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# The Employment Journey

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## The best comes out of the blue waters: Oyster company plans for expansion and more staff

by Patricia Roy

**F**uture Seafoods Inc. is an oyster growing and processing company located on the south shore of PEI. They are planning to expand the operations to produce a new line of ready-to-serve frozen oysters, and will hire more staff once the new plant is in operation.

“Salutation Cove in the community of Fernwood is a unique area,” says **Ted Boutilier**, Director of Global Sales and Marketing at Future Seafoods Inc. “This area has the purest blue water anywhere in the world for growing oysters because it is surrounded by Mother Nature’s natural filter – marshland.”

Future Seafoods is a privately owned, incorporated company with three partners, each with their own area of expertise. “I look after sales and general operations of the facility,” says Ted. “**Erskine Lewis** works on the oyster leases and buys oysters. His brother **Brian Lewis** looks after the purchasing for the plant and in the summer offers tours for visitors.”

### What the business is all about

The business grows, buys and sells oysters to markets across Canada and the US under the brand name **Rocky Bay Premium Oysters**. The company began about seven years ago and has continued to expand ever since. The last major expansion was the construction

of the current facility in 2007. “We will be expanding again within the next three months,” says Ted.

### Staffing needs

The company’s 200 acres of oyster leases are harvested by three employees. Nine people are employed in the plant itself. The business also buys products from 35 independent oyster fishers. “We are striving for full time employment, but right now it is April to January,” says Ted.

### New expansion will produce a new product

“The upcoming expansion will enable us to operate year round with a new line of frozen product. We will need another five to seven new employees in the plant once that side of the business is operational.”

The workers for the new section of the plant will work in a different type of environment and will wear the type of clothing used for laboratory work. “The new area will be warm compared to some parts of the plant,” says Ted.

The frozen product line will be packed in a new type of biodegradable tray developed in Canada and is made from sugar cane. These containers remain cool to the touch and enables the consumer to take the oysters from freezer to oven to table.



Ted Boutilier, Director of Global Sales and Marketing, checks out a box of recently harvested oysters with plant workers Joyce Adams and Wendy Ramsay.

### Tour experiences

Increasing awareness about the oyster industry is part of the overall vision at Future Seafoods. The company has partnered with a local entrepreneur to provide tours of the oyster leases and tour inside the plant. Tourists go out on an oyster dory and are shown how to harvest oysters. The experience also includes learning how to shuck oysters and tasting some of the products in the facility’s kitchen.

Old oyster shells are placed on the ocean floor where oyster spats will naturally stick to the shells. When the spats are about a year old and about the size of a quarter, they bring them out of the water and scrape them off the shells. They put these baby oysters back into the water where they will continue to grow until they are ready to be harvested.

### How the product is grown

“We produce different varieties of oysters, all in natural sea beds,” says Ted. “We tend our oyster beds year-round and harvest 11 months of the year.” In the winter months, they take snowmobiles across the frozen cove and use chainsaws to cut holes in the ice to harvest the oysters.

### Plans for the future

“We plan to grow more oysters and expand the plant,” says Ted. “Our aim is to continue to sustain and even increase our price in the marketplace so that we can continue to grow our business and keep paying good wages.”

For more information, call **Ted Boutilier** at 887-3012 or visit [www.futureseafoods.com](http://www.futureseafoods.com)

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