

# saltscapes

CANADA'S EAST COAST MAGAZINE

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Sausages and beer made for each other



**25**  
ANNIVERSARY

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Castles made of sand  
100 years of watercolours





STEVE SMITH, VISIONFIRE

## Brewing change

Atlantic Canadian cafés bring people together and create opportunities

BY ANDREA PERCHOTTE

**W**hen three parents of two teenage boys with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Dieppe, N.B., launched Café Inclusio, at the heart of the business was more than employment opportunities. They wanted to foster inclusivity and hope while reversing a concerning statistic.

In 2021, the employment rate of people with disabilities was 60 per cent, 16 points below the national average, according to Statistics Canada. In response, a growing number of social enterprises across Canada are operating cafés and catering companies employing primarily people with disabilities. From grab-and-go cafés to casual restaurants led by culinary professionals using locally grown ingredients, their menus range from freshly baked goods and tasty breakfast dishes to salads, wraps, and more.

Guided by support professionals who encourage them to work at their own pace, participants earn wages and work casual to part-time hours from a few months to several years, depending on the program and the needs of the participants.

Acquiring transferable skills including cooking, food handling, cashiering, and customer service, and learning to navigate some of their everyday challenges while feeling a sense of belonging and pride enable them to thrive. Some eventually transition to mainstream jobs.

Tim MacDonald has worked at the River Run Café in New Glasgow, N.S. since it opened five years ago. Besides washing dishes, his favourite aspect of the job is, “I can be on my own.” When asked how working there makes him feel, he’s quick to respond, “Good!”

Cafés across Atlantic Canada do similar work.



STEVE SMITH, VISIONFIRE

Opposite page: Jocelyn Tye, manager of the River Run Café, with one of her employees.

Above: Darrell Williams enjoys baking treats at the River Run Café. Right: Tim MacDonald is happiest working in the café's kitchen.



STEVE SMITH, VISIONFIRE

"They're doing a tremendous service in the community for these young adults," says Rob Greenwood, whose niece works at Café Inclusio. "Having the ability for her to ... work and be involved with the local community unto itself is fantastic. It means a lot to my family and the other families whose young adults work there."

What began in 2019 as a pop-up café came to a halt with the pandemic, explains Suzanne Boudreau, who founded the café along with her husband, Pierre Arsenault, and friend Nathalie Perron, parents of Joël Arsenault and Samuel DeGarie.

"The company meant a lot to the boys and when we started being able to go out in the community again, they kept asking (about it)," says Boudreau. So, the trio pivoted to a coffee delivery service and in 2022, the café opened in the cozy, historic Maison Doiron.

"Our mission is a world of inclusion," says Suzanne Boudreau whose team includes 10, plus three volunteers. She recounts when a couple of visitors

arrived looking, "a little uncomfortable." Greenwood's niece enthusiastically welcomed them, assuring them, "You'll always have a friend at Café Inclusio!"

Greenwood adds: "It's a great, inspiring place ... We need to understand and appreciate (the workers) and give them opportunities."

They dream of opening a second location, adds Boudreau. "We will never be lacking for employees because there are tons of young adults that have a hard time finding employment," she says.

Sharing a setting in a heritage building is the River Run Café located where New Glasgow's first department store once stood. Riverview Home Corporation is a non-profit organization that dates to 1886, operates the café. Clients include people with physical and intellectual disabilities, brain injuries, and mental-health conditions.

Café manager Jocelyn Tye recounts the transformation of one worker who, "didn't really want much interaction with the

customers and he didn't want to make the drinks ... Now ... (he) can pretty much run the whole front of house ... He has great customer service," she says. "He's a figure in the café and the community."

Also laying the foundation for fulfilling employment is the New Leaf Café, with locations in Halifax and Dartmouth, N.S. The provincial branch of Easter Seals founded New Leaf Enterprises in 1958. The international Easter Seals organization advocates for people with physical, intellectual, sensory, and learning disabilities.

Linked to another long-standing initiative is the Halifax-based, gluten-free North End Baking Company. The non-profit Prescott Group operates it. Established in 1962, the organization serves people with developmental and intellectual disabilities. Drawing on more than four decades in food services and catering, the café opened in 2021.

