Everspring Farms is a diversified, niche oriented, family-owned agricultural and food business. Co-founders Dale and Marianne Donaldson first started the operation as a hobby with a flock of geese in 1985. Today Everspring Farms, located in Ilderton and Seaforth, Ontario, Canada, produces unique, organic foods that serve the restaurant and gourmet food trade as well as the emerging functional food sector, with an aim to create a sustainable environment through their products.

Their business has evolved over the years as the Donaldsons built a provincially inspected poultry processing plant, where they now process 200,000 geese and ducks annually for Southwestern Ontario markets. Early on, the Donaldsons had begun growing hydroponic barley grass as a way of providing fresh grass for their birds all year round, which led them to learn about the nutritional transformation that takes place when a seed is sprouted.

They began sprouting a variety of different grains and seeds for the bakery and retail food industries. As consumer interest in health and wellness continues to grow, Everspring hopes to develop a line of healthy, tasty and innovative baking mixes using sprouted seeds to be sold as retail packaged products. Each of the blends had to hit a high bar that included being a good source of omega 3 fatty acids, protein content, carbohydrate content and GMO-free.

The FIRST team was comprised of principal investigators Rob McCurdy, FIRST’s resident Food Scientist, and Brenda Torrens, a Red Sealed Pastry Chef and George Brown graduate and current teacher. The student researcher team, made up of Zoe Smith, Caitlin Bruce, Mindy Lee, was recruited from the Centre for Hospitality and Culinary Arts. Through their work on the project, students learned firsthand about the product development process.

With their project goal in mind, the FIRST team set out to begin the prototyping phase of this project: to develop 12 recipe concepts with sprouted grains and/or other Everspring manufactured sprouted products.

Out of these, the top 8 recipes were optimized for flavor profile and ease of production assembly. Under close guidance of Everspring, FIRST modified each formulation to meet the packaging needs and scale requirements for the finalized packaged product.

All the recipes developed weren’t just tested for their taste—each formulation met stringent nutritional requirements and provided superior flavour profiles. After a round of sensory testing to gather feedback on flavour, ease of preparation and purchase intent, Everspring was given the final 8 concepts. Preparing the dry mixes was kept simple, even for the novice home baker.

Everspring was very happy with the results, the range of which incorporated blends of 6 sprouted grains and seeds like sprouted chia seeds, corn flour and black bean flour and covered a wide range of baked goods including Sprouted Banana Bread, Sprouted Black Bean Brownies, Sprouted Oatmeal Cookie and Sprouted Pumpkin Muffin. Everspring Farms is in a good place to grow their company, with plans for new product development and company diversification on the horizon.

Learn more at gbcfirst.ca