

THE JAM

is in *Obsession*

BY JILL THAM | PHOTOS BY AJ HARLOND

We have our favourite restaurant, our favourite pair of jeans and many other “old reliable” things that make people creatures of habit. Greaves Jams in Niagara-on-the-Lake is a unique company where traditions are embraced and quality is never compromised. Once you have placed Greaves Jam on your breakfast table, nothing else will compare. It will fit just like that favourite pair of jeans. In 1927 Mabel and William Greaves were making marmalade in their kitchen and driving it up to Toronto to be sold. Around the same time, the Greaves family opened up a storefront on Queen Street in Niagara-on-the-Lake where for over 60 years the family produced and sold exceptional jams, jellies, fruit spreads, marmalades, and condiments.

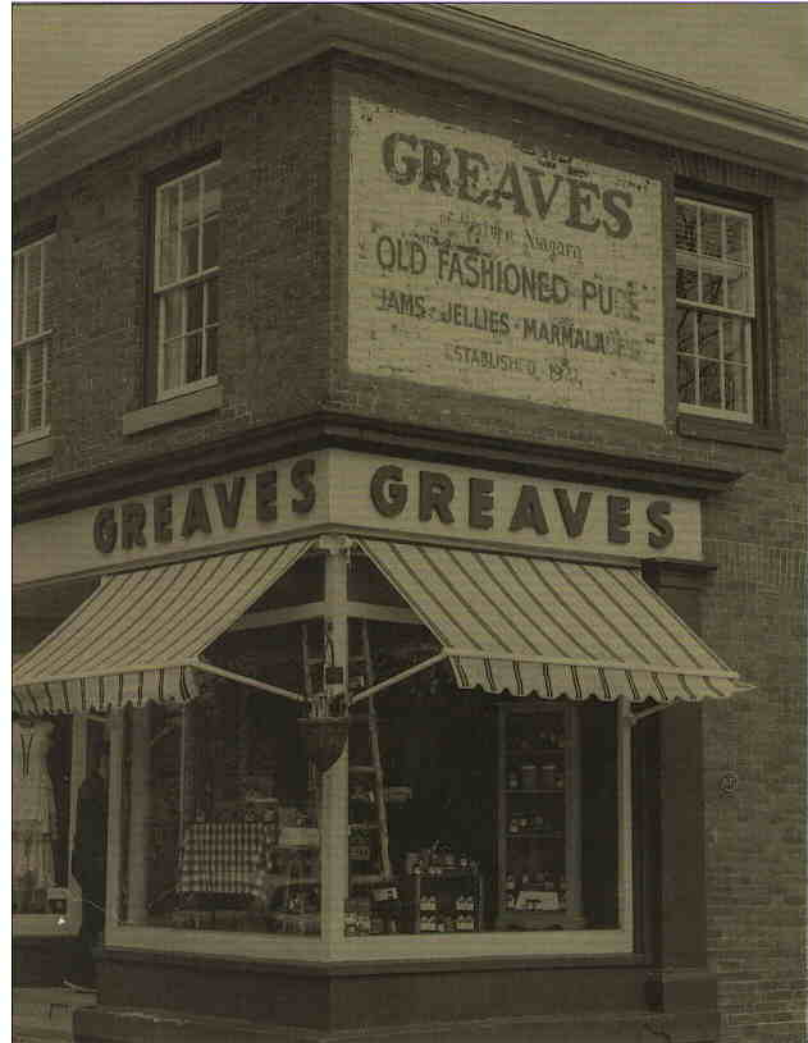
When Angela Redekopp, her husband Lloyd, and their partner, Rudy Doerwald, purchased the company from the Greaves family in 1989 they fully intended on honouring the company’s traditions and upholding the integrity of the jam. “We still have the original recipe book written in Mabel Greaves’ handwriting,” says Angela Redekopp, Vice President of Operations and Co-owner of Greaves Jams. From stirring the mixture with a

large paddles over an open kettle, to placing the jars on the conveyor belt, many aspects of the production and packaging is still done by hand as it was in 1927. “We pit every navel orange, grapefruit, and lemon during the citrus season,” says Redekopp.

