





Wildman Ricing Ltd

"TASTE AND APPEARANCE ARE EQUALLY IMPORTANT TO OUR CUSTOMERS," TONY SAYS. "OUR RICE HAS A RICH, NUTTY FLAVOUR, ATTRIBUTED TO THE GROWING CONDITIONS, AND THE KERNELS APPEAL TO GOURMET BUYERS BECAUSE THEY ARE LONG, NOT SHORT LIKE THOSE SOLD BY NORTH AMERICAN DOMESTICATED PADDY PRODUCERS."



"With the help of Clifford and Anying, it took us a little over 18 months to get into mainland China and put together a deal to import our rice into the country," Rick says. "By comparison, Canadian blueberry growers worked for 10 years to negotiate a similar contract."

Wildman Ricing's product will be shipped from Vancouver to major Chinese ports in steel containers, each containing only 20,000 kilograms to prevent kernels from breaking in transit.

"Taste and appearance are equally important to our customers," Tony says. "Our rice has a rich, nutty flavour, attributed to the growing conditions, and the kernels appeal to gourmet buyers because they are long, not short like those sold by North American domesticated paddy producers."

The extraordinary expansion of the Chinese economy in recent years has created a new class of millionaires and moved many middle-class families into the upper middle class, with money to spend on luxury items.

Tony visited Beijing, Shanghai and Chongqing as a member of a Canadian trade mission to

mainland China in the spring.

Though most of the exported rice will likely be sold in Beijing and Shanghai, Tony notes that one inland city, Chongqing in China's southwest, has a reputation as a centre for consumers with epicurean palates. He calculated that all of his company's yearly rice output could be sold to that one city of eight million residents.

"The size of the market is staggering. Canadian wild rice producers will get a real boost in export sales as the Chinese become more familiar with the exceptional taste, lovely dark colour and health benefits of our organically certified product," he says.

Indeed, a 100-gram serving of the low-fat, high-fibre rice contains only 100 calories and is loaded with protein, essential B vitamins, iron, potassium, phosphorous, zinc and magnesium.

Used as a gluten-free flour, it retains the same delicious nutty taste as the rice itself.

"Nature's Farm in Steinbach makes two pastas from the flour, wild rice linguine and wild rice orzo," says Rick.

Wildman Ricing Ltd. also sells wild rice to

retailers across Canada, along with a selection of dehydrated soups containing beans and vegetables, most from Canadian sources.

The company recently began supplying its soups to a national chain with 170 stores in Canada, increasing soup sales twenty-fold.

The long-grain wild rice business is an expensive, labour-intensive yearly gamble. Employees work 10 or more hours a day to get in the crop before high wind, waves or inclement weather combine to knock maturing rice off stalks, leaving the kernels to sink to the lake's bottom. Because it does not ripen uniformly like wheat, the crop must be harvested in stages over a three to five week period, ideally beginning about Sept. 1.

"Even though we use a new fleet of air and pontoon boats to speed up the harvest, the rice has to be loaded by hand at the lakeside before it can be shipped to a processing plant in Manitoba or Saskatchewan," Rick says.

The harvested "green" rice is cured where the temperature is monitored and water added as required; a parching process dries the rice and

then it is de-hulled. Tony says processing wild rice is an art similar to brewing beer.

The finished product is trucked to the family farm near The Pas or to a large storage facility the partners constructed in Winnipeg to accommodate overseas sales.

To build their business, Tony and Rick have purchased 10-year leases on about a dozen wild rice producing lakes in northern Manitoba.

"The provincial government will not open new lakes to wild rice harvesting, so for us to expand we have to buy leases from people who have retired or quit the business," Rick says.

The partners also acquire product from lease owners who do not wish to market their rice directly.

"We pay other growers fair market value because we want everyone in this long-underrated business to profit," Tony says.

So move over caviar. Long-grain Canadian wild rice is the new gourmet food about to debut in mainland China.

To learn more, visit [wildmanricing.ca](http://wildmanricing.ca).

**YWCA THOMPSON**  
**Affordable & Clean Rooms**  
 Daily & Monthly Rates Available

A PROUD MEMBER OF  
 THE CERTIFIED GENERAL ACCOUNTANTS ASSOCIATION OF MANITOBA  
**DAYTON BARENZ**

**oti eka mall**  
 The longest mall in the north