

# History of Canada's Food System:

## How it's Changed



### PRE-COLONIZATION



- The history of food in Canada begins with the hunting and gathering, fishing and farming lifestyles of First Nations peoples
- In Eastern Canada, Aboriginal communities farmed corn, beans and squash around the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence, and nomadic groups hunted and gathered throughout the Boreal forest. Bison were central to life on the plains and salmon to life on the Pacific Coast.

### 1500'S-1800'S



- In the 16th century, Europeans started fishing for cod off of Newfoundland
- In 1899, dried cod, dried hake, canned salmon, fresh herring, and fresh lobster made up the bulk of the commercial catch



### 1950-2000

- Food prices in 1951 were 5x times higher than before the Second World War
- First fast-food restaurant in Canada was A&W in 1956
- In 1961 spending on food, including restaurant meals and alcoholic beverages, made up 28% of total consumer spending in Canada
- 122% increase in employment in the restaurant industry between 1971 and 1986
  - Including the supply management system for meat and dairy in 1972
- Food self-sufficiency was an important feature of a healthy nation up until the 20th century when trade became much more prevalent



### 2000's

- More and more people employed in the tertiary sector
  - In early 2000s, more than 1 million people employed in this sector
- 92% of farms had a tractor as of 2006
- Decrease in employment in the primary and secondary sectors due to increased tech and efficiencies, but increase in tertiary (retail and food service) due to an increase in services and an increase in imports
- Transportation has greatly increased, allowing for more efficient distribution
  - This means less of a need for local food - it can come from much farther away
- 2011, the number of farms fell by 72 per cent to 205,730, and average farm size more than tripled to 315 ha
- increase in food spoilage and waste

### 1900-1950



- Canadians spend less proportionately on food today than they did in the past
- In 1913, staple foods made up more than half a family's weekly budget in many Canadian cities
- In 1921, Canada was largely a rural country, with half of Canadians living in rural areas
- Agriculture = 33% of all jobs in 1921
- For example, in 1941, farm numbers peaked at 732,832 and average farm size was 96 hectares



Groceries

