



The staff at Pepper's Foods displaying their Independent Grocer Awards.

PHOTO: TRAVIS PATERSON/NEWS STAFF

Pepper's raises the bar

Friendly staff, local product puts Pepper's in the winners circle

Good old-fashioned service has helped make Pepper's a fixture in the community for more than a quarter century.

"As a truly independent, family business, we can offer hands on customer service on every level and we offer a greater diversity of local products," said general manager Cory Davits. "We have no one to answer to but ourselves."

The Cadboro Bay grocery store supports numerous local schools churches and programs with its rebate program. Pepper's is currently in the midst of donating four buddy benches to local schools.

Davits said programs such as that are something that resonate throughout the store and with its employees.

"The close-knit community and family atmosphere makes coming to work everyday a pleasure," he said.

Pepper's recently earned a bronze medal in the small-surface category at the Independent Grocer Awards. The category is open to grocery stores across Canada with less than 15,000 square feet of space. The award recognizes Pepper's for its community engagement and ongoing efforts to serve customers in the area.

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– **Scott Zaichkowsky**
Assistant Grocery Manager

of gotten back into the mix," said Scott Zaichkowsky, assistant grocery manager, adding that a decade ago, the small surface area capped at 10,000 square feet.

"We always competed in the smallest category, but they upped the size of it, so the competition has gotten larger. Bigger stores, bigger chains, so since then, we hadn't really taken any awards home."

Up through 2005, Pepper's – which is only 4,000 square feet – medalled five times in six years at the Independent Grocer Awards in the same category. While the pool of competitors increased, Zaichkowsky said their latest win confirms that they're doing something right.

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us to come back 10 years later and establish ourselves... it's a big honour for us, for sure," he said.

For more than 30 years, Pepper's has been owned by John Davits, with his son, Cory, working as general manager. Prior to that, the store was called Shop Easy and was owned by John Pepper, after whom Davits named the current store.

Zaichkowsky said the family-run Pepper's has been a staple of Cadboro Bay and credited the store's friendly staff and local products as a few of the reasons why the community has been so loyal to it.

"Any time a local vendor or distributor approaches us with a local product, we're all ears and open to carrying their product," he said.

"It's always nice to be acknowledged. We're excited by the fact that doing what we're doing is getting such a great response."



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