

# Veggie innovator breaking new ground

**W**hat do Albert Einstein and Canada's veggie king have in common? They both hold stock in the future of a diet that includes more vegetables.

In one of his famous quotes Albert Einstein said, "Nothing will benefit human health and increase the chances for survival of life on Earth as much as the evolution to a vegetarian diet."

Mr. Potvin, who in 1988 invented the meatless wiener, setting the stage for veggie alternatives to hotdogs, hamburger, sandwich meats and other convenient fare, is now pushing the boundaries again with new meatless mains designed as a centerpiece for traditional dinnerplates.

"There is a growing need for vegetable-source protein in our diet. Just look at the Asian diet – less osteoporosis, less heart problems, less cancer, less obesity," says Mr. Potvin, noting that "flexitarians" – meateaters seeking to introduce more variety into their

diet either because of rising meat prices, ethical concerns or health concerns – are a growing consumer group in North America.

Mr. Potvin, who worked as a chef before launching Yves Veggie Cuisine, his namesake company that he built over a 20-year period and eventually sold in 2001, is now the force behind Garden Protein International (GPI).

The source of GPI's trend-setting endeavors is its creation of "Gardein" – a vegetable-based protein made from soy, beet, wheat and carrot. GPI sells this trademarked ingredient to foodmakers and retailers including Loblaw's, Costco, Whole Foods, Safeway and others, and also uses it to prepare its own brand of meat alternatives that boast the taste, texture and nutritional benefits of lean meat.

The foods are remarkable. Gardein-based meat alternatives such as GPI's "It's All Good" brand veggie beef strips and Loblaw's President's



**Yves Potvin, president of Garden Protein International, has invented a vegetable-source protein called Gardein now used to make tasty and nutritious meat-alternative products that are virtually indistinguishable from real meats.** PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Choice brand Blue Menu meatless chicken breasts are nearly indistinguishable from real meats.

The crux of the deal, says Mr. Potvin, is "the cost of our meatless chicken is the same price as regular chicken breast, but ours has no cholesterol and 28 grams of protein; more than egg, chicken

or tofu."

Mr. Potvin says while today's products mimic meats – in response to western diets, which tend to rely on beef, chicken and pork – Gardein's future is nearly unlimited.

"With Gardein there is more flexibility; we can vary the flavour, the texture. The sky is the limit." ■