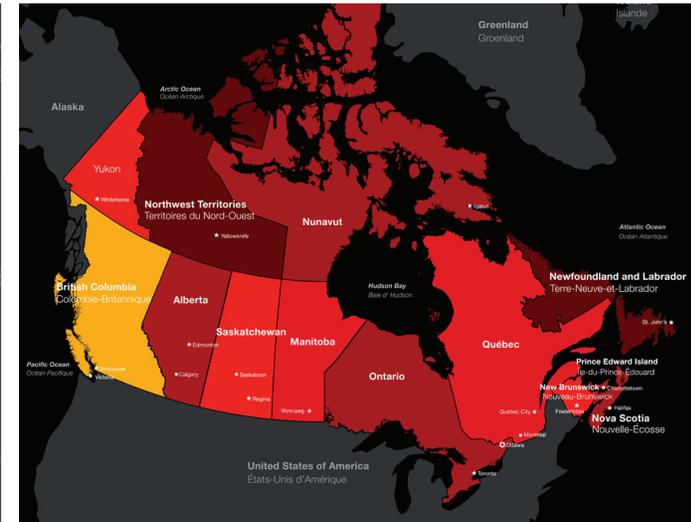


Signature Experiences Collection®  
 Case Study Series

**Edible Canada**

Vancouver, British Columbia  
[www.ediblecanada.com/tours.php](http://www.ediblecanada.com/tours.php)  
 October 2012



# Edible Canada

Vancouver, British Columbia

[www.ediblecanada.com/tours.php](http://www.ediblecanada.com/tours.php)

October 2012

## Granville Island Market Tour for the taste buds

### Leading by Example

Discover how, by taking the risk to lower the guest to staff ratio and shifting to a business model that's based on the guest experience, you can drive your bottom-line, guest and staff satisfaction, and increase repeat business.

Join Eric Pateman, the President and Founder of Edible Canada, as he shares insights on the company, experiential travel and their Canadian Signature Experience.

### Tell Us About Your Company

Edible Canada is the country's largest culinary tourism and locavore retail company dedicated to sourcing the highest quality culinary products from coast-to-coast-to-coast. Headquartered at Granville Island Public Market in Vancouver, British Columbia, we offer an array of tours from gourmet kayaking, to chef-led market dinners, and we take thousands of visitors each year on our *Granville Island Market Tour*.

At the forefront of celebrating Canadian cuisine, we operate a vibrant bistro and artisan food store, as well as operate an online store through our website. All our tour guides are professional chefs, bakers or servers with an intimate knowledge of Vancouver's food scene. They have a passion for food and love sharing this with our guests and give great tips and insights from their worlds to yours.

### What does “Experiential Travel” mean to your business?

It means everything because we have based our entire business model on experiences. From our full-service bistro, to the way we designed our restaurant in an open style kitchen and dining room, to the demonstration kitchen in the middle of the room. It really is about creating something that engages people so that they will come back time and time again and tell everybody about it.

## What makes a “Memorable Travel Experience”?

From our perspective it's the memories that food creates. I can travel anywhere in the world and tell you what I ate and who I was with. So for us, it's about connecting visitors to the diversity of foods we have available in Vancouver.

The big thing I want people to take away from our tours is that it's not just about the food, the smoked salmon or the maple syrup, but it's about the origins of food, how they stir together and create tastes that explode in our mouths and create lasting memories. For example, Canada is quite well known for its Quebec maple syrup but here in northern British Columbia we produce birch syrup. It really excites people to learn about its different uses and how it ties into cultural cuisine.

## Are you seeing any increase in demand for experiential travel?

Yes we are. Our company is one example of how a focus on the visitor experience can increase satisfaction and profitability. We are close to being named one of the fastest growing businesses by Profit Magazine. Our growth is influenced by the demand for local culinary experiential travel that we respond to in our restaurant, culinary tours, and special events.

## What's important to you as a company?

Our goal as a company is to introduce people to the many foods that make up Canada's culture and to shape the perceptions of visitors and locals alike about the culinary aspects of our country's multiculturalism and the ethnic diversity of the foods we eat.

## Describe your ideal guests.

We get everybody from locals to people from English and non-English speaking countries, foodies to curiosity seekers - they all have one thing in common - a passion for food!

## Tell us about your key partners.

The Granville Island market vendors are our key partners. There are 60 in total and we typically work with about 20 on any individual tour to highlight the variety available within the market. At first they didn't understand what we were planning to do and why. We wanted to create a similar experience for visitors to Granville Island as you can enjoy at Pike's Place Market in Seattle. Some of the local vendors weren't familiar with Pike's market, how they engage visitors and why. But now that we are bringing roughly 300 people to their stands every week, with a chef explaining what each vendor sells, and how to use it in cooking, they have discovered there's an opportunity here for everyone. It's not uncommon for our guests to go back to a store after the tour to buy something to add to their kitchen, or take home a souvenir from their favorite vendor.

“Everything we do is experiential, it's the only way to market tourism at this point. People don't want a t-shirt that says “I was here” they want to return home and tell stories about people they met and were involved with.”



## What are your main sales channels?

Direct sales are where we generate 70% of our business for our tours, restaurant, and boutique culinary store. The group market represents the remaining 30%. The receptive tour operators we work with include: Jonview, Discover Holidays, Scenic, Brewster, Cantrav, Perfect Day, Jan Doets, and Tauck.

## Tell us about your marketing.

We think about marketing as a movement rather than just a set of tactics. We are continually looking for ways to engage visitors. This is part of our marketing, *“live the experience then tell your friends about it so they will want to come back again and again.”* It’s the same for our staff; when they believe in what the company stands for, and the social interaction and engagement we encourage with our customers, they will want to stay with us.

