

G.S. Dunn

G.S. Dunn is the world’s largest dry mustard miller, distributing to over fifty countries across six continents.

Headquarters	80 Park Street N, Hamilton, Ontario, L8R 2M9
Year Established	1867
NAICS	311940 - Seasoning and dressing manufacturing
Employees	32
Major Expansions	2019
Exports	US, Asia-Pacific, EU, Central America, South America
Parent Company	N/A
Other Locations	Seed Procurement Facility - Alberta

As some of the oldest traded commodities in the world, spices have a rich history. As long ago as the 15th century, wars were fought to gain control over the sea routes used to import valuable spices to Europe. Even now, spices still command a huge market, as some of the most established companies in the world deal in spices. One such company is Canada’s own G.S. Dunn Ltd., the world’s largest dry mustard miller, which operates out of Hamilton, Ontario. G.S. Dunn was founded by the Dunn family of England in 1867, originally starting as a dual spice and soap company but eventually evolving into a spice firm only. As one of the oldest companies still currently manufacturing in Hamilton, G.S. Dunn shifted in 1923 to specialize solely in milling dry mustard.

Dry mustard milling involves the breaking down of whole mustard seeds into a powder or flour form. However, this can be done in a variety of different ways, all yielding a unique final product to meet differing customer requirements. One of the most popular G.S. Dunn products is mustard flour, which is produced “by successive grinding and sifting to remove the bran of the mustard seed and produce a fine powder comprising the heart [kernel] of the seed.” The mustard flour is then sold to businesses that use it for its emulsification property in their products. Another popular offering is ground mustard (produced by grinding whole seeds)—used primarily in sauces. These are only a few of the ways in which mustard seed can be milled; G.S. Dunn has twenty-four different product offerings in total, highlighting the versatility of mustard seed.

The decision to settle in Hamilton in 1867 was largely based on the ready access to Lake Ontario for shipping purposes. Clearly, this decision has withstood the test of time, as G.S. Dunn will be celebrating its 150th anniversary. Catering to social trends and desires, the company mission focuses on producing

healthy, plant-based ingredients while also eliminating any use of artificial ingredients, in order to facilitate better eating habits. G.S. Dunn's product is 100 per cent Canadian, using whole mustard seed that is farmed in the Canadian Prairies, then ground and sifted in house to produce the final product.

Catering to a "Made in Canada" mentality and healthy eating ideals has paid off for G.S. Dunn, as its customer base is constantly growing.

Customers include spice powerhouse McCormick & Company, as well as the Kraft Heinz Company. All of G.S. Dunn's sales are business to business, and meeting all of the requirements of some of these large corporations can be a daunting task. However, G.S. Dunn passes these tests with flying colours due to a focus on the three elements that its customers value most: quality, consistency, and customer service. By attaining the highest quality certifications for food safety, the firm gives its customers a greater sense of security, and helps to avoid any potential problems with product recalls. Specialization in mustard also means that there will be no contamination with other spices, adding to a consistency that customers can rely on.

As the largest dry mustard miller in the world, it is no surprise that G.S. Dunn distributes worldwide, exporting 92 per cent of its total product. Out of the six continents and 61 different countries that the company exports to, the United States represents its largest market, followed by Asia, Europe, and Latin America. In the global context, Canada is an extremely small market, which (coupled with Health Canada's categorizing of mustard as an allergen) greatly restricts domestic growth.

Yet this does not deter G.S. Dunn, as a large part of its business model consists of educating customers on the uses and benefits of mustard, with an eye towards continuous growth opportunities both within Canada and abroad. In order to stay one step ahead of the changing business environment, innovation must always be present—even within an industry as archaic as spice. Currently, G.S. Dunn is undertaking research to uncover the full uses of mustard, with one of its main goals being the ability to use mustard as a plant-based protein.

By focusing on tapping into new markets and educating customers, G.S. Dunn has experienced healthy, organic growth of 10 per cent annually over the past few years. Contributing to this growth is the company workforce, consisting of over 30 full-time employees with skill sets ranging from millers to lab technicians. To attract the requisite talent, G.S. Dunn networks through various business connections and occasionally uses recruiting agencies when searching for a specialized position, such as milling. Once these positions are filled, the company does an excellent job at retaining talent.

While the spice wars may be over, G.S. Dunn has spent the last 150 years fighting for market share, all while changing its identity to stay ahead of trends and consumer preferences. It seems clear that by continuing to educate customers on the benefits of mustard, and focusing on ways to innovate a seemingly unvarying product, G.S. Dunn will continue to achieve success in the next 150 years as well.