



Love Beets Finds Much to Love About Rochester, NY

Access to key agricultural resources, proximity to major markets and the presence of respected universities gave Love Beets Managing Director Daniel Cross and his leadership team the confidence that the UK-based company, which offers organic beet and beet juice products, could establish its North American presence in Western New York.

“The Northeast is where our sales had become most established, and we needed an area that had both the local supplier of beets and good growers growing beets, but also the infrastructure to get them to our factory,” Cross said. “We also were looking ... to become a real global center of excellence for beet growing because we believe there's an opportunity for exporting to South America and potential other parts of the world.”

Developing Key Partnerships



That was the starting point, Cross said, that brought Love Beets to the Greater Rochester, NY region. What made the decision, however, were the partnerships Rochester provides. “Finding companies like Dewey Produce, one of the market leaders in North America’s beet supply chains, as well as the presence of Cornell University and Rochester Institute of Technology in the region gave us the confidence that this is an area that we can develop for beet growing to really mark us apart.”

When it was time to lay down roots in Rochester, the company continued its partnerships, joining forces with LiDestri Foods because of the food and beverage manufacturing company’s family-oriented background and CEO Giovanni LiDestri’s inspiration, positivity and initiative—he called Love Beets personally to share ideas regarding a partnership. “LiDestri helped us set up and develop a network very quickly so that we could build as quickly as possible to get into production. They’re still very supportive today—we’re focused on working together for the future.”

Prior to investing in the Rochester area, Love Beets was importing product from the UK by way of New Jersey. The company built up coast-to-coast distribution and began offering products across North America. Once they decided to manufacture in Rochester, they were welcomed with open arms—and quick action. “In general, we had a welcoming experience and State support to get our build done,” Cross said. “We had a very tight time scale once we decided we needed a plant in the USA. We wanted to get it done as quickly as possible because we had committed to crops. So, the available support was very useful for us to launch quickly.”

Laying Down (Beet) Roots



Now, Love Beets is at Eastman Business Park (EBP) in Rochester, a perfect fit. What attracted them to the site, Cross said, was steam generation, which allows the company to efficiently cook beets, as well as proper waste reduction and disposal. For Love Beets, EBP provides the opportunity to focus on sustainability and the environment, very important efforts of the company, which “operate[s] with two key principles—how do we make more with less (using fewer beets, less energy and less water to make more product) and how do we hand over the

resources and infrastructure better than how we found it,” Cross said. “We follow these two key principles all the way through our process, including any key decisions we have to make.”

Love Beets began building at EBP in mid-2015 and began manufacturing in late 2016. Today, the company is focused on growth. “We have 125 people now in Eastman Business Park and we’re expanding. I’ve been very impressed with the skill levels of our employees,” Cross said. In return, Love Beets invests in Rochester’s talented workforce. “A lot of people are looking for a long-term commitment and it’s great to know that we can invest in and develop those people and in turn they’re going to help with our growth in the future.”

Growing a Business



As Love Beets grows, Cross is confident in the area’s ability to support growth. “It’s really about scaling up our business, building on strong foundations to further develop the local agriculture in Western NY, and improve our supply chain here. There are resources in this area to do that better than anywhere else,” he said.

In addition, as the company scales up, Cross knows he can rely on the area’s universities to provide talent. “As a rapidly growing business, one of the main

factors for us is ability to scale up. Proximity to Cornell University, Rochester Institute of Technology, University of Rochester, Monroe Community College and others,” he said. “We’re working very closely with Cornell in agriculture and beet cropping. 2018 is the year for our plan to bring talent from the local education system.”

Now, Love Beets is settling into Rochester. “The Northeast is the most like Europe in the way business is conducted. ... It’s very similar in terms of decision-making and pace,” he said. Scaling to Canada, Mexico and the US has been challenging because of the size of North America, but Love Beets continues to grow, encouraging a renaissance for a previously neglected root.

“The important thing for us is trying to get beets to as many people as possible. There is often an instant love/hate relationship that a lot of people have,” Cross said. “The stories I’ve heard in the UK and in the US are ‘Aww, my grandma made me beets and they didn’t taste great. They were boiled for seven hours.’ And we’re trying to bring a different spin to it, preparing a cooked product that’s ready for people—juices, as well, powders that are great for smoothies, and flavored products with vinegar and flavored infusions, which really are our core expertise.”

A Beet Renaissance



No longer are beets relegated to Grandma’s pot. “They’re a great-tasting, naturally healthy, nutritious product, but difficult to prepare,” Cross said. “And so, really, our mission is to make them more convenient, more accessible and easier for the consumer by cooking them, juicing them or turning them into powder,” he said. “It’s easier for the consumer to handle while receiving all those health benefits, particularly when beets are so naturally good for you—for your heart, blood flow and circulation.”

The company continues to innovate with new products, including a Beet Salsa, which debuted in December 2017, and the Golden Beets, which feature diced golden beetroot cooked with honey and vinegar. The Golden Beets are “for people who are into beets, who like the flavor and are more adventurous with their vegetables,” Cross said. The salsa, on the other hand, is for those who are looking to change up their traditional dip while trying out a new vegetable. If Rochesterians are hankering for Love Beets products, they can be found locally at Wegmans and Tops.

Cross and the Love Beets team rely on the talented agricultural industry of Western NY to make sure their beet products are fresh. “We want to make sure that people get the best possible experience,” he said. So, the growers, who generally harvest from August to November, provide fresh beets. Then the company keeps them in controlled-atmosphere storage to keep them longer. “It’s the raw material grown and harvested in New York that gives it that freshness,” Cross said. Then, “all the beets are graded, washed, sorted and prepared for cooking.

A Perfect Fit

As the company—and Cross—settle in and lay down roots, when he isn’t contributing to Love Beets’ success, Cross is enjoying the high-quality of life Rochester has to offer. “I’ve got two young daughters, so the Strong Museum of Play is a very popular local destination,” Cross said. “Aside from that, I enjoy getting out along the trails and exploring the countryside that’s so easily accessible.”

Overall, Cross’s team is taking advantage of the best Rochester has to offer—a strong agricultural presence, passionate and talented workforce, quality infrastructure, proximity to major markets, access to excellent universities and great quality of life. In turn, Rochester has the privilege of supporting a fast-growing, innovative, sustainable business. And who doesn’t love beets?