Over the years, the Redekopps and Doerwald have remained true to the traditions of the Greaves family while taking the business into the next generation. “We moved the processing plant from Queen Street to Walker Road to allow more space for labelling; which was a huge improvement to production. We also added an extra kettle, introduced a rotary filler, and smaller components like a grinder for vegetables and fruits,” says Redekopp. The storefront building, constructed in 1845, still serves many tourists and local residents each year.

To produce approximately one million jars of jam per year, the company purchases the fruit from local growers and all throughout Ontario. “We start locally and then extend outwards to the province and then the country,” says Redekopp. “The fruit comes in differently every year and we have to adjust the recipe to compensate for tartness.”

The recipe for Greaves Jam is simple: fruit and sugar. The sugar content keeps the jam well preserved and the health benefits of a product that lacks preservatives, pectin, additives and colour is an unusual find at your grocery store. So uncommon that a few decades ago the high quality of their jam became quite the controversy when Greaves Jams was visited by a government inspector who deemed the product too pure to be labelled a “jam.” As requirements dictate, there is a certain amount of fruit, sugar and filler, for lack of a better word, that are required for a product to be called a jam. Redekopp and Doerwald wouldn’t back down and call their >>



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jam a fruit spread, and rightfully so as their product holds no preservatives, pectin, additives, or artificial colour. The company constantly strives to live up to their motto, “Canadian Quality, Purity, Naturally.”

Although Greaves Jams produces 40 different types of flavourful jams, jellies and marmalades, there is also a delectable line of condiments. Their peach chutney, chili sauce, cranberry sauce, salad beets, and mint jelly are very popular with customers. Mabel’s recipe for relish is always a strong seller as it adds an extra kick to potato salad, tuna salad, hamburgers, sausages, and hot dogs. “The relish also makes a great tartar sauce for fish,” says Redekopp. “We also prepare gift baskets, wedding favours and gift boxes for individual and corporate events,” adds Redekopp.

The company also supplies sophisticated 28 ml jars of jam, marmalade, and honey to various hotels across North America. Along with locations in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Greaves Jam can be found in the Four Seasons, Ritz Carlton, and Park Hyatt hotels. “We are proud they serve our jam to their clients,” says Redekopp. “Some of the rich and famous are eating our jam.”

In more recent years, Greaves Jams has acquired a following in Asia. “We do some export in North America and we have recently started doing business into China. They have embraced the Canadian products and we are doing exceptionally well with them,” says Redekopp.

Above the Greaves Jams retail store is “Sweet Escape” a boutique accommodation in a historical building that comfortably sleeps four to six individuals. The 1800 square feet of modern living is complete with all the amenities. This loft suite overlooks the main street in historic Niagara-on-the-Lake and is just steps away from shopping, restaurants, golf, Shaw Theatres, bike trails, and historic attractions. “It has been a privilege to provide this nostalgic feel to visitors of the area,” says Redekopp.

Greaves Jams is not immune to the challenges that can arise from owning and operating a business. “The economy has been the biggest challenge for us. Gas prices, the U.S. dollar, and even passport requirements have affected sales,” she says. Redekopp has pleasantly noticed a surge in Canadian customers. “It is nice to see Canadians are spending their money at home more and exploring their own neighbourhoods. Especially because we are a Canadian company employing Canadians.”

Along with online sales, Greaves Jams can be found all over Ontario in a variety of locations. “Our products can be found in local bakeries, gourmet shops, delis, hotels, and grocery stores and chains like Foodland, Sobeys and Metro,” explains Redekopp. “Toronto is still one of our largest markets,” says Redekopp.

The continued goal of the Redekopps and Doerwald is to have Greaves Jams present on every kitchen table. “We want our product to be affordable enough for everyone to enjoy,” says Redekopp. They are certainly on their way to reaching that goal and with the expansion of stores offering Greaves Jams and their international sales, Greaves Jam will soon be in everyone’s shopping carts. If you haven’t tried Greaves Jams before, drop in to one of their retail locations and make Greaves Jam your new habit.

For a complete list of Greaves Jams retailers please visit greavesjams.com and search your city in the store locator section. ■

