

Crosby Molasses Company is all about family – an interview with James Crosby

The sweet smell of molasses surrounds you when entering the Crosby Molasses Company. Crosby's is a fifth-generation company started in Yarmouth 140 years ago. It has been in Saint John since 1897. We sat down with the President, James Crosby to talk about the company's history and how his family has managed to adapt and grow with the times.

James indicates that mentorship is critical for a business leader as you can learn from people who have been on similar journeys. His father serves as his mentor; as well, he works with a former business executive who has been an invaluable resource as he prepared to take on more leadership within the company.

"Entrepreneurship can be lonely and it's really important to not isolate yourself," he said. "Anyone thinking of running their own business would definitely benefit from talking to other people who have been down that road - there are so many opportunities to learn from their experience."

James participates in peer groups with the Wallace McCain Institute and the Young President's Organization (YPO). These groups provide business leaders with a confidential environment where they can share challenges and gain insight.



An interview with James Crosby – continued

“The customer is at the centre of everything we do,” shared James. “Looking after our employees is critical to us being able to achieve that goal. We are deliberate about where people want to grow personally so we can train and develop along that path. We want our company to be an enjoyable place to work, so our employees can give their best to our customers.”

James attributes the company’s success and longevity to the fact that it is a family business. James and his management team, which includes his father Jim and brother William have built a long-term strategy to gain a better understanding of the consumer mindset.

“More consumers are concerned about the impact of processed sugar on their health and are looking for natural alternatives that support sustainable practices,” James said. Consumers have an increasing interest in alternate sweeteners such as maple syrup, honey, and agave. James believes Crosby’s is well situated to meet these demands. “With our unique flavour profile, no added ingredients, and the fact our product is sourced from a single mill, we are confident that those new to molasses will be pleasantly surprised by its properties and versatility.”

Its diversity is what makes it so appealing. While more people are cooking less and less at home, Crosby’s is tapping in to its family roots to sell the experience of slowing down, spending time with family and friends to bond over home cooked meals.

“One of my favourite holiday memories is making homemade gingerbread men with my siblings and cousins,” shared James. “The memory of my mom taking the sweet and spicy dough out of the fridge and all of us gathering around to make our own has stayed with me for over 30 years – I want others to share these types of experiences.”

While Crosby’s has been operating for over a century, James indicates that it’s important to always look to the future.

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“I like being able to be in control of my own destiny,” James says about being an entrepreneur. “It’s about understanding where we’ve come from, and anticipating changes that are coming. You can’t be on your back foot if you want to succeed. We want to serve our customers better than anyone else in the market and that requires being agile, looking to the future and expanding our reach into larger markets.”