inside... The Pundit Looks At Vertical Farming In Las Vegas • Wholesalers Talk Traceabilty • *Trucking Costs* • In-Store Marketing Technology
Berries • Avocados • *Carrots* • **Organic Imports** • **Regional Profile: SAN FRANCISCO** • **Walnuts** • *Mother's Day Floral Sales*

MAR. 2008 • VOL. 24 • NO. 3 • $9.90

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MARKETING • MERCHANDISING • MANAGEMENT • PROCUREMENT

THE 20TH ANNUAL MYSTERY SHOPPER REPORT

Secret shoppers go undercover to reveal how retailers are complying with **COOL.**

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

7th Annual
MASTERS OF MERCHANDISING

STARTS ON PAGE 51

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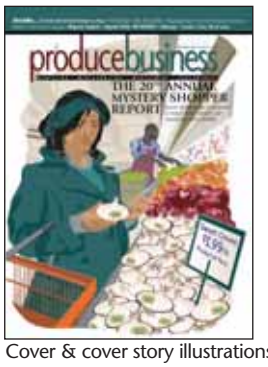

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MAR. 2008 • VOL. 24 • NO. 3

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SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

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PRODUCE QUIZ

THIS MONTH'S WINNER:

Misty Ysasi
Produce Buyer
Kroger Company
Cincinnati, OH

SPONSORED BY Tanimura & Antle

For Misty Ysasi, produce buyer for Kroger's Wesco operation in McAllen, TX, the industry is a breeding ground for constant change and development. "No two days are ever alike," she says about her five years working for Kroger, where she began her career as an inspector.

In Misty's office, she is responsible for handling organics, watermelon, Colorado vegetables and peaches, as well as various special projects. One of her biggest challenges is staying flexible. "You just have to hope Mother Nature is on your side," she notes. "In order to overcome anything that pops up, you have to be willing to try just about anything. In this industry, you're always thinking outside the box."

A Produce Business reader for just a few months, Misty enjoys reading its wide array of topics, particularly articles that discuss emerging trends in sustainability and organics.

As the winner of the Produce Business Quiz, Misty wins a survivor's backpack.

How To Win

To win the Produce Business Quiz, the first thing you have to do is enter. The rules are simple: Read through the articles and advertisements in this issue to find the answers. Fill in the blanks corresponding to the questions below, and either cut along the dotted line or photocopy the page, and send your answers along with a business card or company letterhead to the address listed on the coupon. The winner will be chosen by drawing from the responses received before the publication of our May issue of Produce Business. The winner must agree to submit a color photo to be published in that issue.

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1) What is the name of Rosemont Farms' new value-added corn product? _____

_____

2) What is the phone number for Herb Thyme? _____

_____

3) What is the fax number for T. Marzetti? _____

_____

4) What is the P.O. box number for Hollandia? _____

_____

5) What is the toll free number for Family Tree Farms? _____

_____

6) What is the street address for the California Pear Advisory Board? _____

_____

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american business media

Planting Deep Roots, Harvesting Great Results

At Tanimura & Antle, we are dedicated to the business of farming premium quality produce. For over three generations our families have worked together, and twenty-five years ago, we made our partnership official. Our goal then was the same as it is now: to produce the best quality produce, innovate wherever possible, and service the customer.

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Reader Service # 17

SUBMITTED BY ROBERT GUENTHER, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, PUBLIC POLICY • UNITED FRESH PRODUCE ASSOCIATION

Setting The Stage For 2008

While most of the country is watching (and hopefully participating) in this year's historic presidential election, many critical policy issues will not wait. Between now and the election, the produce industry will need to work to shape legislative, regulatory, political and legal solutions to the challenges that threaten the industry's growth and profitability, while at the same time creating opportunities for success.

The first step is developing a comprehensive policy agenda encompassing our priorities. More than a hundred commodity groups and regions often compete with each other for opportunities, but over the last several years, the following principles have applied to our efforts in Washington, D.C.:

- We have taken important steps to lay the foundation for continued successes.
- We have expanded opportunities to increase produce consumption and strengthen our competitiveness.
- We still face key challenges.
- We must provide the tools for industry to take advantage of policy successes.

We must focus on a core group of broad public policy issues while also participating in the policy minutia that often has the most immediate impact on the produce business. Companies expect us to focus on major priorities but not turn away from other narrower, yet important, issues. So what is on the agenda for 2008?

Finalizing the 2007 Farm Bill: Congress will continue the detailed work of developing a new Farm Bill. This legislation will drive U.S. agriculture policy for the next five years. The 2008 Farm Bill will represent an historic investment in mandatory funding for the produce industry that will strengthen our infrastructure and enhance access to key nutrition programs for increased consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables.

Food Safety: There is no more important issue for the produce industry than the safety of our products. In 2007, over 75 legislative proposals related to food safety were introduced in Congress as a result of recent, high-profile food-safety challenges. The House and Senate held an in-depth series of oversight hearings related to imported food, good agriculture and good manufacturing practices, and industry-driven activities related to the growing, handling, processing, manufacturing and transportation of our food supply. In 2008, the industry must continue to work with our customers in retail and foodservice, the Food and Drug Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Congress and all other stakeholders to ensure that only sound and appropriate policies are enacted to address current challenges related to produce food safety.

Working to shape national legislation and federal regulations is a never-ending job for any major industry.

Immigration: With the impasse of significant immigration reform legislation over the past two years, United Fresh and industry allies have looked at industry-driven and regulatory changes that could help the produce industry address the current shortage of a viable workforce. On the legislative side, 2008 represents opportunities for a specific congressional vote incorporating sound agriculture provisions, pragmatic temporary worker programs, realistic approaches to the current undocumented workforce and reasonable employment verification processes and requirements.

