

Yves Farges Founder and CEO, The Qualifirst Group

Yves Farges grew up in the food industry. In 1957, his parents arrived in Vancouver from France to start Far-Met Importers Ltd., at a time when fine foods were in their infancy. Far-Met grew to become a highly successful importer of gourmet products for the Western Canadian market. A man of eclectic interests, Yves studied nuclear physics and engineering at university, before spending time as a surveyor in the Yukon, and traveling around the world.

In 1984 Yves founded Qualifirst Foods Ltd. in Toronto as a one-man operation from a small warehouse under a dye factory at the corner of Queen and Dufferin. Armed with 10 cases of product, a lot of product knowledge, and a good suit, Yves began building his customer base. He compensated for his lack business contacts in the Toronto market with an intimidating store of fine food knowledge, gleaned from years in the industry and travels around the world. Determined to make his mark in Toronto, Yves built Qualifirst using a determined “door-to-door” approach. He quickly gained a reputation among leading chefs for his hands-on approach, his quality products, and his unique ability to locate hard-to-source products. Using the same approach that made Far-Met successful, Yves was uncompromising about the products sold by Qualifirst. He also secured exclusive distribution rights for a number of key gourmet product lines. For example, Qualifirst brought Valrhona chocolate to the Canadian market, and today exclusively distributes across Canada Michel Cluizel, the world’s leading producer of dark single estate chocolate. Qualifirst was also a leader in bringing fine sea salts to the Canadian market among them the legendary Maldon Crystal Sea Salt Company.

Yves returned to Vancouver in the mid-1990s to help his parents build the Far-Met business and purchased the operation on their retirement in 1999. The Québec sales base became Aliment Qualifirst Ltée in 1999. In 2004 Yves’ Management Team launched www.epicureal.com, Canada’s leading source for fine foods online. Together these are the Qualifirst Group of Companies, celebrating 50 years in business in Canada, bringing the world’s best to the Canadian market.

A man in search of innovation, Yves continues to travel around the world and work with industry-leading chefs to stay abreast of the latest food trends and to educate consumers.

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