

# Retailer crafts a Maritime success story

**The Wicker Emporium** has carved a niche for itself as a home furniture and décor chain

BY RON BARRY

It's impossible to talk about Wicker Emporium without first introducing the company's founder, Madan Kapahi.

What started as a futile shopping excursion to furnish his Halifax home with wicker furniture turned into a prosperous career – not only for the president and CEO, but for his son and daughter-in-law, Raj and Priyanka Kapahi.

It's a genuine made-in-the-Maritimes retail success story, and the Kapahi family has brought a slice of it to East Point Shopping as one of the centre's four new businesses to open in 2014.

"My father started the business in 1972," said Raj, noting that it came about because he could not find the wicker furniture he was looking for on the local market. "Coming from India, he also saw this business as offering him the opportunity to travel back to Asia frequently, which would allow him to keep his close family ties.

"I have been involved in the business in some way shape of form for most of my life. I can remember working in the warehouse during summer vacation throughout high school. After graduating from university and returning from a four-year stay in Asia, I decided to join my father because it offered me a great opportunity to build the business into a national brand as well as travel the world sourcing the best possible

products for the Canadian market."

Today, the family's chain of stores numbers 24, operating in the Atlantic region and Ontario. While quality wicker products remain its signature, it has diversified smoothly into offering wood-based furniture and an expansive array of home décor items, from pillows and cushions to rugs and quilts to mirrors and wall art – its home accessories seem limitless. In fact, Raj quips that he doesn't have a favorite time of year to shop since he shops for a living as a buyer for the company. And, he adds that pricing and store promotions attract customers, as does the product mix, which is always changing... always fresh.

"And, as an Atlantic Canadian home furniture and home décor retailer, I consider myself to be a good local option for the Saint John market," he said. "I believe that the purpose behind the "shop local" movement is to keep the money which is being spent circulating in the local economy."

As Wicker Emporium anticipates what will follow Black Friday – "the Christmas shopping season is the most important season for my business," says Raj – the company is over the moon about the launch of ecommerce home delivery on their web site ([www.wickeremporium.ca](http://www.wickeremporium.ca)).

"Through the upgraded web site, customers can now order online for delivery direct to their door," said Raj. "The site allows real time shipping and handling quotes. We can now provide easy and convenient access of our products to customers who may live in more-remote areas and can't easily visit a brick and mortar store location. We also access customers in new markets across the country where we don't have store locations. I am very excited about this new development."



Wicker Emporium founder Madan Kapahi (left), with his son Raj, the chief operating officer, and Raj's wife Priyanka, the marketing director. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE WICKER EMPORIUM

# The goji's way: 'keeping it real'

If you're up for a little 15-minute vacation, frozen yogurt franchise is the place to go

BY RON BARRY

Janette Zacharias has a treat for everyone under the sun – a vacation.

A partner in the goji's Frozen Yogurt ownership family, Zacharias is thrilled that a franchise has opened its doors at East Point Shopping, bringing an ever-popular product to an ever-growing centre.

"East Point is a vibrant, beautiful, growth-oriented development that holds the same high standards in their development as goji's has for its stores," said Zacharias. "East Point has been wonderful to work with and goji's is excited to be part of their retail centre."

And, she's serious about that vacation promise – to wit: "goji's has achieved a warm, boutique-like atmosphere and ambiance that gives our customers a feel-good '15-minute vacation' from their everyday lives. Our upbeat customer service is also a key part of the goji's

experience."

The family chain opened its first store two years ago in Dieppe. The name came courtesy of Quinn Zacharias, one of the owners' daughters, who was 16 at the time. Quinn also designed the original logo, which has since been tweaked by the pros, but is still true to her vision.

The chain offers an exclusive line of yogurts, gelatos, sorbets and Almond milk yogurt. goji's yogurt has six strains of live and active culture, the highest in the industry. Probiotics are so important to people's health and well-being with each strain providing a specific health benefit. goji's creamy gelato is a low-fat, healthier option to premium ice cream. Sorbets are dairy free as is our exclusive Almond Milk Yogurt; both are very attractive options for vegan and lactose intolerant consumers.

The owner of the East Point franchise, Barbara Sellars, is particularly excited about the new Almond Milk Yogurt.

"We're exclusive in Canada – goji's is the only place that offers this product," said Sellars. "Almond milk is a big buzz word for health benefits, for low sugars, not to mention that vegans and dairy-free are two of the other options. It's fun to see people come in and enjoy a texture



goji's Frozen Yogurt at East Point PHOTO: KEITH HAWKINS

that comes closer to an ice cream than yogurt who couldn't enjoy. We're trying to have something one."

Sellars' landing at East Point fruition of her journey with the clan. She had been involved in grand openings for four of their the Moncton-Shediac-Riverview area and saw it as a positive experience.

"I thought it would be a good Sellars. "The product itself and the aesthetics of the East Point site were very appealing, but I was also confident in the integrity of the company."

The family-owned business got ground with the assistance of a primary consultant and development of the four corpora

SAINT JOHN SEA DOGS HOLIDAY Flex Pack

Get your CHRISTMAS Shopping done EARLY!

AVAILABLE NOV 1

Available at the Harbour Station box office: Shop online at Sea Dog Styles

Open

For live chat, push door.

**Real local people. Real local service.**

With State Farm® every policy comes with your own personal agent. I pride myself on being part of the local community so I can truly understand and best serve the needs of my customers.

**Get to a better State.® Get State Farm.® CALL ME TODAY.**

Rob Scott Ins Agcy Ltd  
Rob Scott, Agent  
670 Charles Street

Walmart

Save money. Live better.

450 Westm  
(506) 634 6