
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries

Food Business Refresh Program helps Castlegar small business adapt

CASTLEGAR – Small B.C. food businesses are accessing customized training, coaching, business planning and implementation support through the Food Business Refresh Program, and the results are being served in Castlegar.

The Roasted Chickpea is a company serving plant-based, gluten-free, fully prepared, ready-to-eat meals at local grocery stores, coffee shops and for private clients in the West Kootenays. For owner Kayla Heddle, COVID-19 presented a series of new challenges that her small business was forced to adapt to.

“Because the pandemic was something none of us had ever experienced before, panic buying meant that I couldn’t rely on a fresh food supply from grocery stores to create products,” Heddle said. “Many places that previously stocked my products closed down during those initial few months because of the uncertainty, and I ended up closing my business for four months while I considered next steps.”

In partnership with the Small-Scale Food Processing Association and Western Economic Diversification Canada, the Food Business Refresh Program is a \$650,000 cost-shared program helping local businesses find new opportunities and pivot from markets disrupted by COVID-19. Launched in October 2020, the program helps participants access mentorship services like business coaching and food industry expertise, along with implementation support to help small businesses adapt to the changing conditions of the pandemic.

“The program enabled me to enhance my business with a focus on my line of chia puddings,” Heddle said. “Healthy and both dietary and allergy friendly, they can be produced on a larger scale that allows for distribution throughout B.C. I knew I could take this product to the next level, and access to Refresh Program coaches and food industry experts, along with support from other food processing businesses, were fundamental in helping me jumpstart this new project and helping my business adapt.”

Lana Popham, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, said, “Throughout the pandemic, farmers, fishers and food and beverage processors have shown incredible resilience by adapting their businesses to keep communities fed, employed and safe. I’m proud of the local success stories we’re seeing through the Food Business Refresh Program as businesses develop new ways for people to enjoy made-in-B.C. food that helps strengthen our food security and our local economies.”

This funding is part of B.C.’s \$10-billion COVID-19 response, which includes StrongerBC: BC’s Economic Recovery Plan that protects people’s health and livelihoods while supporting businesses and communities.

Quick Facts:

- Since the program launched in October 2020, more than 70 small businesses have benefited from the Refresh Program.
- The Province has invested approximately \$550,000 through the Food Business Refresh Program to strengthen small businesses in B.C., with an additional \$100,000 provided by Western Economic Diversification Canada.
- B.C.'s food and beverage processing industry has almost 3,000 establishments and is the second-largest manufacturing sector in the province.
- In 2019, sales were up \$700 million to a record \$10.5 billion.
- In 2019, there were 35,700 food and beverage processing jobs in B.C.

Learn More:

For more information about the Roasted Chickpea, visit:

<https://www.theroastedchickpea.com/>

For more information about the Food Business Refresh Program, visit:

<https://www.foodbusinessrefresh.ca/>

For more information about StrongerBC, visit: <https://strongerbc.gov.bc.ca/>

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