

The following article was a feature in one of the most famous publications in Canada, [The National Post](#).

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THE TIN MAN

The mysterious Mr. Goudas stands by his brand.

By Sarah Teitel

IT'S SAID OF CELEBRITIES that they possess an epic quality — a grandiosity that's manifest in them even before they become famous.

Requisites for fame, it seems, are the gumption and imagination it takes to act as though you have it even when you don't.

If that's the case, it shouldn't be long before Mr. Goudas supplants the Green Giant as the country's most recognizable character on a can.

Peter Goudas, the brain behind a leading Canadian food brand, was born just outside Athens in 1942.

He wasted no time asserting himself as a serious entrepreneur, establishing his first business, a construction outfit, at the young age of 16. Four years later he was drafted

into the Greek military, and in 1967, after completing his term as an air force mechanic, Goudas immigrated to Canada.

Like many immigrants, Goudas arrived in Toronto almost penniless and unable to speak English.

By 1969, he had picked up enough of the language to negotiate the opening of his first store in the city's Kensington Market.

Initially, Goudas sold traditional Greek produce, but he was influenced by the neighbourhood's of languages and dialects: from Europe, the Caribbean, Asia.

Searching for a comestible common denominator, Goudas tried an experiment: he imported a small quantity of Jamaican fruit and vegetable staples.

They sold quickly and completely. Inspired by that success, Goudas began bringing in larger, more varied shipments.

He began to package rice bearing his name and the now iconic prefix.

In July 1970, he introduced Mr. Goudas ginger beer, and from there the brand evolved to appeal to the multicultural city, expanding wildly.

The products began making inroads at local supermarkets, thanks largely to Goudas, who

*tirelessly monitored the pulse
of his consumer base.*

*If a neighbourhood's demographic
changed, Goudas responded with
a prompt overhaul of the
merchandise he was
distributing there.*

*When Toronto's Jane-Finch
corridor, once predominantly
Jamaican, experienced an influx of
Sri Lankan and Somalis.*

*Goudas's stock adapted in
accordance - chapatti flour
and couscous.
Joined black-eyed peas and
ackees in brine on his shelves.*

*When Chinese and Indian
immigrants began settling in
Woodbridge, which originally has
been an Italian stronghold, Goudas
was there with lychees in syrup,
patna rice and madras curry paste.*

*Goudas's aplomb at gauging
Toronto's evolving population wasn't
just an entrepreneurial endeavour;
it was also a hobby.*

*His passion for all the world's
music, not just big-label pop,
inspired him to purchase a
nightclub in 1970.*

*He dubbed it the 813 Club and
instituted an ethnically
diverse playlist.*

The club quickly became a prime

*destination for parties from
Toronto's Latin and Caribbean
communities, and a prime
opportunity for market research:
Goudas gave away samples of new
products, listening in as patrons
"reviewed them".*

*Occasionally, Goudas himself would
spin records under the alias, Mr. Wu*

*(for reasons unknown, patrons
assumed the mystery
DJ was Asian, and Goudas simply
went along with the assumption).*

*A perfect example of Goudas's
ability to conflate diverse
ethnicities and cultures in
his own peculiar way.*

*Today, on the label of one can of
Mr. Goudas's green lentils, the name
of the product is stamped in six
different languages.*

*Goudas himself maintains he is an
expert discerner of ethnicity, saying
he can "tell within 10 yards whether
a man is from Ghana or Guyana."*

*Over the past three decades,
Goudas has continued to diversify
his inventory, entering into
production partnerships with
factories in about a dozen countries
on five continents.*

*This effectively cemented the
Mr. Goudas ethos: a stalwart
dedication to "C as stated on the
company's sprawling, eclectic*

website “C “making the world an “international cooking pot’.”

Goudas is well on his way to that goal.

His empire now extends to 21 major supermarket chains and 3,000 independent grocery stores across Ontario and Quebec, in the aisles of which more than 600 Mr. Goudas products can be found.

Among those products is 9 Ben Mix Symphony, a salad that (according to the website) “depending on the time of day you decide to eat it” will allow one to “achieve sounds, close to rival high notes once emanating from the famous soprano, Maria Callas.”

Mr. Goudas may not yet be a household name, but that doesn't mean his large-mindedness is going unnoticed.

Since 2001, the year in which he claimed to move “two million kilograms of rice a week.

” Goudas has been featured in many newspapers and profiled on the CBC.

He's particularly proud of making the cover of the Globe and Mail's Report on Business section.

His star is on the rise, because somewhere along the way.

Mr. Goudas figured out the secret

of celebrity: no matter how big you get, think bigger.

When contacted in regard to an interview for this article, Panos Goudas, the Mr.'s son, PR person and heir apparent, came back with the following reply:

“I asked Mr. Goudas about the interview, and he mentioned that he can only be interested if he is featured on the front cover.

Please advise accordingly”.