

Atlantic Flavour

Atlantic Canada can offer more than McLobster to the fast-food universe

THIS SUMMER, for the first time ever, McDonald's Canada sold McLobster sandwiches at its restaurants from coast-to-coast.

The McLobster has only been available during the summer months in its Atlantic Canada restaurants in the past. So why offer it throughout Canada this year? Well, the company evidently decided there were enough displaced Atlantic Canadians across the country craving a lobster sandwich that it was time to roll out this popular seasonal product nationwide.

But the McLobster isn't the only regional dish we think could be a hit at Golden Arches in Canada. Here are three suggestions the fast-food goliath should consider to liven up its menu and get more East Coasters through its doors.



The McRabbit pie

Long a staple of Acadian families during the December-January holiday season, this tasty concoction usually includes a variety of meat – pork, beef, and chicken, as well as chunks of Bugs Bunny's descendants. The pie would definitely be a vegetarian's nightmare, but if you're a vegetarian, why are you eating at McDonald's anyway?



The Jiggs-is-up dinner

Our bet is the Newfoundland and Labrador diaspora would drool over this item landing on the McDonald's menu. This boiled dinner featuring (extremely) salty beef, cabbage, turnips, carrots and potatoes has been keeping bellies full on The Rock for decades. Now it's the nation's turn to see what all the fuss is about.

The Dulsinator salad

Speaking of people who don't eat meat, here is a traditional Atlantic Canadian favourite that should tickle their fancy. This reddish purple-to-black seaweed – known as dulse – is a bit on the salty side. However, combined with some nuts and the right (low calorie) dressing, it could provide a unique Maritime twist to the typical garden salad.



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The royal treatment

Why a Newfoundland auto dealership thinks every customer should be treated like a monarch

IT'S AN ISSUE every business must grapple with: how do you get customers through your doors and keep them coming back?

For owners who are struggling to solve that puzzle, they might want to take some notes from Hickman Automotive Group, the St. John's-based auto dealership that keeps on racking up provincial and national awards. This spring, Hickman's won an award from the Canadian Automotive Dealers Association for outstanding achievement within an individual dealership. It also received a business excellence award from the St. John's Board of Trade in 2014.

The recognition is nice, but the company wouldn't receive those accolades if it wasn't selling automobiles. And to be successful selling automobiles, you need to keep the customer happy. Bert Hickman, who runs the business with his brother Jonathan, says they've learned to have a laser



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And what does that entail, exactly? At Hickman's, when a customer buys a vehicle, they are taken to each department and introduced to the staff. Sales people jot down significant details when dealing with customers and will call them up periodically, not to ask them who they are buying their next car from, but to wish them a happy birthday or ask how the daughter's hockey camp went.

Hickman adds that a few years ago he brought in experts from Disney for a week to train his employees on how the entertainment giant treats its customers. "If you've ever been to Disneyland, every employee there is empowered to greet you and they will show you where to go rather than just pointing you in that direction," Hickman says. "The returns from [that training] were astronomical."

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Fork it over

Halifax entrepreneur launches online business aimed at beef connoisseur

CANADIANS are buying plenty of items online these days. But are they willing to buy premium steaks over the Internet?

Matt MacQuarrie (inset) thinks they are, and he's established a Halifax-based business called Fuego Diablo where meat lovers can order steaks that will be delivered to your door. "Luxury brands, there is so much of that with scotch, wine, and cheese," MacQuarrie says. "But can you name me a brand-name steak you eat at home? That category is wide open."

MacQuarrie is hoping to turn Fuego Diablo into a household name in that category, with hungry customers willing to pay top dollar for his beef. So why invest as much as \$80 for a single Porterhouse steak from MacQuarrie's online outlet when you can go to a grocery store and pick one up for less than \$20?

The reason is that MacQuarrie says he's offering steak you can't get at those grocery stores. Fuego Diablo sells "prime" meat that is the top one-to-two per cent graded beef in the U.S. and Canada. It's the kind of steak customers can normally only find at the best steakhouses in North America.

But thanks to Fuego Diablo, Canadians looking for a great steak don't have to make a trip to a New York City or Toronto steakhouse. They can order it from Fuego Diablo, where the product is brought into Halifax, aged there and shipped anywhere in Canada.

It's tough to stand out in the competitive online shopping world. But MacQuarrie says no one else in Canada is offering premium steaks online, and he thinks his business will be a hit. "My goal is to have 10,000 shipments in the next 12 months," MacQuarrie says. "We're offering something you just can't get elsewhere."



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Age of extinction

It isn't easy being a small retailer in downtown Halifax

THE MILLS HALIFAX department store is dead, and for other small retailers operating in downtown Halifax, that fact should not be forgotten.

That's because when the local business icon closed its doors for good in July after 96 years in business, it was a reminder of how tough it can be for retailers who aren't part of the multinational chain stores to survive in today's market place.

Ramesh Venkat, a professor of marketing at Saint Mary's University in Halifax, says the demise of Mills Halifax could have been the result of a failed business strategy. But he says it was also the result of some macro factors that small retailers have to overcome in the city.



Location

Retailers operating in Halifax's downtown core (Mills Halifax was located on Spring Garden Road) have to deal with the fact customers can go to

shopping centres like Bayer's Lake and Dartmouth Crossing that have ample parking and the popular big box stores. "Go back 20 years and Spring Garden Road used to be a really vibrant shopping area," Venkat says. "But there's been a gradual decline for retailers downtown."



Exclusivity

Mills Halifax sold products like Chanel and Michael Kors at its location, but Haligonians could get those brands elsewhere, too. "Lululemon has a store almost right next to [Mills Halifax], but it's the only place to get that brand in Halifax," Venkat says. "Having some exclusivity gives you some protection from the competition."



Connecting with customers

When you're competing against retail Goliaths, small retailers – even ones with established brands like Mills Halifax – have to work extra hard to win over the next generation of customers. "Young customers will sometimes say, 'That's my grandfather's store, I'm not shopping there,'" Venkat says. "You've got to continually re-invent yourself to stay relevant to the new customer."

Economic jolt

Port of Saint John predicts expansion project will be a boon for provincial economy

IN JANUARY OF 2015, Port of Saint John CEO Jim Quinn told CBC that a proposed \$205-million project to expand and modernize its container terminals was "not just a Saint John project but a New Brunswick project."

Now that funding has been secured from all three partners to proceed with the thing (the port, the federal government and the New Brunswick government), residents will get to see how accurate Quinn's statement really is. That's because the plan to consolidate and upgrade the Rodney and Navy Island terminals on the city's west side, create a 25-acre area for container storage and deepen the main channel of the port at low tide to 10 metres, will allow the port to accommodate larger vessels, which should increase container traffic for years to come.

And more vessels in the port mean more opportunities for New Brunswick businesses that send their products on those containers to reach global markets and grow their businesses. While numbers on what the upgrade will mean to the New Brunswick economy 30 years from now are strictly guesswork at this point, the port is projecting some solid economic growth for the province during the 2015-2022 project period.



Growth to provincial GDP



Full time employment



Consumer spending



Tax revenue

Source: Port of Saint John