

A successful collaboration: National Centre for Electrochemistry and Environmental Technologies (CNETE) and Vergers Cataphard



➤ A Second Life for Damaged Apples

By Matthieu Dessureault
Translated by Edith Skewes-Cox

Year after year, apple growers see their profits drop because too many of their apples have surface imperfections and cannot be sold. To counter this situation, Vergers Cataphard decided to process this flawed fruit into a 100% natural syrup, the first of its kind in North America.

It only takes a small bruise, hole or unusual shape for an apple to be processed into juice or applesauce, the value of which barely covers the original product's cost. In the case of Vergers Cataphard, more than two million pounds of apples, or 25% of its entire production, are rejected each year.

This family-run business from Saint-Joseph-du-Lac, west of Montreal, decided to take the bull by the horns and invest in developing new technological applications. "Our goal was to offset these losses by extracting natural sugars from these apples. In the end, we decided to produce syrup instead, which we thought would sell better," confides Martin Cataphard, a third-generation apple grower.



Before transforming apples into syrup, the **National Centre for Electrochemistry and Environmental Technologies (CNETE)** developed a process to extract the natural sugars found in apples. Hassan Chadjaa and his team used a filtration system to isolate the fructose, which is sweeter than sugar but has a lower glycemic index. The result: diabetics in particular will appreciate this special syrup, with a flavour somewhat reminiscent of molasses.

"We knew absolutely nothing about sugar filtration and boiling points! No one had ever thought of making 100% natural apple syrup before us. The challenge was to create the product without using additives, sugar or honey," adds Martin Cataphard, pleased with the expertise shown by the CNETE.

For his part, Hassan Chadjaa says the Cataphard family should take all the credit. "They were very brave and forward-thinking to have taken on this project; it was a risky venture but they didn't hesitate!"

Pending patent approval, the apple syrup has been available since late summer, selling for approximately ten dollars under the Pierre-Henri label. The next step: spread the word to Quebec consumers. The apple grower feels confident. "It takes three to five years to build a market for a new product. We just have to be patient!" Odds are it won't take long before people start happily pouring apple syrup over their pancakes or meat. □