

FOOD & DRINK

# Pier-C Produce Inc. Growing a Healthy Company

Produced by Sean Barr & Written by Camila Osomo

Doug Pearce, current president of Pier-C Produce Inc., co-founded the company after his family's business, K&M Produce Distributors Inc., changed ownership. Pearce began his career at age 15, when his uncle and father offered him a job working in the family business. "Not everybody gets that kind of unique opportunity," he explains. With such a deeply ingrained background in agriculture, Pearce found himself not yet ready to abandon his family's history in the produce industry. Following K&M Produce, he partnered with Ken Pearce and Larry LaBute and started Pier-C. Since its incorporation, Pier-C has built on its founders' decades of experience in produce and commercial trucking and has set a standard for variety, supply and quality of produce across North America.

The company offers five different varieties of onions, three varieties of cabbage, two kinds of corn, cello and jumbo carrots, in addition to green bell peppers, parsnips, rutabagas, beets, pumpkins and decorative gourds. Of these, only the green peppers, gourds, and pumpkins are available seasonally, with the other items available year-round and generally able to be shipped to grocers within one to two business days of an order placement. In addition, Pier-C offers an extensive variety of specialty packs to promote products.



Pier-C maintains a competitive edge amongst other staple produce suppliers simply by stationing its headquarters in Leamington, Ontario, part of the southernmost tip of Canada. The company maintains its primary carrot processing operation in Chatham, Ontario, and the onion processing facility in Leamington. With trusted growers operating on 5,400 acres of rich black soil farmland throughout Ontario (130 employees total), and a strategic location near Point Pelee National Park, the company can deliver produce four to six weeks ahead of competitors from other provinces. Additionally, Pier-C offers less-than-truckload shipments to assist customers and attract new business.

### But How Do the Carrots Stay so Crunchy?

Such efficient turnaround translates to superior quality produce upon receipt. The carrot operation, for example, was recently outfitted with entirely new automated processing equipment. The company invested about \$2 million, according to Pearce, completely revamping its carrot operations to produce the most vibrant, crunchy and fresh carrots possible. The firm even goes as far as

polishing the carrots before packaging in order to minimize preparation time for the consumer and provide added visual appeal.



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Pier-C also invests extra time curing every onion. The curing process is especially important to the shelf-life, appearance, and quality of an onion. The extra time Pier-C spends translates into an added benefit for consumers and distributors.

Once the carrots, onions, or beets have left the processing facility, Pier-C goes above and beyond to ensure freshness and nutrient retention through strict food safety and storage measures. Once harvested, the vitamin content of produce

immediately starts declining, which makes quick processing and shipment the utmost priority for a high-quality perishables supplier. With an in-house transportation fleet, as well as access to 60 independent carriers, the firm is capable of overnight deliveries to most North American markets. The total regulation of shipping conditions and quality through specific temperature and humidity-controlled warehouses and trucks is outlined in the company's Pier-C Logistics website.

## Congratulations Pier-C Produce.

This article is a testament to your success in produce supply and commercial trucking services within the Canadian food industry.

We wish you, your partners and customers many more years of success and thank you for making us part of your team.

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### The Health of Nations

Pier-C understands that the biggest priority, even above the health of the produce, is the health of the consumer. Therefore, the company has established strict rules and guidelines to ensure the utmost in food handling safety and traceability. Growers must complete self-

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audits, and participate in mock recalls. Additionally, the  
company outsources food safety auditing for its facilities  
and farms to Primus Labs, a leader of food safety regulation  
across North America. These measures ensure the company's  
ability to distribute products nationally within Canada, and  
abroad, with a notable portion of consumers located in the  
U.S. In the interests of transparency, the firm posts its safety  
audit certificates regularly, with the most recent scoring a 99  
percentile in satisfaction.

Additionally, Pier-C has implemented an intensive labeling  
and tracking system to decrease response times with the



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NNZ has been a partner in business with Pier-C  
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We would like to take this opportunity to  
congratulate Pier-C on their success and thank  
them for their continued business.

concern of food safety. Each unit of produce is labeled right  
down to the field it was produced in, not just the pallet it  
arrived on. As Pearce explains, "The label is then traceable  
through GPS tracking systems, down to the field and  
personnel working in the area." The technology enables the  
company to isolate and respond to any concerns faster and  
more thoroughly than possible in past years.

**Here to Staples**

The great thing about being a trusted, conscientious supplier  
of staple produce items like carrots, onions and cabbage is

that, while many industries have suffered a huge blow dealt  
by the depression of the United States construction and real  
estate markets, Pier-C enjoys the benefit of offering a product  
that is essentially recession-proof. "Everyone has to eat,"  
explains Pearce. "Staples are normally very stable," he adds,  
laughing.

Though, jokes aside, the company has maintained strong  
enough operations to grow significantly throughout the past  
decade; it currently stands at \$40 million in annual sales.  
In 2011 into 2012, Pearce estimates the company "should  
be able to grow by at least 10 to 15 percent." A controlled  
growth rate seems to be the norm for Pier-C. "In the past six  
to seven years we have been able to grow at that steady rate, at  
times a bit higher, but not by much. Anything higher is too  
risky," he asserts.

Continually being a company whose label represents  
consistent, quality produce at competitive prices, Pier-C  
Produce Inc. has invested wisely in the health of both its  
customers and its future. •



Congratulations  
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