

# Corn Fed Ideal Fit For Food Service Distributor



The growing interest in local food is proving to be an exciting development for Ontario Corn Fed Beef and Morton Wholesale. The Windsor-based company was the first food service distributor to partner with the OCFA's signature branded beef program. The family-owned business, which has been around since 1919, focuses on independent restaurants and food service operators in Southwestern Ontario. Its customers are located in a wide area, from Windsor to Goderich, Guelph, Burlington and surrounding areas.

Jean Beauchemin, regional sales and marketing manager, says a key part of Morton's business strategy is to source quality food products that are raised or produced in Ontario. The certified Ontario Corn Fed Beef program is a prime example. "For Morton, it's one of the pillars of our business," says Beauchemin. "This gives us a point of difference and it fits right in with the point of differentiation our customers are demanding as well."

Beauchemin credits the OCFA and executive director Jim Clark for helping Morton set itself apart from others in the marketplace over the last ten years. Among other things, OCFA has played a significant role in maintaining the integrity of the program while also helping to create an identity for Morton as it relates to Ontario Corn Fed Beef.

He also praised OCFA's brand promotion and marketing support. "We had to niche ourselves out in the marketplace, educating one customer at a time," recalls Beauchemin. "Jim would actually go out and work with

our sales reps on certain key accounts, educate our sales team on the differences between the Corn Fed and the commodity product on the market - and even the other premium beef brands - and really built the confidence for our team to sell the brand."

In addition to the local food aspect, another big part of the attraction for Morton, according to Beauchemin, is consumer confidence in the quality and the source of the food products. "People in the community want to support what they have, but they also want to know where the food they're eating is coming from," he says. "They're more educated and in tune with what their options are."

Morton's objective is to provide food service customers with quality, local food options so consumers can support their local, independently-owned restaurants. In turn, the scenario creates demand for food that is produced or raised in Ontario. To help meet these goals, the company has developed the Ontario Grass Roots Program that works at the farm level to ensure that sustainable and healthy methods are practiced.

Besides promoting Ontario Corn Fed Beef, the program is focused on providing fresh food items, including produce, veal, chicken and fish. The program is being expanded this month to add duck, pork, cheese and honey. "It gives an identity and a brand to products from Ontario and gives the customer the food safety and quality aspect so when they serve that plate of food to their customers they can rest assured that the quality is there," says Beauchemin.

Along with quality assurance, Morton has worked with Ontario Corn Fed Beef on the key requirement of having a consistent supply of top-quality beef products for its customers. "It's got to be consistent, it's got to be the highest quality available - not only in Ontario but anywhere," he says. "At the end of the day, the product has got to speak for itself in terms of quality, and Corn Fed does that in a heartbeat."

According to Beauchemin, Ontario Corn Fed Beef has produced some impressive results in blind taste tests against some other programs. "We win hands down, nine out of ten times. The product speaks for itself in terms of quality and consistency," he says.

As for the future of Morton's partnership with Ontario Corn Fed Beef, plans are in the works to expand the lineup of products. Of note, Morton is now offering Corn Fed Beef from a plant that is certified to produce Halal products. Halal certification recognizes that the products are permissible under Islamic law, which is an important distinction for Canada's growing Muslim population. And building on the benefits of locally-produced food, Morton will be expanding the offering of its value-added products including fresh steak and burger programs.

For more about Morton Wholesale, visit the website at [www.mortonwholesale.com](http://www.mortonwholesale.com)