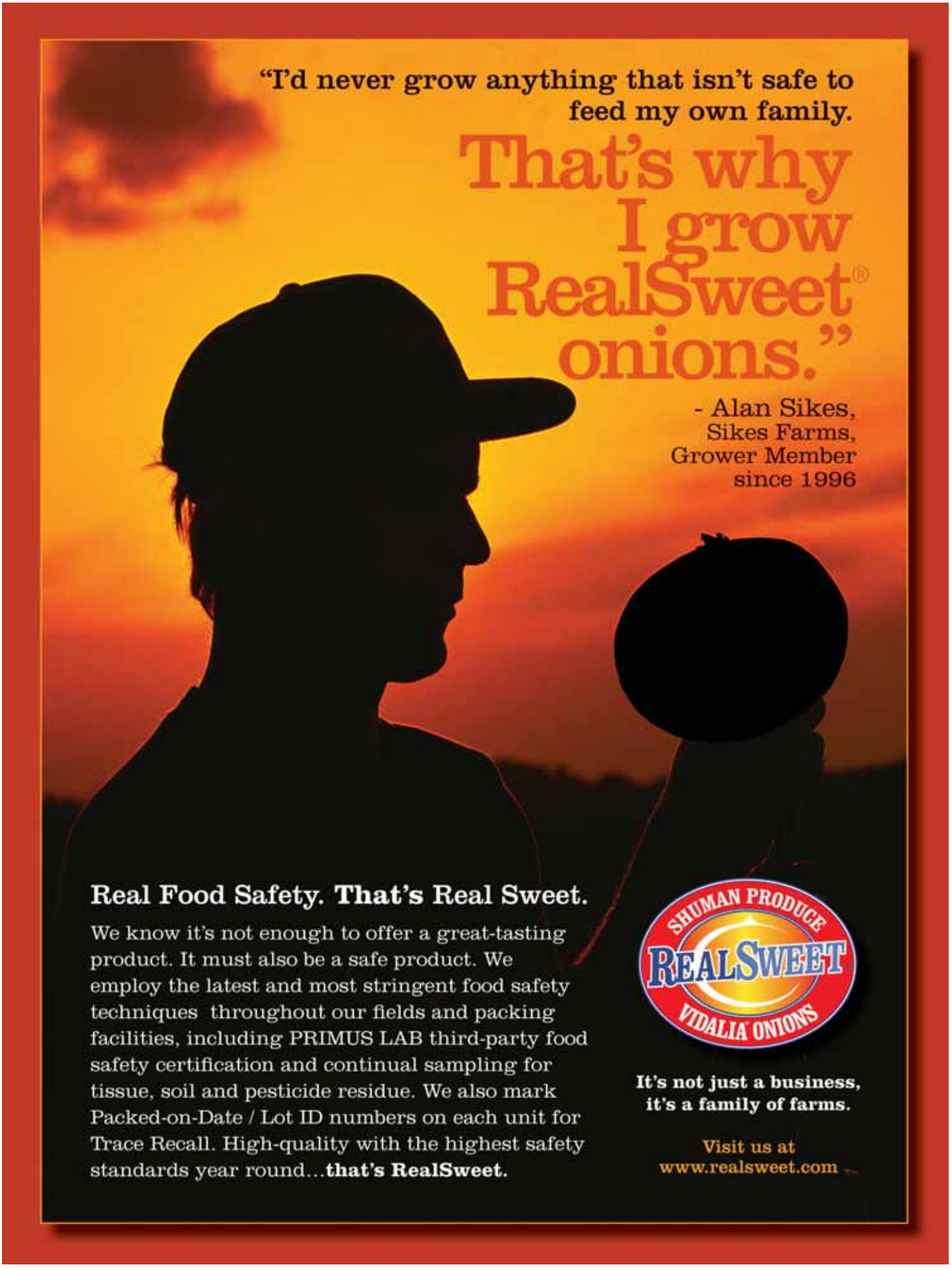
Nutrition Policy: The produce industry has helped reshape government policy and drive environmental change to enable America's children to meet the new Dietary Guidelines for fruit and vegetable consumption. The 2008 legislative year will be critical to solidifying the expansion of the School Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program, launching a fruit and vegetable voucher in the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) nutrition program, ensuring school meals meet the new Dietary Guidelines, increasing the availability of fresh produce to schools, and expanding government commitment to the National Fruit and Vegetable Program.

Country-of-Origin Labeling (COOL): After a 2-year delay, mandatory COOL, as called for in the 2002 Farm Bill, is scheduled to go into effect this September. However, the 2008 Farm Bill contains legislative language that would allow for more flexibility than the 2002 law. Once the Farm Bill is passed, we must ensure USDA's implementation of a country-of-origin labeling program for produce reflects the changes in the 2008 Farm Bill and that the regulation allows for flexibility and reduces burden on produce company members.

Working to shape national legislation and federal regulations is a never-ending job for any major industry. While the produce industry's leadership in Washington is strong, greater power can be achieved by stimulating the personal involvement of thousands of produce industry members to interact directly with their elected leaders.

Our industry must build upon its recent success. Labor shortages, international market access, produce consumption, food-safety requirements and investment in the industry's infrastructure are critical issues. Without support from the industry's members, these issues will not rise to a level needed for continued success. Working together, we can urge our government representatives to increase funding for nutrition programs, develop sound food-safety policies and implement fair regulations that enhance our business rather than restrict our success.

Only personal involvement in the political process and collaborative efforts among all industry members will achieve our policy goals and find solutions to the issues that impact our future.



Reader Service # 112

THE FRUITS OF THOUGHT

By James Prevor
President & Editor-in-Chief

Merchandising Disconnect

When a retail concept struggles, it is typically the proposition offered to the consumer — or the execution of that proposition — that is the problem. In its new foray into the American retail scene — Fresh & Easy Neighborhood Markets — Tesco seems to have problems with both concept and execution.

Fresh & Easy is not just a name; it encapsulates in its name the proposition that Tesco wishes to make to consumers.

The execution side of Tesco's problem is obvious. Although "fresh" is an attribute most consumers desire, much of the Fresh & Easy offering doesn't strike Americans as fresh. In the vaunted prepared foods or ready-meals department, food prepared in a commissary and sitting cold in a plastic platter seems significantly less fresh than the offering of many other retailers.

Some upscale retailers have on-site chefs to produce fresh food to order. One doesn't have to go to that extreme to realize the difficulty of Fresh & Easy's value proposition. Take something as common as a rotisserie chicken. A typical supermarket does several things to persuade customers its offering is fresh:

- You physically see the chicken cooking on the rotisserie.
- From time to time, when chickens are being removed from the rotisserie, the scent of roasting chicken is evident.
- The chickens are mostly sold warm.

Compare this with the execution of fresh at Fresh & Easy where the stores offer a cold chicken, cooked at some unidentified time. Few Americans will perceive that to be a fresh offering.

Sandwiches are another example. My local Publix has a fresh sandwich program built around Boar's Head product but including many others. Deli associates will prepare a sandwich to my specifications — from how thin I want the meat sliced to the combination of ingredients to how much of any condiment I want — and they do it right before my eyes. At Subway, they do the same, but I also see them bake the bread.

How does Fresh & Easy present a fresh sandwich? They make it to their specifications — not mine — on a date they don't identify and wrap it in plastic to ship and preserve it. The sandwich sits on a shelf until someone buys it, during which time it might have been squeezed and manhandled a few times.

So Tesco struggles in part because its execution of fresh isn't persuasive to consumers.

Even more intriguing is the use of the word "easy." Tesco meant by that two things: First, the store would be conveniently located and second, the store — being small — would be easy to shop.

Yet one wonders if this is a solution to an actual problem. There is no evidence consumers find shopping difficult. In fact, lots of people love shopping. Fresh & Easy opened in LA; surely Tesco knew about Rodeo Drive. People have a lot of fun there; malls and open- air centers are focal points for enjoyment and socializing.

The problem is not that shopping is hard to do. Even speaking strictly of food, we've done countless surveys and focus groups throughout the years, all designed to measure consumer attitudes toward shopping and shopping venues, and we have never heard a complaint about the difficulty of shopping in and of itself.

Some people may complain about the mismatch between their needs and an individual store. We've heard people say they hate going into a giant super center when they need only a quart of milk. We have mostly heard a lot about the tedium of shopping. Quite often, food shopping is a chore — just not fun.

Fresh & Easy forecloses the possibility of great merchandising by transforming produce into another packaged good.

Many retailers have addressed this tedium in different ways. A small-format store such as Trader Joe's combines a quirky Hawaiian shtick with unusual, gourmet products, all at a good price in a house brand consumers have grown to trust, creating passionate devotees. Costco keeps things intriguing with its "treasure hunt" aspect, whereby consumers come looking for what will be available that wasn't there before. Whole Foods offers an ethos of sorts that creates a sense of place, making it a comfortable venue for people of a certain disposition. Even a Wal-Mart Supercenter adds a fun side trip into clothes and music or fishing gear and hiking boots — depending on one's interests.

People may complain they're too busy, but that doesn't really translate into finding a store that requires a few less steps. It translates into wanting to abandon tedious tasks.

So the winning strategy is actually not Fresh & Easy; it is Fresh & Fun — yet Tesco's concept is cold and sterile. Much of the discussion about its pre-packed, private-labeled produce has focused on the excess packaging and the oddity of date-stamping produce. The real loss of this approach is it precludes great merchandising.

