

GOING WILD: Interview with David Hoffman, co-CEO Oxford Frozen Foods

[Lifestyle](#) | Posted by [YouInc.com](#) - March 11, 2013 at 7:30 pm

By YouInc Columnist Tiffany Burns

Many of us have heard blueberries described as a superfood, due to their incredible health benefits. They have a reputation for improving brain health, reducing eyestrain and fending off several types of disease. But many might not realize the difference in nutritional value between cultivated and wild berries. Or perhaps I should just speak for myself, since during my conversation with David Hoffman, co-CEO of Oxford Frozen Foods, I repeatedly lumped all blueberries in the same basket.

"Wild blueberries," David stresses, speaking on the phone from Nova Scotia. "Tiffany, I'm going to coach you on this. Wild blueberries."

It's no wonder he wants to emphasize the distinction. Oxford Frozen Foods is the world's largest supplier of frozen wild blueberries. They simply don't do cultivated. A planted-on-purpose blueberry has more pulp and less skin, which means fewer antioxidants and less flavour. In fact, David dares me to try the blueberry version of the Pepsi Challenge.

"Try them side by side. We've never lost a taste test yet."

Smaller and less watery than its cultivated counterpart, the wild blueberry is one of only three berries native to North America. It grows naturally in just a few places – the main locations being Maine, Atlantic Canada and Quebec. Oxford Frozen Foods has massive operations in two of those areas.

"I think that by being an industry leader and being heavily involved in innovation and market development, we've been able to develop an industry which most people would think of as a cottage industry, but in fact is a very sophisticated business."

Since forming in 1968, Oxford Frozen Foods has used vertical integration to become an industry leader. They have improved almost every step on their berries' journey from farming, freezing and shipping to developing worldwide markets. In addition to extensive in-ground irrigation systems and collaborating on better fertilizer technology, Oxford owns two apiaries to ensure optimal pollination. Their eight manufacturing facilities contain company-designed equipment and can process over three million pounds of wild blueberries a day during harvest. Their factories also have over 150 million pounds of frozen storage capacity and are located in Halifax for convenient global shipping. They're also one of North America's largest producers of frozen carrots and one of Canada's premier manufacturers of onion rings. However, the wild blueberry is the indigo-colored jewel in the company's crown.

Because they are a business-to-business operation (their product goes directly into some very yummy jams, muffins and pies), until now they've kept a low profile, kind of like those low-growing blueberry bushes. But as the largest employer in Oxford, NS, wild blueberry capital of Canada, word is starting to get out. It was recently named one of Deloitte's 2012 Top 50 Best Managed Companies.

"It's good to have a great product, but the people development side is probably our greatest accomplishment," says David. "And that's their accomplishment, not the company's. It's giving people the opportunity to develop in the community in which they were born. We've tried to be decentralized in our decision making, to provide a sense of empowerment to people and I think that's been successful."

It's also been successful in sending me straight to the frozen fruit aisle at my grocery store, in search of blueberries — wild blueberries.

Source: <https://youinc.com/content/lifestyle/going-wild-interview-with-david-hoffman-coceo-oxford-frozen-foods>