"I'll often explain that we're a social enterprise," says supervisor Kelsey Fox. "People seem to really love to support

## Coffee with a conscience

### Café Inclusio

1150 Amirault St., Dieppe, N.B.,  
(506) 871-0371  
cafeinclusio.ca

### Maple House Bakery & Café

76 Ellis Ave., O'Leary, P.E.I.,  
(902) 859-2774  
communityinclusions.com/menus-1

### New Leaf Café

22 Fielding Ave., Dartmouth, N.S.,  
(902) 455-9044  
1341 Summer St., Halifax, N.S.,  
(902) 455-9044  
easterseals.ns.ca/  
new-leaf-enterprises

### North End Baking Company

5515 Clyde St., Halifax, N.S.,  
(902) 454-7387  
northendbaking.com

### The Pantry Café & Gardens

70 Clinch Cres., St. John's, N.L.,  
(709) 722-8200  
thepantrynl.com

### River Run Café

151 Provost St., Suite 102,  
New Glasgow, N.S., 902-695-6111  
riverviewhome.ca/services/  
social-enterprise

### Snook Café

184 Arthur St., Truro, N.S.,  
(902) 893-7228  
stepsonarthur.com/  
our-social-enterprises

### Steel Grounds Café

258 Ferry St., Sydney, N.S.,  
(902) 539-8553  
Joan Harriss Cruise Pavilion,  
74 Esplanade, Sydney, N.S.,  
(902) 539-8553  
horizon-ns.ca/social-enterprises/  
steel-grounds-cafe



BRENDA WILLIAMS

Hayley Moore from the Pantry Café and Gardens

that ... It's a community hub we are growing towards and what we aspire to be."

Across the Cabot Strait in St. John's, N.L., you'll find The Pantry Café and Gardens in the Elaine Dobbin Centre for Autism. Opened in 2006, proceeds from the restaurant benefit the Autism Society of Newfoundland & Labrador.

Dave Philpott frequently visits The Pantry. "I watch how they develop and grow," he says, recalling one worker who went from barely bussing tables to taking orders and working the cash register. "He has just blossomed ... Yes, the (workers) are making gains and growth in their developmental trajectories, but we're making gains in our own emotional trajectories of understanding disability and embracing diversity. It's just been remarkable to watch how (the café has) opened up the eyes of so many people."

Echoing that sentiment is Rushell MacDonald, human-resources coordinator of the non-profit organization Community Inclusions which operates the Maple House Bakery & Café in O'Leary, P.E.I. She points out that participants are not merely acquiring employment skills. "It's the social aspect," she says. "That, I think, is probably one of the most vital parts of the bakery ... It really ensures that the community knows what inclusion is and what we're doing. We can't succeed without the community."

Established as the Maple House Bakery in 1972, it expanded to include the café nearly a decade ago. Proceeds fund programs for adults with intellectual disabilities. "Inclusion is teaching us how to be better citizens," says Philpott, "more compassionate ... to see strengths versus differences."





# Maple Turnip Soup

Yield: 8-10 servings

## INGREDIENTS

- 3 medium onions, chopped
- 5 celery stalks, chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 4 carrots, diced small
- 5 large turnips, chopped
- 2 sweet potatoes, diced
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 1-1 ½ cups (250-375 mL) maple syrup, to taste  
(start with ½ cup and adjust as necessary)
- 4-8 cups (1-2 L) vegetable stock or enough to fill  
¾ of your soup pot

## METHOD

1. In a large soup pot over medium-high heat, add a splash of oil and sauté the onions, garlic, celery, and carrots for 5-6 minutes until softened.
2. Stir in the turnips and sweet potatoes. Cook for another 4 minutes.
3. Pour in enough vegetable stock to fill the pot ¾ full. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat, and simmer until all vegetables are tender, about 45-60 minutes.
4. Use an immersion blender to blend the soup until smooth and creamy. For extra silky texture, blend in batches using a countertop blender.
5. Taste and season with additional salt, pepper, or more maple syrup as desired. 🍁

Source: Chef Brenda Williams/*The Pantry Café and Gardens*