Merchandising is more than the sum of its parts. Individual items merchandised well combine with other such well-merchandised items to tell a story. It may be of bounty, seasonality, extravagance or a gathering of excellence from all over the globe. Produce, beyond the product itself, contributes crucially by being the place great retailers reveal their story. Produce provides a tapestry of color and scent unfurled like a flag declaring one's beauty and truth.

Yet at Fresh & Easy, the most beautiful part of the store is boxed and bagged or wrapped in plastic. Fresh & Easy forecloses the possibility of great merchandising by transforming produce into another packaged good. It certainly doesn't feel fresh and even if it is in some sense easy, it certainly is not any fun. **pb**

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*A.C. Nielsen Scan Data weeks ending 06.23.07 vs. YAG

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PRODUCE WATCH

TRANSITIONS

ALBERT'S ORGANICS, INC., BRIDGEPORT, NJ

Todd Greene was appointed to the new position of national sales director. He will be located at Albert's Denver, CO-based division. His extensive retailing experience includes stints as the director of operations for Earth Fare and corporate sales manager for Food Lion.

John Hedgers is the new business unit manager of the Mounds View, MN-based division. He most recently worked as an account manager for Sage Software. His background includes ownership of Storefront Pizza in Roseville, CA, and multiple senior management positions with The Fleming Companies.

Leonard Bibb was promoted to the new position of national operations director. He spent 18 years at The Fleming Companies prior to joining Albert's in 2006. At Fleming, he held several positions, including division president. He will be responsible for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of Albert's six operating divisions.

KEY TECHNOLOGY, INC., BALTIMORE, MD

Teri Johnson was promoted to the new position of fresh-cut industry marketing manager. She will be responsible for planning and managing Key's automated inspection, specialized conveying, product preparation systems and service. She has worked for Key for 24 years.

BOSKOVICH FARMS, INC., OXNARD, CA

Dave Murphy was hired as the director of food safety and quality systems. His responsibilities involve coordinating the company's quality and food-safety programs. His background includes work with Yum! Brands restaurants, Ready-Pac Produce and Danaco Solutions. He also served as chairman of PMA's Food Service Board.

DOLE FRESH FRUIT COMPANY, SALINAS, CA

Joe Koch was hired as director, sales strategy, fresh vegetables. He will be responsible for leading eight sales strategy managers and analysts. He has 10 years experience in sales, trade marketing and category management and his background includes strategic and tactical execution within category marketing.

Ron Webb was hired as regional sales manager, Canada. He will be responsible for supervising and developing business for value-added products throughout Canada. His background includes wholesale and retail produce procurement and merchandising, packaged goods sales and marketing and business development.

SUN WORLD INTERNATIONAL, LLC, BAKERSFIELD, CA

Allen Vangelos was elected president and CEO on an interim basis. Sun World's manager since October 2006, he has more than 36 years of management experience, including his most recent role as principal of Novelle Consulting and chairman of BC Hot House Foods. He served as president and CEO of Calavo Growers for 11 years.

AWE SUM ORGANICS, INC., SANTA CRUZ, CA

Dan Cheatham has joined the sales team. He previously spent three years as sales manager for Lakeside Organic Gardens. He also worked seven years for Whole Foods produce procurement office in Watsonville, CA, as a field team leader and a national buyer.

THE CENTER FOR PRODUCE SAFETY, UC DAVIS, DAVIS, CA

Tim York was appointed chairman of the Center's new board of advisors. He is currently the president of Markon Cooperative. His leadership on the board will help the Center and other agencies work together to establish the scientific foundation for best practices that provide a safe food supply for the public.

NEW PRODUCTS

Gourmet Salads

Dole Fresh Vegetables, Co., Monterey, CA, a subsidiary of Dole Food Company, Inc., launched two new bagged salad products under the Dole Fresh Discoveries label. Tender Garden is a ready-to-go blend of baby spinach, baby lettuces, carrots, baby greens and radicchio, while 7 Lettuces is a mix of romaine, red leaf, green leaf, butter lettuce, escarole, radicchio and endive.

Reader Service No. 300

Shelf Life Extender

Performance Systems, Houston, TX, and Natratec International Ltd., Katzrin, Israel, have introduced NatraLife, a post-harvest application that naturally preserves and extends the shelf life of fresh produce. The product slows ripening by reducing respiration and gas exchange, retains weight by slowing dehydration and prolongs and saves natural flavor.

Reader Service No. 301

Produce Watch is a regular feature of Produce Business. Please send information on new products, personnel changes, industry, corporate and personal milestones and available literature, along with a color photo, slide or transparency to: Managing Editor, Produce Business, P.O. Box 810425, Boca Raton, FL 33481-0425, or e-mail us at ProduceBusiness@phoenixmedianet.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Avocados As Pizza Topping

The California Avocado Commission, Irvine, CA, is marketing Fresh Hand Grown in California avocados as an excellent pizza topping. Popular combinations include Fresh Avocado and Canadian Bacon Pizza, Fresh Avocado and Rock Shrimp Pizza and Fresh Avocado Confetti Pizza.

Reader Service No. 302

Frieda's Cooks Up Innovation

Frieda's, Inc., Los Alamitos, CA, announces a new partnership with Fresh Connect, LLC, a sales marketing organization that specializes in providing the foodservice industry with innovative produce ideas and solutions. Fresh Connect will now represent Frieda's product portfolio to foodservice professionals.

Reader Service No. 303

Modern Mushroom Farms Earns Award

Modern Mushroom Farms, Inc. Kennett Square, PA, was presented the Poinsettia Award for Environmental Excellence from the Ventura, CA, Chamber of Commerce. The company was chosen based on its commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainable agriculture related to its Protected Harvest certification program. Pictured are Christy Weir, mayor of Ventura, and Jack Reitnaur, Modern Mushroom COO.

Reader Service No. 304

Michigan Apple Offers Free Music

The Michigan Apple Committee (MAC), DeWitt, MI, is offering consumers a chance to win $20 worth of free music downloads from iTunes as part of its new health and fitness marketing campaign launched to coincide with diet and exercise efforts often pursued by consumers during the first few months of the New Year.

Reader Service No. 305

New Packaging Brochure Available

The Fibre Box Association, Elk Grove Village, IL, the Association of Independent Corrugated Converters, the International Safe Transit Association and the Technical Association of the Pulp and Paper Industry has produced a brochure entitled *How to get the best box* to help packaging buyers understand how they work with corrugated suppliers.

Reader Service No. 306

Mann Partners With Kraft

Mann Packing Co., Inc., Salinas, CA, is now packaging its Broccoli Wokly with coupons to save 55¢ on Kraft grated Parmesan cheese. Kraft hopes the promotion will increase sales of Parmesan cheese by communicating usage ideas, such as on fresh vegetables, that go beyond conventional Italian food. The coupons expire April 30, 2008.

Reader Service No. 307

Global Organic Excels On Audit

Global Organic/Specialty Source, Inc., Sarasota, FL, earned an "Excellent" rating in an audit conducted by Primus Labs for Good Manufacturing Processes (GMP), food safety sanitation and security. The inspection included Global's pest control program, produce storage areas, packaging storage areas and employee common areas.

Reader Service No. 308

Stemilt Kicks Off Promo

Stemilt Growers, Inc., Wenatchee, WA, kicked off its *Crunch Before Lunch* promotion in an effort to encourage consumers to snack on healthful items like apples in order to reach their nutritional and weight-loss goals. The promotion provides retailers POS packs and other tools to boost their apple category during the apple season.

