



Tom Hayter, President and second generation turkey farmer, Hayter's Turkey Farm

## DO THE RIGHT THING and the rest will come

*By Heather Nahatchewitz, OIMP Marketing and Communications Director*

I visited Hayter's Farm prior to the May long weekend and before I even parked, I noticed the difference. A massive sign outside the retail store advertised a BBQ fundraiser on one side and a message to support the fireman's breakfast on the other. On a direct route to the shores of Lake Huron, you'd think this prime advertising real estate would be encouraging drivers' to stop by and pick up some turkey products for their long weekend festivities. But no, it was used to promote charity – a premise that runs through the heart of the operation – do the right thing and the rest will come.

It was 1948, when Harry Hayter decided to make a move from beef farming to turkeys and since that time his children and grandchildren have honoured his position of integrity – to raise the best turkey possible. Harry's children Tom Hayter and Joanne Maguire run the show now, Tom in charge of farm operations and Joanne the plant.

A true farm-to-fork operation, Hayter's Turkey Farm (the actual farm), Hayter's Turkey Products Inc. (the processing facility), and Hayter's Farm (the brand and retail operation) all operate at the same Dashwood address. Going one step further, you will find a family member at every step of the operation, ensuring top quality product for the end consumer each and every time.

Although generous and down to earth people, the Hayter's are also astute business operators who never let a good opportunity pass by unconsidered, and are constantly looking to the future for new processes and products to meet changing market demands. In fact, new ideas are pitched at the weekly family meeting, like they would be at any other company, with members encouraged to research new processes and products and bring back what may work for their own operation. As a close-knit family business, each member is expected to carry their workload and step-up when and where needed, even if that includes a last minute Saturday run to Toronto, or what was to be a day off spent in the plant to ensure orders are filled and retail shelves stocked.

Before I could sit down with Sean Maguire, Sales & Information Systems, to talk about Hayter's, I got a sneak peek of the latest development, the construction of a test kitchen located above the retail store and next to the business offices. Partly funded by a RED grant received in 2011, the enthusiasm Sean showed when talking about plans for the kitchen was apparent. Although plausible the test kitchen could be used

for just that – testing products – Sean shared the many other ways the kitchen could be best utilized including a studio for YouTube cooking demos, sales rep training, and for pitches to potential new wholesale customers.

When asked about his personal favourite turkey product, Sean promptly replied the turkey tenderloin as the most tender and versatile cut. When asked the most popular product, it was the Sage and Onion Breast roast both at their retail and through Longo's private label sales. Turkey sausages and burgers followed closely behind, but their latest venture into further processed product (i.e. pepperettes) is quickly becoming popular. Even though Hayter's sales are now predominantly wholesale driven, the retail store remains central to the success as it provides a testing ground for new products. It's a walk-in showcase with a captive audience and

allows Hayter's to make small runs and see how they fare before introducing into other markets. The store also helps with brand awareness as the unique and attractive new packaging proudly displays the Hayter logo. Hayter's remaining sales come from customers like Longo's, local Sobey's locations, independents, and restaurant chains, including Duke Pubs in the GTA.

Of great importance to the Hayter clan is heritage, tradition and family. So much so, that the logo was created to represent more than a brand and to be a reminder of where they came from. The house is an actual home on the property where Harry Hayter himself was born, lived and passed away. The willow tree, once small in old photos and now grand, marks the passing of time. Three turkeys represent three generations of involvement. And as the first members of the fourth generation are only just in grade school, there isn't any concern over logo redesign, I was reassured.

Also extremely important to Hayter's is their staff. Awards for long-term employment appear in the office, but more importantly, their comfort and well-being are considered whenever possible. An example of this would be the new cooling system installed last year – a definite upgrade in terms of efficiency, but also designed to avoid the 'wind-chill' effect in the plant. The cool air floats down as opposed to a fan blowing on employees already in a cold environment.

It's true that the holiday season allows for little to no festivities beforehand, but a parking lot ball hockey game on Boxing Day has become a family tradition and a way to reconnect leaving the stress of operations behind. Grandma's birthday and a cousin's wedding also allow time to be family and not just colleagues or co-workers. Regardless, even when pushed, Sean could not think of a time when a disagreement held up progress, and that they generally get along, family or not. "We work hard and play hard," Sean explains. To do the right thing means considering the welfare of all stakeholders (even the turkeys are brought into the plant on a wagon and avoid the added stress of a truck ride), but remembering

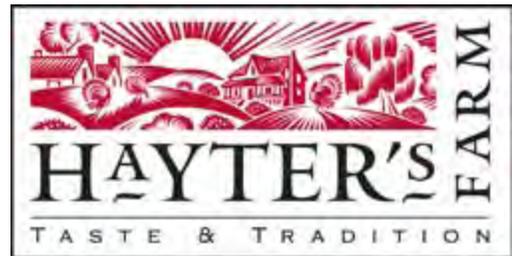


Back: Justin Hayter, Tom Hayter, Elaine Hayter; Middle: Sean Maguire, Joanne Maguire, Lindsay-Jayne Hayter, Adam Hayter; Front: Dave Maguire

*"Membership with the OIMP is important because it keeps us in touch with our peers."*

~Sean Maguire, Sales & Information Systems, Hayter's Farm

that this is a business and that the end goal is to grow. And the more people accept turkey as an everyday protein option, the more opportunities will open for Hayter's Farm. I look forward to the day when I can visit my local grocer and pick up my favourite maple turkey breakfast sausages. And, thankfully, I don't believe that day is far.



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