



SILGA Community Excellence Award Submission

The City of Salmon Arm is pleased to submit the Zest Commercial Food Hub for consideration for a Community Excellence Award under the category of Economic Development. Following two years of joint industry and community planning, and significant building renovations and retrofits, the Zest Commercial Food Hub, an initiative of the Salmon Arm Economic Development Society, opened its doors in Salmon Arm in November 2021.

The Challenge: The Shuswap is home to numerous established and emerging food and beverage businesses; however, affordable and accessible processing, packaging and research facilities to support value-added product development was identified as a critical supply chain gap. Substantial community and provincial support led to the development of the Zest Commercial Food Hub to address this local food processing gap.

The Solution: Zest aims to **cultivate** local food businesses, **connect** local food resources, and build the **community** food system. The Zest Commercial Food Hub is a fully staffed 4,000 sq. ft. commercial food processing facility with a 40-ft. refrigerated storage unit. This facility provides businesses access to certified processing space, shared-use equipment, cold and dry storage solutions, and knowledge and mentorship to support the launch and growth of food processing businesses. From dedicated anchor tenant space to rotating shared-use kitchen agreements, Zest offers multiple, affordable access options to support the diverse needs of start-ups and growth stage businesses.

The Economic Impact: Upon opening its doors two months ago, Zest was immediately occupied by four anchor tenant food processing businesses: Canadian Barley Tea, Wills Food Inc, Kurt's Sausage and Shuswap Merchant. Two of these businesses are growth stage businesses and two are new start-ups. These tenants are renting small processing rooms dedicated solely to their operations. All four businesses have now been onboarded and are processing their products on site. In addition to the anchor tenants, Zest has also received significant interest in the use of the shared commercial kitchen space with seven rotating users currently completing the onboarding process and the first shared use kitchen rental taking place in December 2021. Further, Zest has entered into a unique rental agreement with a food truck for the use of the Zest parking lot two days per week for direct sales, renting the shared-use kitchen for food prep, and storage space for their food truck when it is not in use. To date, it's estimated there have been more than 40 unique food and beverage products produced at Zest.

What's Next? Now that the facility is fully constructed, commercial kitchen equipment installed, operating procedures developed, and tenants actively using the space, Zest is moving into the second phase of its operations, which includes business development programming with a focus on getting local products to market. This work will include hosting on-site food markets and establishing important relationships with grocers.

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Zest Commercial Food Hub is part of the provincial food hub network, sharing knowledge and resources to support food processing across British Columbia.

FAST FACTS

- The food and beverage processing industry is the second largest manufacturing industry in Canada; It's Canada's largest manufacturing employer and provides employment for 290,000 residents.
- In British Columbia, there are more than 2,900 food and beverage processing businesses.
- The Thompson Okanagan Region accounts for approximately 16% of BC's food and beverage manufacturing.
- Zest's target market encompasses a 45-minute drive time radius. Due to Salmon Arm's central location this includes areas of CSRD, TNRD and RDNO.
- SAEDS 5 Year Action Plan identifies food and beverage processing as a priority sector for growth. Zest is a key infrastructure and programming investment designed to support this growth!

www.zestfoodhub.ca