Reader Service No. 309

Ocean Mist Frost-Kissed Artichokes

Ocean Mist Farms, Castroville, CA, has implemented a culinary education program to teach consumers about frost-kissed artichokes — a flavorful product that is the result of recent frosts throughout California growing regions. In addition to posting information on its Web site with pictures and recipes, Ocean Mist sent display cards to retailers.

Reader Service No. 310

Florida Grower Enters Strawberry Deal

William P. Hearne Produce Co., LLC, Wimauma, FL, entered the Florida Strawberry deal, expecting to ship 75,000 to 100,000 flats this season. Pre-cooling and sales will be handled at Hearne's Wimauma, FL, operation.

Reader Service No. 311

AgriWorld Welcomes New Players

AgriWorld Exchange, Inc., Menlo Park, CA, announces that Mission Produce, Inc., Oxnard, CA; Cal Citrus Packing Co, Lindsay, CA; and The Garlic Company, Bakersfield, CA, signed separate agreements to trade fresh produce with it. The deals enable the company to offer its grower base the latest technological methods used for selling the highest quality products.

Reader Service No. 312

Awe Sum Organics' Royal Galas Set To Arrive

Awe Sum Organics, Inc., formerly Farmers Fruit Express, Santa Cruz, CA, is set to receive its first arrivals of organic Royal Gala apples by mid-March from the Southern Hemisphere. Chilean fruit will arrive first, followed by New Zealand fruit. Awe Sum received its first delivery of organic pears from Argentina earlier this year.

Reader Service No. 313

Produce Watch is a regular feature of Produce Business. Please send information on new products, personnel changes, industry, corporate and personal milestones and available literature, along with a color photo, slide or transparency to: Managing Editor, Produce Business, P.O. Box 810425, Boca Raton, FL 33481-0425, or e-mail us at ProduceBusiness@phoenixmedianet.com

Confidence Rising, Caution Necessary

Confidence in the safety of fresh produce was at its highest level last November since Produce Marketing Association (PMA) began polling consumers on the subject in September 2006. On a 7-point scale, we earned a mean score of five, the highest we've seen since that fall's foodborne illness outbreaks. Sixty-eight percent of consumers report they are confident in the safety of fresh produce, up from 61 percent just two months ago.

Consumers may be rising above the noise of negative headlines and hearing our assertive messages about the industry's expanded commitment to produce safety. As consumer confidence is regained in the segment hurt most by these outbreaks — fresh-cuts — trust in our industry's ability to dependably deliver safe, fresh fruits and vegetables can be restored — and sales with it. Our latest research hints this is taking place, yet we cannot ever get overconfident.

PMA had Opinion Dynamics Corporation conduct a national telephone survey of 1,000 primary-shopper consumers Nov. 26-29, 2007. In addition to checking their confidence in produce safety, we also asked them about packaged fresh-cut produce.

While confidence overall has improved, fresh-cut sales are still feeling the effects. Retail data indicate the fresh-cut category has stabilized and recovered, though not to the level we would like. The consumers we surveyed report a substantial drop in the percentage consuming fresh-cut compared to our 2005 survey. Three years ago, nearly eight in 10 made fresh-cut purchases; today the number is six in 10. Among the 40 percent saying they do not buy fresh-cut produce, 11 percent cite concern with food safety, whereas no consumers gave this reason in 2005. So the sting of the spinach crisis is still being felt by at least some of the consuming public.

This latest research indicates packaged fresh-cut produce remains a significant part of many consumers' everyday lives, primarily because these foods combine the convenience they demand with the health benefits they need. Almost half (46 percent) of the 60 percent of surveyed consumers who buy packaged fresh-cut produce buy it about once a week; they name quality, convenience and price as the top reasons for their purchases. Another 33 percent buy about once a month.

Basic home-meal use tops the list for 57 percent of those surveyed. This tells us that today's busy consumers value the everyday convenience of fresh-cut. Another 42 percent of shoppers use fresh-cut fruits and vegetables to ease the strain of holiday cooking and entertaining, suggesting our industry has an opportunity to better position the category as a holiday entertaining solution.

High quality is a must for any fresh-cut consumer. Four of 10 shoppers mention quality as the most important factor for buying packaged fresh-cuts, followed by convenience for 21 percent and price for another 17 percent of respondents.

And what about the four in 10 shoppers who say they aren't buying fresh-cut produce at all: what keeps them away?

Concern for quality is the primary reason among 18 percent of respondents; cost and preferences for bulk rank second and third respectively, less so than in our 2005 survey. That year, 24 percent reported cost concerns compared to 16 percent of November's respondents. In '05, 25 percent told us they prefer to prepare cuts from bulk versus 15 percent now reporting bulk preferences. And as mentioned previously, 11 percent name food safety concerns as the reason for not buying packaged fresh-cut — a stark but not surprising contrast to zero responses in 2005.

These data remind us of how critical consumer confidence is to our industry's health, and how quickly it can change. Trust is built and maintained by many small actions over time, so our vigilance and direct consumer communications surrounding matters of produce safety can never cease. Our commitment to proving competence with enhanced produce handling procedures and to working on continuous improvement and verification will earn back the cautious consumer's trust.

While 2007 saw a dip in retail sales of packaged salads for the first time in eight years, in today's produce marketing environment what matters most is not where we are now but how far we have come and where we need to go. So while we have some good news, our industry's work is by no means done. We must never lose sight of the importance of the many fundamental steps we must take day in and day out to uphold consumer trust in the safety of fresh fruits and vegetables.

Our commitment to proving competence with enhanced produce handling procedures and to working on continuous improvement and verification will earn back the cautious consumer's trust.

Recognizing that food safety is a reality of today's produce industry, PMA recently hired our first chief scientific officer, Dr. Robert Whitaker. Bob will direct creation of PMA's new science-based programs and services at a time when food safety, traceability, sustainability and other science-based issues are taking immediacy in our industry. He brings the rare combination of a brilliant scientific mind and feet firmly planted in the field, packinghouse or processing facility — he knows how to transfer sound science into sensible business practices. Bob's hiring is good news, indeed, for the entire produce supply chain's future. Please join me in welcoming him.

Don't Ignore Low-Consumption Users

It is, of course, possible "consumers may be rising above the noise of negative headlines and hearing our assertive messages about the industry's expanded commitment to produce safety," yet it seems at least as likely that the simple passage of time without a major new outbreak of spinach-crisis proportions has allowed other concerns to rise to the surface. After all, who has the time or mental energy to devote to worrying about fresh produce when one is so busy checking labels to avoid recalled beef?

One clue in the intriguing PMA data is that food safety may operate not only as an absolute value — I trust it so I'll buy it/I don't trust it so I won't buy it, etc. — but as a kind of attitudinal add-on that, as with the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back, can lead a decision not to purchase.

When Bryan explains PMA's findings that only six in 10 consumers today report making fresh-cut purchases — down from eight in 10 — and concern over food safety is reported by 11 percent of those not purchasing fresh-cuts, we are left to ponder the implications of this.

If all the consumers who purchase fresh-cuts bought equal amounts of fresh-cuts, and the number of consumers purchasing fresh-cuts declines from roughly eight of 10 to roughly six of 10, that would translate into a 25 percent decrease in fresh-cut sales as compared to three years ago.

Yet fresh-cut sales are actually up over numbers back in 2005 and, even against more recent heights, not down by anywhere near 25 percent.

