

New “Made in Canada” pear now available in local grocery stores

By Kelly Daynard
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Quick: name a variety of pear available in your local grocery store. You might be able to come up with one or two but if you can't go past that, you're not alone.

Research conducted by the [Vineland Research and Innovation Centre](#) (Vineland) in 2014 showed that the average

Canadian doesn't spend a lot of time thinking about pears when they're grocery shopping.

And unlike apples where names come more readily, consumers can rarely name pear varieties that they like.

A new partnership though between Vineland and the [Vineland Growers' Co-operative Ltd.](#) aims to change that with a new made-in-Canada pear – the [Cold Snap™ pear](#).

Unveiled to great fanfare at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair in Toronto in November 2015, the pears are now available in selected Loblaws, Costco, Walmart, Sobeys and Metro stores, as well as some independent retailers.

The pear was developed by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) with Vineland acquiring the rights in 2009. In 2011, Vineland entered into a commercial license agreement with the Vineland Growers' Co-operative for the exclusive Canadian rights to the fruit.



Since then, 75,000 pear trees have been planted in Ontario and Nova Scotia with a limited first harvest this year. Over the next five years, as trees come into production, the harvest is expected to double annually.

June DenBak, Marketing Coordinator for the co-operative, said the business is already in the process of expanding its controlled storage facilities to be able to accommodate larger harvests to come.

Dr. Amy Bowen, Vineland's Consumer Insights Research Program Leader, focuses on research that examines consumer preferences.

Bowen said that Vineland conducted testing in the fall of 2014 and that focus groups showed that while pears aren't top of mind, consumers enjoy their taste and attribute a higher level of sophistication to the fruit, associating it with products like wine and cheese. A consumer preference study was more detailed and involved participants tasting the new fruit.

Cold Snap™ has a lot going for it: its rounder shape and red blush skin are proving attractive to consumers. It also has a texture, Bowen described, that isn't too "mushy or crunchy, isn't as grainy as other pears, and is more consistent in its ripening". Those are all characteristics important to consumers, Bowen explained.



The new variety is also proving popular with farmers because the trees are fire blight-tolerant. Fire blight is a contagious disease that can be devastating to an orchard.

A key benefit also comes from the fact that new pears have a longer storage life than others. Generally, local pears are only available in grocery stores until November, but because of the Cold Snap™'s storage life, the new variety will be available until February or March.

DenBek said that extending the selling season for a Canadian product is a huge benefit to the marketplace.

Research findings were shared with the co-operative, which hired a marketing firm to develop the “Cold Snap™ name, the easily recognizable icy blue packaging and logo, and the catchy “Winter’s Favourite Fruit™” tag line that will help set the product apart from its imported competitors.

Packaging is also proudly identified as being a product of Canada. DenBek said that the pear is the biggest marketing project that the hundred-year-old co-operative has ever tackled.

This project was funded in part through *Growing Forward 2 (GF2)*, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative. The [Agricultural Adaptation Council](#) assists in the delivery of *GF2* in Ontario.

<http://www.aginnovationontario.ca/en/new-made-in-canada-pear-now-available-in-local-grocery-stores/#more-915>