

Tapping into the North

If there's anything Dave Challen, owner/operator of Boreal Birch Syrup, enjoys more than the distinct flavour of his product, it's the sweet taste of success.

Dave has been producing the gourmet syrup from the white birch trees of the Thunder Bay area since 2006.

Contrary to its sweet maple counterpart, birch syrup presents a unique experience to the taste buds and is used primarily in recipes and garnishes.

"Birch syrup is a completely different product compared to maple syrup," Dave said. "It is rich in flavour, with a bold, dark caramel taste. It is used mostly in cooking and baking as a glaze or marinade, and is excellent on fish and pork. Birch syrup presents a new and exciting taste to experiment with."

From the West to the North

It was love at first tap when Dave had his initial experience on a fledgling sugar bush in Canada's westernmost territory.

"While in the Yukon in 2005, my wife and I learned how to make birch syrup as we helped a friend start a syrup operation," he said. "We enjoyed the experience so much that I decided I'd start producing birch syrup back home in Thunder Bay."

Planting his entrepreneurial seeds in the North was an easy decision as Dave believes "Northern Ontario is a land of opportunity."

"In the North one can still try something new, something that hasn't been done before. In most cases the enthusiasm an entrepreneur has for a new idea is embraced by the community and is therefore successful."

Moreover, his hometown of Thunder Bay makes for easy product distribution to his clientele of syrup aficionados.



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At a Glance:

WHERE

Thunder Bay, Ontario

WHO

Dave Challen and Boreal Birch Syrup.

HOW NOHFC HELPED

Funding helped Dave to realize his businesses goals faster than he would have been able to on his own, leading to expansion quicker than expected.

"Thunder Bay, specifically, is perfectly placed for manufacturing," Dave said. "We are in the middle of the continent and therefore can ship to most places very easily. This has been an advantage for my business as I can mail product all over North America within a few days."

Fast Track to Success

With his business progressing rapidly and growth expected in future, Dave recalls how a Young Entrepreneur Program investment from the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation [NOHFC] benefited his business during the summer of 2006.

"The funding I received from the NOHFC to start my business was crucial in determining its success," he said. "The NOHFC has helped me realize my goals for this business much sooner than I could have without it. I am now looking to expanding the business and to diversify the products we offer."

Building Strong Communities

Many of the North's business savvy youth began their entrepreneurial endeavours with the help of the NOHFC's Young Entrepreneur Program. These investments create jobs and careers in Northern Ontario and have positive influences on many of the North's regions.

"I think the Young Entrepreneur grants through the NOHFC are incredibly effective in boosting the economy here while encouraging youth to stay in the region and contribute



Northern Ontario Heritage
Fund Corporation

Société de gestion du Fonds
du patrimoine du Nord
de l'Ontario

to its growth,” Dave said. “The NOHFC has had such a great impact on my community. A friend of mine received funding to start a tourism operation here in Thunder Bay while another acquaintance started a flourmill just outside the city. My wife goes to a salon just down the road, which was also funded by NOHFC.”

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For more information about the NOHFC’s Northern Ontario Young Entrepreneur Program,
call 1-800-461-8329 or visit www.nohfc.com