If these percentages are borne out in subsequent research, it would imply that the consumers electing not to purchase fresh-cuts due to food-safety concerns are the consumers who purchase the least amount of fresh-cuts. There are many reasons why this may be true. A crucial one is that it is easier to indulge one's concerns about tiny risks if the product is not very important to you anyway.

Every time there is a food-safety issue on fresh-cuts, someone in the industry pulls out some statistics pointing out that the risks of flying on an airplane, driving a car, getting hit by lightning, etc., are higher than the risk of consuming fresh produce. These pronouncements do little to lessen a crisis, and this PMA research provides a plausible explanation as why this may be so.

People need airplanes and automobiles and to be outdoors, so, psychologically, they discount the risks or at least offset the risks with the benefits. In food, however, there is no need to eat any particular item, so consumers are free to indulge their concerns.

Many families that have fully integrated fresh-cuts into their lifestyles haven't made a salad from scratch in years. They may buy salad kits for lunch and make stir-fry from stir-fry mix; though they eat broccoli florets in almost every dish, it has been so long since they've seen a stalk that they think florets are picked from trees like cherries. For these folks, concern about food safety would represent a substantial inconvenience — actually a life change — as they start chopping as grandma used to do. So, perhaps they go into denial and psychologically resist negative information or, perhaps, appreciating fresh-cuts more, they just weigh the risks and benefits. In any case, they seem to keep on consuming.

The occasional buyer, on the other hand, having not integrated fresh-cuts into the life of the family but only occasionally indulging, is much quicker to dismiss the product. It won't change this consumer's life much to give it up, so why run any risk?

So the good news is an implication can be drawn from this research that generalized food-safety concerns, not expressed in the midst of a recall or crisis, are likely to affect the purchasing of the lower volume purchasers who are least committed to a product.

There is another possibility, though. Another explanation for the PMA findings would be that certain types of households with low consumption to begin with pulled back due to specific food-safety concerns. Here we need to do some research that is large enough to be statistically valid with small subsets of the data.

The most logical place to start would be to look at the elderly. Food-borne illness is not an equal opportunity health problem. Everyone can suffer from food-borne illness, but the consequences vary dramatically depending on one's health. A young adult with a robust immune system is probably not going to suffer more than a very bad stomachache. The very young, the very old, people with AIDS or undergoing chemotherapy, anyone with a compromised immune system, run life threatening risks.

It is easier to indulge one's concerns about tiny risks if the product is not very important to you anyway.

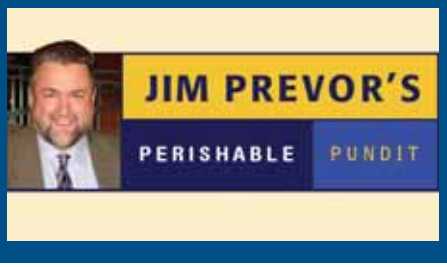
Perhaps consumers are more sophisticated than we give them credit for and this health message has been gaining currency. If so, households of elderly people and more vulnerable households might be holding back on purchasing due to food-safety concerns.

Elderly households have always been lower-consumption households. They are smaller, often just one person. Caloric needs tend to go down as one gets more sedentary. Many older people have lifelong habits preparing salads and vegetables and fruit from scratch so they may never have bought into the fresh-cut boom. Money also tends to be a concern for those on fixed incomes.

Yet, if this is true, it is a serious challenge for the industry. The elderly are the fastest growing portion of the population. It is a real target for increased fresh-cut consumption.

PMA would do the trade a great favor by focusing some of its research on smaller cohorts such as the elderly or single moms. There is little information available and the opportunity may well be in developing products and messages on this more targeted level.

Setting The Record Straight On Vertical Farming In Las Vegas



From Jim Prevor's *Perishable Pundit*, Jan. 15, 2007

You have to be careful of the information you get over the web. The contemporary dynamic of reputable organizations redistributing content that they haven't vetted could lead you to think you are getting valid information when you are really being fed a hoax.

Here at the Pundit, we take pride in bringing things to the attention of the trade that might otherwise remain obscured. We have discussed the Vertical Farms Project many times.

It is a fantastic thing. Operated out of Columbia University by Dickson Despommier at the Department of Environmental Health Sciences, if they ever get the Vertical Farms Project to work, it will transform the world.

Now, all the sudden, word comes out on blogs and gets redistributed by publications and trade associations that, supposedly, they are going to build one of these vertical farms in Las Vegas.

Most of these sources picked up a story from something called *Next Energy News*:

Las Vegas To Build World's First 30-Story Vertical Farm

Las Vegas, the tourist mecca of the world, is set to begin development of the world's first vertical farm. The $200 million dollar project is designed to be a functional and profitable working farm growing enough food to feed 72,000 people for a year and provide another tourist attraction to the city that does everything in a larger-than-life way.

The world currently uses about 80 percent of the available farmland and 60 percent of the earth's population lives near or in an urban environment so the logical choice for farming is to go up for land where the environment can be controlled and where distribution is local. Las Vegas is seen as the perfect location for this project by Nevada state officials who would like to demonstrate their sustainability and environmental awareness instead of projecting an image of waste and excess.

Although the project's initial cost is high at $200 million, with annual revenue of $25 million from produce and another $15 million from tourists, the 30-story vertical farm would be about as profitable as a casino, with operating expenses being only about $6 million a year.

There would be about 100 different crops grown ranging from strawberries to lettuce -even miniature banana trees could be grown from each floor's specially controlled environment. The products would go straight to the casinos and hotel properties and be a very visible and desirable addition to the overall Las Vegas experience. Design details should be worked out in 2008 and the project could open its doors by the middle of 2010.

When we received the story, as is our practice here at the Pundit, we called for confirmation. Nobody seems to have heard of the project.

The *Las Vegas Sun* quotes Professor Despommier from Columbia as saying it is probably a hoax:

The Vegas Building Rumor Watch: A Skyscraper Farm?

If you're a city that has already built a faux Eiffel Tower rising out of a casino and a giant lake with explosive fountains that dance to Frank Sinatra songs, perhaps it's only inevitable that Internet rumormongers will be only so happy to believe you'll do just about anything.

How else to explain the latest wacky building rumor pinned to Las Vegas: a skyscraper farm.

The so-called "fact" that Las Vegas is building a giant skyscraper that will feed 72,000 people in the city — and serve as a tourist attraction — has been floating around for about a week now on "green business" web sites, Las Vegas building sites, and, of course, Wikipedia. Most of the reports reference a story in something called Next Energy News *that cites "Nevada state officials" as saying that Las Vegas is building the $200-million 30-story building, the world's first skyscraper farm.*

Unbelievable? Uh, yeah. But a little too fantastic to totally ignore.

Turns out, the enticing and actually very serious-minded concept of a "vertical farm" was dreamed up by Dr. Dickson Despommier, a professor of public health at Columbia University. Despommier has spent the last 10 years developing extensive plans and studies that explore the feasibility, necessity, and practicality of a giant tower that would feed city folks.

Web sites that "report" the building of the vertical farm in Las Vegas don't mention Despommier by name, but include renderings and language lifted straight out of his vertical farm web site.

Problem is . . . Despommier doesn't know anything about Las Vegas plans.

"I have absolutely nothing to do with it," said Despommier, in an e-mail. "My own opinion is that it's just a hoax."

