

# Retailer crafts a Maritime success story

**The Wicker Emporium** has carved a niche for itself as a home furniture and décor chain

BY RON BARRY

**I**t's impossible to talk about Wicker Emporium without first introducing the company's founder, Madan Kapahi.

What started as a futile shopping excursion to furnish his Halifax home with wicker furniture turned into a prosperous career – not only for the president and CEO, but for his son and daughter-in-law, Raj and Priyanka Kapahi.

It's a genuine made-in-the-Maritimes retail success story, and the Kapahi family has brought 'a slice of it to East Point Shopping as one of the centre's four new businesses to open in 2014.

"My father started the business in 1972," said Raj, noting that it came about because he could not find the wicker furniture he was looking for on the local market. "Coming from India, he also saw this business as offering him the opportunity to travel back to Asia frequently, which would allow him to keep his close family ties.

"I have been involved in the business in some way shape of form for most of my life. I can remember working in the warehouse during summer vacation throughout high school. After graduating from university and returning from a four-year stay in Asia, I decided to join my father because it offered me a great opportunity to build the business into a national brand as well as travel the world sourcing the best possible

products for the Canadian market."

Today, the family's chain of stores numbers 24, operating in the Atlantic region and Ontario. While quality wicker products remain its signature, it has diversified smoothly into offering wood-based furniture and an expansive array of home décor items, from pillows and cushions to rugs and quilts to mirrors and wall art – its home accessories seem limitless. In fact, Raj quips that he doesn't have a favorite time of year to shop since he shops for a living as a buyer for the company. And, he adds that pricing and store promotions attract customers, as does the product mix, which is always changing... always fresh.

"And, as an Atlantic Canadian home furniture and home décor retailer, I consider myself to be a good local option for the Saint John market," he said. "I believe that the purpose behind the "shop local" movement is to keep the money which is being spent circulating in the local economy."

As Wicker Emporium anticipates what will follow Black Friday – "the Christmas shopping season is the most important season for my business," says Raj – the company is over the moon about the launch of ecommerce home delivery on their web site ([www.wickeremporium.ca](http://www.wickeremporium.ca)).

"Through the upgraded web site, customers can now order online for delivery direct to their door," said Raj. "The site allows real time shipping and handling quotes. We can now provide easy and convenient access of our products to customers who may live in more-remote areas and can't easily visit a brick and mortar store location. We also access customers in new markets across the country where we don't have store locations. I am very excited about this new development."



Wicker Emporium founder Madan Kapahi (left), with his son Raj, the chief operating officer, and Raj's wife Priyanka, the marketing director. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE WICKER EMPORIUM

**SAINT JOHN  
SEA DOGS  
HOLIDAY  
Flex Pack**

**AVAILABLE NOV 1**

**Available at the Harbour Station box office:  
(506) 657-1234**

**Get your  
Shopping done  
EARLY!**

**Shop online at Sea Dog Styles  
[store.saintjohnseadogs.com](http://store.saintjohnseadogs.com)**