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Canasnacks are out of this world

Sometimes, after a long day of walking in space, an astronaut just craves a special treat.

Now, thanks to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) researchers, astronauts can get a taste of home, even when they're hundreds of kilometres above the Earth.

During the Space Shuttle Endeavour mission to the International Space Station (ISS) in August 2007, Canadian Space Agency astronaut Dave Williams, his six crewmates and the three residents of the ISS were the first to taste-test a new product: *Canasnacks*.



Photo courtesy of the Canadian Space Agency

Canasnacks are bite-sized oatmeal sandwich cookies with maple, cranberry or blueberry cream fillings that were specially designed – and even individually baked – by an AAFC research team led by Dr. Ted Farnworth in Saint-Hyacinthe, Quebec.

"We're proud to have been a part of the Endeavour mission," Dr. Farnworth said. "We know the astronauts look forward to their meals and we made a concerted

effort to use Canadian ingredients and make the treats nutritious and tasty. From what we've heard, we think we succeeded."

Indeed, as Dr. Williams said, "They were great - a little bite that was out of this world! Others liked them, too. It made me proud."

Vacuum-packed in bags of five bite-sized cookies that bear the maple leaf logo, the *Canasnacks* were designed especially for space, while still keeping the astronauts in mind. The result is a sweet treat that has few crumbs to contaminate the sensitive environment of the ISS. The snacks also have a long shelf-life, as there are no refrigeration or freezer capabilities for food in orbit.

Canasnacks taste good, and they're healthy too. The five-cookie packages are free of trans-fats, contain fibre, protein, calcium and iron, and only contain about 152 calories.

Canasnacks were developed using ingredients that are representative of Canada, such as

- maple sugar;
- cranberries and blueberries, which are native fruits;
- canola oil;
- oats, since Canada is the world leader in the development of oat varieties; and
- lactulose, a prebiotic that has its only North American supplier in Quebec.

For Dr. Farnworth and his crew here on Earth, the success of the *Canasnacks* project left them walking on air.

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