It wouldn't be the first time someone tried to prematurely tie a somewhat whimsical-sounding building project to Las Vegas. I enjoy the "dreams" page of the blog Vegas Today and Tomorrow *for my fix of never-weres (sample: an Addams Family Resort and Casino!).*

It is a very interesting concept, and they are continuing to develop it. Maybe the first one will be built in Las Vegas one day. The future of controlled-atmosphere agriculture is vitally important for the future of the industry.

A more immediate lesson, though, is that the Web is filled with false information. That problem is magnified because many reputable publications and organizations just pick up news feeds and redistribute them.

We just want to assure you that if it is on the Pundit, we checked it out. Sure we could make a mistake, maybe even be hoodwinked, but a real effort has gone into making sure you get information both interesting and accurate.

www.perishablepundit.com

THE 20TH ANNUAL MYSTERY SHOPPER REPORT

Secret shoppers go undercover to reveal how retailers are complying with COOL.

BY AMY SHANNON

For the past 20 years, PRODUCE BUSINESS has sent a team of "mystery shoppers" into stores across the country. This year's team had the mission of observing merchandising, marketing and management of country-of-origin labeling (COOL). Here are our findings:

Consumers are interested in the geographic origin of their produce — but perhaps not in the way COOL advocates intended. Shoppers don't seem particularly concerned whether the fruits and vegetables they buy are foreign or domestic. What they really seem to care about is whether their produce is locally grown.

The produce clerks and managers our mystery shoppers encountered acknowledged they are seldom asked what country a produce item comes from. When consumers do ask about origin, they want to know if it was grown locally.

Right now, COOL compliance — as defined by the 2002 Farm Bill — is voluntary [*Editor's note: Please see* COOL FAQs *sidebar on page 25*], but that will change in September 2008 when compliance becomes mandatory. "The 2002 law requires retailers to show the product's country of origin with signs, shelf tags, labels on individual items or other means," according to the Food Marketing Institute, Arlington, VA.

The specifics that will constitute mandatory compliance come September are not known because the House and Senate have not yet agreed on the final language of the 2007 Farm Bill. And if the 2007 Farm Bill does not pass, the mandatory rules established in the 2002 Farm Bill will become effective, unless some other intervention or postponement comes into play. How this will play out and what compromises will be made are anyone's guess.

Several of the retailers our shoppers visited relied solely on the stickers and/or packaging supplied by the shippers, which is all that the 2002 provisions delineate as necessary. Other retailers have chosen to supplement that information with signage that is easier for consumers to read than the stickers and packaging because it is larger and because, in some instances, the signage also constitutes an avenue for marketing specific aspects of the item.

How We Conducted The Mystery Shopper Report

To mark the 20th anniversary of the *PRODUCE BUSINESS Mystery Shopper Report*, we asked some of our contributing editors to "go incognito" and visit a variety of retailers from coast to coast to see just how well their produce departments measure up. And they did fairly well overall.

Our seven mystery shoppers covered six geographic locations and visited a total of 23 stores between the end of January and the beginning of February. They each visited a large chain (national or regional), a small chain and an independent retailer. To protect the innocent, we did not identify the stores in our report. We asked our shoppers to pay particular attention to COOL.

During the winter, when domestically grown produce is limited, imported items that will require COOL — grapes, stone fruit, sweet onions, Clementines, avocados, tomatoes, peppers, kiwifruit, asparagus and many other items — are particularly abundant.

Our mystery shoppers also shared their general impressions of the department staff they encountered.

NORTHEAST REPORT

Store 1

I visited this large-chain supermarket on a busy Sunday afternoon.

I first saw a display of conventional apples just two rows away from the organic apples. Several signs explained the varieties but didn't indicate country of origin. Instead, each apple was marked with a small PLU sticker. I picked up a Gala, which was labeled as from Washington.

A small display of attractive berries had a sign stating, "California strawberries," but the clamshell packages said the strawberries were from Florida. I didn't see any signs indicating the origin of the blackberries, but the packaging showed they were grown in Chile.

I picked up a clamshell of organic garlic and asked the only employee I saw, "Do you know where this was grown?" He said no and took the clamshell to inspect it. Finally, he turned it over and saw a sticker that read, "Produce of USA." He replied, "Oh, it's from the United States," and handed it back to me.

I didn't see any loose yellow onions. Under a "Yellow Onions" sign, I saw a pile of much more costly sweet onions.

I found a small bunch of Broccolini labeled "Baby Broccoli" but no sign or sticker indicated price. I looked for the same employee. This time, another man was standing next to him and leaning against the shelves. I couldn't tell if he were an employee. They were talking in Spanish. "How much is this?" I asked. The employee was not happy at my interruption. He glanced at the display and stated, "$3.99."

I asked, "3.99 each?"

He replied, "$3.99 a pound." The bunch weighed just less than half a pound, so I figured it must cost about $2.

"Where's the basil?" I asked and he pointed to a jumbled shelf of packaged fresh herbs.

I later returned to the produce department and asked another employee if there were any soy veggie crumbs. He pointed to the natural foods section in another part of the store, and said, "If there are any left, they're over there." When I said I hadn't seen any, he said, "Then we're out."

At the checkout counter, the woman slid my items across the scanner and dumped them into a plastic bag without looking at the bag or me. The Broccolini rang up $2.99.

Store 2

I visited this enormous suburban shop on a Sunday afternoon and it was nearly full. When I walked in, I saw a sign that read, "Today, we are offering 110 varieties of organic produce."

Just past the front doors were large displays of Clementines and blueberries — neither had signs indicating where they were from — leading to the produce department in the center of the store. The displays were big and beautiful. Everywhere I looked, I saw varieties of every kind of produce imaginable. A display of mushrooms included enoki, shiitake, portobello, maitake and oyster.

The sweet onions were labeled "Mayan Sweet Onions." After picking one up, I saw they were from Peru. Over a display of tomatoes, a sign read, "Plum (Roma) Tomatoes. Meaty, great for sauces and canning." I asked an employee stocking tomatoes where they came from. "Let me see," he said, turning a box in his hands. "They were packed in Arizona but grown in Mexico."

I thanked him and moved on to the lemons. "I see bags of lemons, but I only want one," I told a man stocking bananas.

"No problem," he said. "They're right over there," pointing to a display of loose lemons.

I picked up a bulb of elephant garlic and brought it to a man stocking fresh herbs. "Is this the same as regular garlic?" I asked.

"Yes, it's just bigger." He looked at the packaging. "It says it's more mild. Let me ask someone else." He conferred with a co-worker, who told me I could use it in place of regular garlic.

Another employee, who was stocking broccoli, asked me if I needed any help. "What's good today?" I asked.

"Everything is good!" he replied. "What are you making?" I told him I was planning on roast chicken. "The broccoli is really good," he advised. I asked him where it comes from this time of year. "This broccoli is from California," he said. "The broccoli rabe is from Mexico. It's real good, too."

When I asked how to cook it, he told me how to steam it. I decided to buy the broccoli rabe.

Although I doubt elephant garlic would have had the desired effect on my garlic roast chicken, I had a good experience at this store. All of the employees seem genuinely happy to help me.

Store 3

I visited this small, bustling single-store independent operation just after noon on a Sunday. The majority of the aisles were filled with big, bountiful displays of produce. The rest were dedicated to staple items, specialty groceries and a small deli counter. This is a no-frills space, but clean and easy to navigate.

Along with the usual fruits and vegetables, I found a lot of specialty produce such as fresh aloe, cipollini onions, batata and calabaza. I also saw a couple of items I couldn't find at the large chain's store, such as oyster and shiitake mushrooms. I didn't see any organic items. Several handwritten signs gave the name of each item and the price but very few included where it came from. I did see a sign for Holland bell peppers and Dominican eggplant.

