



Puratos Conquers Taste Buds from Mississauga, Ontario

Although few consumers recognize the Puratos name, people around the world eat



the company's products on a regular basis. Puratos is a Belgian multinational and the world's leading producer of mixes and ingredients for the bakery, pastry and chocolate industries. In Canada, the company operates from a new facility near Toronto, where it develops the recipes and techniques that delight consumer taste buds and drive profits for food companies across the country.

Launched in Brussels in 1919, Puratos currently employs more than 5,500 people at dozens of facilities in more than 50 countries. Puratos set up its first Canadian manufacturing centre outside Toronto in the late 1980s. In 2006, the company moved into a \$50 million, 75,400 square-foot facility in Mississauga, Ontario, and in 2009, plan to add another silo to the site to increase storage capacity.

"We've expanded in Canada for several reasons," says Benoit Keppenne, General Manager of

Puratos Canada Inc. "With 30 million people, the market is lucrative and well developed. The country produces many of the raw ingredients, such as top-quality grains, we use in our mixes. Our business also relies on access to a reliable transportation network, and Canada's is first-rate."

The location of Puratos' Canadian plant is ideally suited to employ these advantages. Major highways, rail lines and an interna-

tional airport are all minutes away from the United States. Most of the company's largest customers, such as companies that supply food items to supermarket chains, are also nearby.

Solutions for the food industry

In 2007, Puratos' global sales exceeded \$1.4 billion. The company's success is built on a remarkable business model, according to Mr. Keppenne.

"Although we sell mixes and ingredients, we're really in the solutions business," Keppenne says. "We develop products that enable food companies to succeed by studying consumer tastes and the production facilities of our customers. We work closely with

industrial and small bakers, pastry makers and chocolatiers to help them respond to shifts in consumer demand." The humble baguette provides prime example: 10 years ago, Canadians who wanted fresh, tasty baguettes had little choice but to visit independent bakeries and specialty food shops. Although some supermarket chains baked baguettes in-house, few managed to make a profit on them.

"Baguettes present a daunting challenge," says Keppenne. "They don't remain fresh for very long, so they must be sold soon after baking. Yet demand can be inconsistent—a supermarket may sell 200 one day and only 50 the next. It's nearly impossible for a supermarket bakery to produce the right number of good quality baguettes at the right time."

Puratos came up with a solution: a technique and recipe that enables large numbers of baguettes to be produced in a central location, flash-frozen and shipped to supermarkets, where they can be reheated on-site in existing facilities. This helps to restore the crunchy freshness that make

baguettes appealing to consumers, and enables supermarkets to respond quickly to shifts in demand. Today, Canadians buy tens of thousands of pre-frozen, re-heated baguettes from supermarket chains every day.



Benoit Keppenne



Anticipating shifts in consumer preferences

"Consumer tastes and preferences change continually," Keppenne says. "Ethnic breads such as foccacia, ciabatta and naan have now gone mainstream in many parts of Canada. Puratos identifies emerging trends and helps our customers stay ahead of them by developing new recipes and methods."

Innovation has long been a central characteristic of Puratos. The company introduced emulsifiers to improve the consistency of baked goods in the 1950s, enzymes and sourdoughs to enhance taste in the 1990s, and active and instant dry yeasts to boost efficiency in the 2000s.

A few years ago, Puratos unveiled its latest innovation: Sublimo Glaze, the world's first ready-to-use cold-setting glaze. According to Keppenne, the product solves a vexing problem faced by pastry chefs looking for ways to enhance the flavour and freshness of fruit toppings.

"Glazes used to be available only as concentrates that had to be diluted, heated, then brushed on and the pastry allowed to cool and set," Keppenne says. "This was time-consuming and sometimes dangerous as the heated glaze can cause burns. Sublimo Glaze eliminates these steps; it brushes on easily and dries quickly."

In 2006, the product won a prestigious industry award for innovation and continues to sell well. Puratos,

in partnership with the international nutrition-science company Fugeia, is hard at work on the next breakthrough: bread and pastry products with enhanced digestive-health benefits. The partners are fine-tuning a way to produce foods that the body can digest more readily, absorbing greater amounts of the fibre and nutrients available in cereal grains such as wheat and rye.

"There's no doubt that demand for nutritious, healthy foods continues to increase," says Keppenne. "I'm confident that the research project

"For us, taste is the driving imperative," says Keppenne. "The truth is that even if a bakery product is full of healthy ingredients, few consumers will buy it unless it also tastes good. It's an ongoing challenge."



will lead to new recipes and mixes that our customers can use to produce healthier baked goods."

The key, of course, is to meet consumer demands for both nutrition and taste. Puratos regularly conducts market research, asking people to taste several products and comment on the properties of each one. The company incorporates this research into its product offerings; recipes vary by region and country.

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