
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries

Food Business Refresh Program helps Salt Spring Island small business adapt

SALT SPRING ISLAND – 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 on Salt Spring Island.

Culturalive fermented foods is a small business that ferments locally sourced and mostly organic vegetables and herbs to make sauerkraut and kimchi. The products are sold in stores on Vancouver Island and many of the Gulf Islands. For owner Melanie Furman, COVID-19 presented a series of new challenges that forced her business to adapt.

“With the arrival of the pandemic, all of a sudden I was juggling parenting as a single mom, home schooling and running my business,” Furman said. “I lost my employee and had to scale back production, which was challenging because as the pandemic unfolded, interest in my fermented products increased as people looked for more local, immune-boosting foods. I just couldn’t keep up with the demand from store owners.”

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.

“Making my products is physically demanding,” Furman said. “Through the Refresh Program, I was able to purchase some much-needed equipment to make more products more efficiently and with much less physical strain. Because of this, I will be able to expand production so I can better meet the needs of consumers and retailers.”

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 Culturalive Fermented Foods, visit:

<https://www.culturalivefoods.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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