Plastic containers of peeled garlic were individually labeled as Chinese, but bulk garlic had no signs or labels. I didn't see any employees in the department, although a few times someone, who may have been an employee, rushed by me.

I saw a sign for Vidalia onions, but I know this was the wrong season for them. I looked closer and saw they were individually labeled with stickers as sweet onions from Peru.

The lines to each of the four registers were

PROPOSED COOL MODIFICATIONS

If the 2007 Farm Bill is passed later this year, country-of -origin labeling (COOL) regulations will have significant compromises that make mandatory rules a little more palatable to produce retailers and suppliers.

In a joint statement issued on July 25, 2007, Tom Stenzel, president of United Fresh Produce Association (PMA), Washington, D.C., and Bryan Silbermann, president of Produce Marketing Association, Newark, DE, wrote:

"A number of produce stakeholder organizations reviewed the proposed changes to the law and endorsed an agreement to move forward with mandatory COOL with the following changes that will be included in the Farm Bill:

1. Significantly reduced penalties for mistakes in labeling at point of purchase, including a 'good faith' standard that reduces the liability for retailers unless shown to be disregarding or willfully violating the law. This helps ease the burden on retailers, so long as they are working to comply with the law. Note that produce suppliers must provide country-of-origin information to retailers, and the truthfulness of that declaration is still subject to PACA law.

2. Retailers would not be liable for misinformation provided by suppliers, which should eliminate the need for retailers to audit their suppliers to ensure compliance.

3. No new record-keeping. Normal records kept in the regular course of doing business are sufficient to comply with the law. This is an important relief from the original law that threatened an extreme cost burden on the total supply chain.

4. A specific provision to allow labeling of a U.S. state, region or locality in which a product is produced to meet label standards as product of U.S. Therefore, a descriptor such as Minnesota Grown or Pride of New York would be sufficient labeling to comply with the law. Produce suppliers and retailers across the industry strongly advocated for this change due to the many marketing programs and state/regional affiliations currently appearing in produce labeling." **pb**

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BellaVita

Reader Service # 70

about 10 deep, but with one person working the register and another bagging, they moved fast.

NEW ENGLAND REPORT

Store 1

Although this regional chain store is less than a mile from my house, I rarely shop here because I've always been disappointed in the produce. Its vegetables last no more than one night in my house and, very often, items are wilting right on the shelves. On this occasion, however, it almost looked like a new produce department.

Some things didn't change, however — not many specialty items were on display. The most exotic were avocados and ginger. There was also a serious lack of organic produce. The department is small, as is the store. It did look cleaner than usual, and I did not find any items wilting on the shelves. The produce was fresh and displays full.

I easily found the price that matched the item. Almost all the signage had country of origin. Products without COOL signs were labeled with individual tags, packaging or PLU stickers that included country of origin. The only exceptions were loose green beans and some peppers.

The display of peppers was a bit confusing. Green bell peppers were listed as from Mexico or California, either on the sign or on the sticker. Colored bell peppers simply said "imported." A sign read "Imported Hot Peppers," but it indicated neither the type of hot pepper nor where it came from. The only non-bell peppers were jalapeños, which I don't consider particularly hot, but some people do.

As I pondered peppers, a produce associate asked if I needed assistance. I asked him if the "Imported Hot Peppers" were the jalapeños, and he said yes, and asked me if I wanted him to bring out more hot peppers from the back. When I said yes, he rolled out a cart of about five or six different peppers and proceeded to explain to me the heat and flavor of each.

As he did so, he restocked the display with the different varieties. I asked where they came from. He confessed he didn't know but showed me the packaging [from Melissa's/World Variety Produce, Inc., Los Angeles, CA]. He said Melissa's was based out of California but imports from a number of different locations. He added that Melissa's always has good quality.

I bought several hot peppers and limes to go with them. Everything rang up correctly, though I had to tell the cashier that all the peppers were considered hot. They were different types but all shared the same PLU. I also had to tell her what my cilantro was before she could ring it up.

Store 2

The next store I visited is a unique, independent grocery store that specializes in organic and all-natural foods. I go to this store frequently because I've always had good luck there. Next door, the store also has a delicious restaurant that uses the same products sold in the store.

The produce section is to the right of the entrance beside the cash registers. While I've run into the produce manager a few times, I know he can be paged if necessary. Overall, I found the produce section clean and well stocked. At this store, good customer service is readily available.

Although I didn't have any problems finding prices, I did have a hard time finding country-of-origin information. For most of the products, the information was on the products themselves — either on the packaging, the elastic or twist tags or PLU stickers. Stickers were most commonly found on the stone and tree fruit, such as apples, peaches and avocados. All fruit with stickers had the country-of-origin information.

Several items, such as the garlic, tomatoes, potatoes and onions, had no COOL. However, the manager was knowledgeable. He told me the ginger came from China, but he was trying to get it from Hawaii or Florida. He said he prefers buying product domestically, even if it costs more. If he is unable to get a product from the United States, he wants to get them from countries with fair-trade policies.

Although the produce department is small, the store makes good use of its space. It looks full without being cluttered, busy or overwhelming. The selection includes many commodity items, such as carrots, lettuces, tomatoes, potatoes, onions, turnips, berries, tree and stone fruits, squashes and leafy greens. There are also many specialty items, such as sprouts, micro greens and locally grown specialty mushrooms. The only exceptions to the department's full stock were several bins of squash and gourds that needed to be refilled. But I was there on one of the two days the store doesn't receive shipments.

I bought carrots, a red onion and shallots. In all cases, the items rang up exactly as marked, and I received an additional 10 percent off for showing my student ID card.

Store 3

This small neighborhood chain is one of my favorite stores, though it's out of the way of my usual travels. This particular store has a smallish produce selection, but I tend to find products I want at a price I like. The atmosphere is also very welcoming.

I stopped to look at the bagged salads first. Some of the organic salad bags were labeled as "Products of the U.S. and Mexico," but the vast majority had no labeling. Since they're packaged items, I was rather surprised at the lack of COOL. I thought bagged salad would be an easy product to label. Fortunately, someone was filling a display nearby and I approached her saying, "I have a silly question. These bags say they're products of Mexico and the U.S., but the rest don't say where they are from. Where can I find that out?"

She replied, "That's not a silly question at all! That's a very good question. Let me find out for you, immediately." I appreciated the respect and the quick response. She told me if an item is not labeled, it is from the United States. I thanked her and put the greens in my basket. She made sure I didn't need anything else before she returned to stocking her shelf.

I took my time in the department and, aside from prepared entrée salads and meals, only found one other omission of COOL: some of the apples. Most of the apples had stickers that indicated where the items were from.

Everything else at this store is sold pre-packaged, and the packages were labeled. There was also a lot of educational information on signage, such as which apples were best for baking, eating or making salad, pasta or bruschetta.

I bought some Splendido tomatoes (from Mexico) to go with my salad mixes and spinach, and two apples to snack on for the ride home. All items rung up correctly, and the checkout attendant suggested I try the tomatoes with mozzarella and fresh basil in a salad.

[The manager] told me the ginger came from China, but he was trying to get it from Hawaii or Florida. He said he prefers buying product domestically, even if it costs more.

NORTHWEST REPORT

Store 1

This large national chain has a large, remodeled produce department. A produce associate asked me if I was finding everything OK after he saw me picking up several items and putting them back. I told him I was interested in where the produce was grown and how much of it was locally grown. Together, we looked at display signage and found no indication of the source.