We truly believe the social interactions between our staff and guests are our greatest and most powerful marketing tool. However, like every business, we invest in traditional and online marketing; trade shows, social media, educational sessions, FAM tours, our website, to name a few. We took our chef to a special event in New York with the Canadian Tourism Commission to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Food and Wine Magazine, and we work regularly with Tourism Vancouver and Tourism British Columbia.

Currently 65% of our business comes from Canadian visitors, 20% from the USA, and the remaining 15% from international markets. We offer net rate pricing for the travel trade. We can deliver our experiences in English, French, Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese and Japanese. As our business grows the international markets we look to attract include the UK, France, Germany, and Australia.

## Who does your Signature Experience appeal to?

Our guests are typically between the ages of 40 and 60, predominately female, and definitely interested in cooking and cooking shows. They are looking for those interesting tips to dazzle their guests when they entertain. They also appreciate the small, intimate group setting. We don’t limit the number of guests who can book a tour, rather we maintain a staff of 15 guides so we can increase the number of tours, ensuring the maximum group size of eight is protected.

According to the Canadian Tourism Commission, our Signature Experience would primarily appeal to Cultural Explorers and Free Spirits.

## How does your Signature Experience contribute to Canada’s competitive landscape?

We are promoting Canadian diversity and our Canada’s cultural mosaic through food.

“I love their passion and dedication to local food, it inspires others to take on the same passion. What’s a great way to explore a city? Eat it! It’s a wonderful experience for visitors AND Vancouverites. We have enjoyed the Cooking with BC’s Best, Chinatown tour, and Personal Chef tour of Granville Island. Worth every penny and the memory is priceless!”

TripAdvisor Guest



## Your Canadian Signature Experience

Mmmm ... do you love tasting, discovering and learning about food? Join one of Edible Canada's professional chefs as they take you on a culinary journey through Vancouver's Granville Island Public Market. The inner gourmet in you will burst with excitement as you explore this treasure trove of Canada's finest multi-cultural culinary vendors and artisans, and connect with visitors from around the world who share your passion.

With a chef at your side, roaming from vendor to vendor within the Market, you'll sample specialties from around the world and learn about the cultural influences that impact cosmopolitan Vancouver's gastronomy. Learn the secrets behind grilling Canada's famed wild sockeye salmon or get tips on searing fresh-caught spot prawns. Breathe in the aroma of a cappuccino made from a micro-roaster of organic coffee beans. Break open a freshly made baguette as you discover the infinite variety of local BC cheeses. Hop around the globe in minutes; be tantalized by savoury eastern spices, get tips on making the perfect ravioli, and learn about the process of creating Canada's unique artisan sake. Engage in discussions about BC's culinary scene, including the origins of farm-to-table cuisine.

Easily accessible by car, city transit, or motor-coach, Granville Island Public Market attracts over 12 million visitors a year and is a major culinary destination with 60 permanent vendors and a rotating roster of farmers and culinary artisans. The two-hour market tours accommodate 2-8 people, and typically visit 12 to 15 vendors. After the tour, enjoy dining in the bistro or shopping in the culinary retail shop that's perfect for foodies! Tickets must be purchased in advance. Edible Canada offers a variety of specialty culinary tours and experiences in addition to its market tours.



“Initially I was a little freaked out when we took the risk to change our staffing ratios because it added 25% more staff with zero revenue at the start! But, at the end of the day we are seeing increased sales, service scores have soared, repeat business and tips for our staff have increased.”

## How do you sell your Signature Experience?

The tour section of our website is where we have listed the Signature Experience, along with our other culinary experiences. Pre-registration is required so that we can ensure we have enough chefs available to deliver this highly personalized tour for small groups.

## Tell us something we don't know.

We have built our business model on promoting the diversity of foods available in Canada. Everything from our infrastructure decisions, to who we work with, where we source our foods, which on and off-site guest experiences we design and deliver, are all made with the customer's experience at the centre of our decision making, and finding ways to showcase Canada's amazing cuisine.

## Insights for Others

### Have you made any changes to respond to the demand for experiential travel?

Yes, probably the most effective change we've made is to our staffing model. We have reduced the number of people per guide from ten to eight. Our table servers now have only four sections rather than six.

We made conscious choice to ensure our staff had more time to spend connecting with our guests. It's a formula that as worked extremely well and a risky decision that has paid off.

## Any marketing challenges?

I would like to see where the business is coming from, the referrals about our company, and if there is any new interest from our trade partners as a result of our Signature Experience being promoted. It's difficult to track which marketing investments contribute to driving sales, especially with one individual experience. If we could get information from the CTC about what the travel trade partners are looking for, how visitors are responding to the Signature Experiences Collection and what else we could do to help drive international business, we could all learn together with this type of information.

## Any benefits of being in the Signature Experiences Collection?

Exposure for a small company like ours is really important as we can't afford to pay for print media. A valuable benefit from Signature Experiences Collection would be increased coverage in print magazines and tourism publications to help drive new international business to our door and increased sales overall. In addition, being one of a select group of key experiences across Canada is something we are very proud of.

## Any tips for others?

Hire the right staff to deliver the experience, even though it is a more expensive way to run your business. To differentiate from everyone else in your sector, you have to offer some type of memorable engagement that matches what travellers are demanding, and never compromise on quality.

## Any final words of wisdom?

Don't be afraid to take risks. If you know your business and your product, trust your instincts. Monitor the outcomes carefully and then adjust as needed as you learn what works, and what doesn't.

**Story contributed by: Eric Pateman, CEO and Founder, Edible Canada.**

**Researcher: Dr. Nancy Arsenault, Tourism Cafe Canada.**