

# Sweets from the Earth

Sweets from the Earth is a family-owned, vegan specialty baked goods manufacturer with over 150 types of desserts produced.

<b>Headquarters</b>	234 Canarctic Drive, North York, Ontario, M3J 2N7
<b>Year Established</b>	2002
<b>NAICS</b>	311814 - Commercial bakeries and frozen bakery product manufacturing
<b>Employees</b>	45
<b>Major Expansions</b>	2005, 2010, 2012, 2017
<b>Exports</b>	US
<b>Parent Company</b>	N/A
<b>Other Locations</b>	Gluten free manufacturing - North York, Nut free manufacturing - North York

“Sweet. Natural. Sinfully delicious.” Welcome to Sweets from the Earth, North York manufacturer of possibly the most delicious vegan baked goods on earth. It’s a family business with a bent for social responsibility.

Just before we meet with VP Marc Kadonoff at his Canarctic Drive office, we’re offered decadent, melt-in-your-mouth chocolate chip cookies. Like all their products, the treats were vegan, non-GMO, dairy-free, egg-free, cholesterol-free, refined sugar-free, free of artificial colours and flavor, trans-fat free and certified kosher, produced in either the nut-free or gluten-free facility.

Lavender cupcakes, Goji superstuff cookies, apple beet muffins, chocolate zucchini loaves, organic Medjool date squares, wild blueberry cheesecake... What heavenly names to spark the imagination and stimulate the taste buds.

The secret? Only use ingredients you can pronounce, reveals president and founder Ilana Kadonoff. Their flourless cashew cookies, for example, only contain natural cashew butter, organic evaporated cane juice, organic tofu, baking soda, and sea salt.

“Ilana’s like a mad scientist,” her brother Marc jokes fondly. She travels the world hunting for the best and most expensive ingredients. How they choose their sweeteners is a perfect example. “Let’s start with fructose, at the bottom,” Kadonoff illustrates. “Then you have your normal, refined sugar. Molasses is slightly higher up. At the top, you have organic cane sugar, agave syrup, and coconut palm sugar as well as natural fruits and vegetables like carrots, apples, beets, organic medjool dates and bananas. Those are the



sweeteners we use.”

Sourcing ingredients is the biggest challenge, especially since their cost of ingredients is many times that for normal bakeries. And while they are conscious of their environmental footprint and make every effort to source locally, coconut trees or rice paddies can be hard to find in Ontario.

Finding suppliers that meet Sweets from the Earth’s standards can be difficult – if Ilana does not respect their business model, she will turn them down. And the ones that do meet the siblings’ stringent criteria must jump through numerous quality control hoops. But the Kadonoffs will settle for nothing but the best – if Ilana won’t feed it to her young children, she won’t feed it to her customers.

Loyalty to customers is key. “People come to us for health, medical, vegan, allergy-related, religious, and ethical reasons,” Kadonoff explains. “If you don’t care about any of those, you’ll go buy a \$3 box of Oreos.”

If you do care, you can find Sweets from the Earth in over one thousand retailers across Canada, including Loblaws, Metro, Sobeys, Second Cup and Whole Foods. They’ve yet to enter the U.S. market – “all in good time,” Kadonoff says. They aim for sustainable growth in a way that is responsible to their customers and employees.

Sweets from the Earth employs 45 workers, with skills ranging from high school graduates to skilled chefs and wedding cake decorators with years of experience. The Kadonoffs, as a family-run business, are fiercely loyal to their employees.

They are also dedicated to giving back to the community. Several times a week, Sweets from the Earth responds to fundraising events or sponsors community events. They also partner with local schools, non-profits and government agencies on nutrition programs.

One such collaboration with the Toronto Public Health Organization aims to make healthy food available to underprivileged neighbourhoods. “Now, when kids walk into their corner convenience store,” Marc beams, “instead of grabbing that \$2 bag of chips, they can get a healthy Sweets from the Earth cookie or muffin for even less!”

The idea is that feeding children healthier foods will benefit the entire community, and society as a whole. Kadonoff emphasizes that they are not running this as a charity – they make a profit. They want to show other businesses that it is possible to help their communities, and make money doing so.

Since its inception, social consciousness has been at the forefront of Sweets from the Earth. Decades ago, seven-year-old Ilana discovered to her horror that her food was coming from cute, fluffy animals. She promptly became vegetarian. Years later, she decided to pursue her passion for baking by attending pastry school before starting her own vegan bakery, enlisting her family as the business grew. This was Ilana’s way of being an animal rights activist.

Ilana started with nothing but a mission: to prove to the world that it is possible to make vegan, healthy,



sustainable and environment-friendly treats that also taste amazing. If what they say is true – that veganism will save the world – then Sweets from the Earth is spearheading that campaign, one sinfully delicious bite at a time.

Now, her company was recently recognized in Canada's Profit 500 as one of the country's fastest growing companies. Ilana herself was named one of Canada's 2014 Top Female Entrepreneurs.

And what does the future hold for this wonder of a manufacturer? "Cool stuff – but I'm not telling!" Marc Kadonoff grins. He does say that they are exploring ways to extract nutrition from untraditional sources. Things Canada has never seen before. "The question," Marc declares, "is whether the world is ready for us."

#### Update:

In the past three and a half years, Marc and Ilana have been busy expanding all areas of the business, including its product line, international presence, and production capabilities.

When we last profiled Sweets from the Earth in 2015, the firm was thinking about entering the U.S. market. In 2017 the firm established a U.S. sister brand, Treats from the Earth, and is currently in advanced partnership discussions with several U.S. grocers. The business aims for a 2020 launch in U.S. supermarkets. Already, the firm is able to reach the U.S. market through select online retailers such as Amazon and Jet.com.

Towards the end of 2017, Sweets from the Earth introduced a new product line of natural baby food. While this division is still small, it is well positioned to take advantage of the growing market for organic infant and toddler snacks. The business is continuing to search for niche market opportunities driven by health-conscious consumers. These opportunities are often discovered through customer feedback and suggestions. The firm is currently in the process of launching a diabetic-friendly product line, as the demand for sugar-free foods rises.

Sweets from the Earth has also upgraded its production capabilities, adding more space and introducing a significant amount of automation. Between a new production facility with and upsizing its old facilities, Sweets from the Earth has added 41,000 square feet of new production space. Large investments in productivity have meant that despite growing sales, the business has not had to expand its workforce. However, now that the business is exploring new market opportunities, it is beginning to hire more workers for the future.

For the past five years, Sweets from the Earth has been named one of Growth 500's (formerly Profit 500) fastest growing companies in Canada. With the firm's strong execution of its past plans, and many more plans for future expansion, Sweets from the Earth expects to continue with strong growth well into the future.