



Tom Dawson

From Retired to Rewired



Tom is the owner of *Wintergreen Maple Products*, a timber-framed barn on a country side road of Minden, Ontario. After many years of teaching, he was inspired by his surroundings and their bounty, and turned this passion into a full-service business including Maple Syrup operation, restaurant and store.

What was the fountain of inspiration for Tom? He read a book entitled "Re-Imagine: Successful Business in a Disruptive Age", where writer Tom Peters rants on how modern businesses of all sizes are misreading their customers, the market and the huge market influences globalization is making. Two provocative ideas in this book particularly stuck with Tom: "If you don't like change, you'll like irrelevance even less", and "Diversify or die".

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"A key point is surrounding yourself with people who are more knowledgeable than you are, to provide the technical and manufacturing skills required", explains Tom. "I was fortunate to find a friend Doris Robertson, with many years of experience working in a variety of institutional kitchens, bakery businesses, and catering. I inquired about the possibility of her teaching me the skills of baking, sauce making, jam making and how to cater large groups of people."

Tom provided the facilities, resources, customers and some inspiration to create a successful brand of products, from unique barbecue sauces such as Apricot-

Horseradish, Cuban-Citrus-Garlic and Flaming Peach, to fruit syrups including Rum and Butter, Lavender and berries, for sprucing up as a delicious ice-cream topping or garnish.

Tom and his crew created food products on the fringes of the flavour scale – products that mainstream companies would not produce because of labour intensity, fruit inaccessibility, and instead did the opposite, which is to produce huge quantities of a limited range of products.

"Because we can produce small runs of very creative and novel products, we are able to have a wide range of unique colourful and tasteful food gifts. By preserving with liquours and spirits, using comical and humorous names, making attractive and appealing jars which become art in a jar, we found a special niche!", says Tom of his Wintergreen Maple products.

But that's not all. The production of unique BBQ sauces have led them to the design of 2 very large, mobile BBQ trailers which have expanded

