vital to heart health, and helps prevent platelets from clotting or sticking to artery walls. One source of omega-3 is plants such as flaxseed. Not only does this nutritionally enhanced diet produce a healthier pork, it also improves colour, texture and taste, reduces meat drip loss and extends shelf life.

Starting the new venture in the summer of 2004, Hoffman first established a working relationship with Springhill Farms, a western Manitoba hog producer, then set up random samplings. The operation received Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) approval in April 2005 to go ahead with marketing and distribution. While Hoffman initially established a market for Just Pork in western Canada, he has recently launched his omega-3 enhanced pork in Ontario, and now has a representative in California, where it is marketed under the company name Verdancia Farms. “We intend to expand our marketing in the U.S.,” says Hoffman, “but we want to find the right agents – representatives who are already marketing other healthy meats such as buffalo and ostrich.” The product has also been approved for sale in Japan, but, says Hoffman, it takes time to establish working relationships with Asian partners.

Last year, Prairie Orchard further enhanced the health benefits of its pork by adding the mineral selenium to the hog diets, a dietary change which has been approved by both the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the CFIA.



Willy Hoffman,
president of
Prairie
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Selenium, as Hoffman points out, is an antioxidant, and as such is thought to improve the immune system, reduce the risk of contracting certain cancers and ameliorate the effects of Alzheimer’s Disease.

In late February, Hoffman brought his latest product – omega-3-enhanced broiler chickens – to the annual Canadian Food and Beverage Show in Toronto. Already Hoffman says there’s significant interest in the new product, and notes that the omega-3 broilers have received USDA and CFIA approval. The company began doing research on omega-3, selenium and chickens last summer, and completed their trials in December. “The chickens have turned out to be an excellent source of selenium,” says Hoffman. “In the trials, we found that the chickens provided between 80 and 105 per cent of the daily requirement for selenium. Also, there is 1.5 g of omega-3 in every 100-g serving.” Hoffman also notes that: “The interesting thing about chicken is that there is little fat content. Meat from chicken is already considered healthy and lean.”

With Prairie Orchard’s nutritionally enhanced chickens soon to go to market, Hoffman is already planning his company’s next move. And, he says, the next category he targets may be the seafood sector. Already Hoffman has begun working with a Manitoba fish farm to try to design value-added features in that category. FC