"I think that information is usually on the sticker," he said. I picked up a tomato and told him I could see the sticker and the PLU code, but unfortunately I couldn't read the tiny print on the small label. He identified the source as Mexico, but he agreed it wasn't easy to see.

I then asked him how many customers were curious about the source of fruits and vegetables, and he replied, "We have a few customers that are extremely interested, but not a lot. Many customers want to know when local supplies start."

This retailer occasionally uses country-of-ori-

Old faithfuls or specialty deliveries. No problem.

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Reader Service # 93

gin information in weekly ads. This week's ad noted sweet cherries from Chile, but the remaining ad items did not include a source.

The associate returned to stacking a display of pears while I moved deeper into the department. A second associate asked if I was finding everything OK. I asked about the variety of chiles and fresh specialty peppers. I mentioned I had a recipe that called for ancho chiles.

He looked through the display and said, "I don't see any and don't think we carry them." He offered to check in the backroom and apologized when he couldn't find any. While he tried to helpful and was very personable, he seemed unaware of the name differences between fresh and dried chiles and was unable to recommend an alternative. Chiles here are displayed in small baskets, but none were labeled with a source, and many were too small for a sticker.

Store 2

Some of the most committed and intensely curious consumers shop at this 8-store chain with a focus on natural foods. At 10:00 AM on a Thursday, the parking lot was about half-filled and the small produce department was busy.

Strolling down each side and around the center displays, I found every product signed with a country of origin. Perhaps a dozen of the displays also gave the name of the supplier — usually a grower — with some concise information about the product.

While the majority of fruits and vegetables sold here are organic, products such as grapes from Chile were signed as conventionally grown. When I asked the produce manager working the floor why the store didn't offer organic grapes, he replied, "Due to the long distance, grapes from Chile are treated with a gas and can't be organic. Maybe sometime in the future, they'll be able to grow organic grapes and get them here to meet organic standards." [*Editor's note: Please see* Considering Organic Imports? *on page 161. Any produce item that is fumigated cannot be marketed in the United States as organic.*]

When I asked about fresh lychee, he immediately cut a piece off the stem, split its beautiful red shell and encouraged me to taste it. I told him I liked it, but at $7.99 per pound, I didn't think it was going in my cart. He laughed and agreed it was a special treat — one reason why the display was so small.

I told him I was planning on making a roasted beet salad and was looking for beets with stems. There were some, but I wanted to know if he'd be getting more in soon. He said he'd have more in later (the truck was late), but in his opinion, I'd get better results from another bulk beet from a local farmer. He showed me these beets; they were big, ugly — and lower priced than the ones I had looked at originally. "You have to try them to understand why I recommend them," the clerk said. "They have unbelievable flavor and are so sweet and fresh." The guy clearly knew his product.

I left the department without lychees but with a bag of ugly beets. On my way out, I checked out a display of squash and apples outside the front door. These all had PLU stickers that included a country of origin source.

Store 2½

Even though I was asked to visit only one regional chain, I had to write about another small high-end chain in the area. Every regular display was well signed with country of origin. Promotion products — this week basil, melons, asparagus and tomatoes — were displayed in carts in the aisle. These products had price signs only.

I asked the produce associate where the asparagus was from. He said, "I think it's from Chile. A lot of products are from there at this time of year." I looked down and saw the source was printed on a rubber band — it said Peru. I showed it to him and he said, "Wow, I better check on the rest of these. I was sure I knew." He immediately went to the back and wrote down a list of all the promotional products with their sources. Great service and response.

"You have to try them to understand why I recommend [these beets]," the clerk said. "They have unbelievable flavor and are so sweet and fresh." The guy clearly knew his product.

Store 3

This local independent has the largest produce department in the area. There are seldom less than three staff members working the displays. At 9:00 AM on a Saturday, the department was ready for business. The department includes about six aisles and a large cold-case, showcasing products from around the world. Located in an area with significant Asian and immigrant populations, this store appeals to all income levels.

Promotion items are typically displayed at the front of the department near the doors in high bins or on tables. These displays, along with every display in the department, were meticulously labeled with a country of origin. I couldn't find a single mistake or missing sign.

An associate asked me if I needed help with anything. I told him I was concerned about where my produce comes from and I found the signs very helpful. He replied, "Every day, we have someone check every sign. Accurate signs on produce sources are important to us." When I asked if many people ask where their produce comes from, he replied, "We don't get many questions other than on local products, but we still think it is important. If there's a recall, people ask about safety, but most of the time, the sign program answers most of the questions."

I asked him about quality, saying I love fresh apricots but a recent experience with fruit from Chile wasn't very good. He replied, "If you stick with grapes or cherries, you'll do well. The berries and avocados are great. I'm less confident about the apricots."

I started to ask him about a recipe, but he admitted he wasn't much of a cook and directed me to the nearby cooking kiosk where a chef was setting up for a demonstration. The two of us walked over and he asked the chef my question about cooking squash in a slow cooker. The clerk thanked me for coming in and went back to his work. The chef answered my question and I happily left with a full basket.

Another Extra Visit

When I visited a club store, I found reliance for country-of-origin information is on the individual package, case or carton the fruit or vegetable comes in. Small items such as green beans come only in packages. There are no bulk items. Some items, such as apples, also had PLU stickers. Signs were used for pricing only.

The pace is fast and there is little opportunity to talk with a staff member. Questions about the location of something are answered but any level of dialogue appears to be discouraged.

WEST COAST REPORT

Store 1

Late on a Monday morning, the produce department of this major chain in an affluent area was fully stocked with a wide selection of items. The department was neat and clean and the produce looked fresh and inviting. Two clerks were working on displays. Shoppers were greeted with a sign indicating large Hass avocados are imported. Each avocado bore a sticker saying it was from Chile, but the sign had no specific exporting source.

Another printed sign, hanging above a large, attractive display of cherries in bags and clamshells, announced they were from Chile. It also said, "I just arrived from Chile with intensely sweet and vibrant flavors." A blueberry display bore a large price sign saying, "Blueberries imported," but without a specific country of origin.

STRANGE AND UNUSUAL JOURNEYS INTO...

BIZARRE

STORIES FROM THE FUTURE!

IT'S STRANGE, BUT TRUE!!

SOME SPACED-OUT PRODUCE MANAGERS THINK ALL POTATOES ARE THE SAME, BUT *YOUR* CUSTOMERS KNOW THAT WHEN IT COMES TO *CONSISTENT QUALITY*...
IDAHO POTATOES ARE SIMPLY OUT OF THIS WORLD!

Famous Potatoes GROWN IN IDAHO

Reader Service # 18

Chilean apricots, black plums, nectarines, and grapes as well as Italian kiwis had a small price card with a brief description of the item, its price and the word, "imported." All the fruit had stickers to identify where they came from. Some domestically produced items, such as bags of cauliflower and Jazz apples, were identified as "Product of USA" or "domestic" on the price cards.

Other imported items, such as asparagus from Peru, squash from Mexico, papaya from Brazil and melons from Guatemala had individual stickers. No signage indicated country of origin.

I asked a produce associate if the store received many inquires — or complaints, for that matter — about imported produce. He said some consumers sometimes comment that imported tree fruits aren't as good as California fruit. On the other hand, he added, people really seem to like imported berries. He was friendly and knowledgeable and offered me a sample of the blueberries. They were sweet and juicy, so I bought some. As I walked away, he offered another customer a sample of a different item, which she also purchased. I often buy items at this store when someone in the produce department lets me taste them.

The produce department has a separate organic section with long banners hanging from the ceiling. Large stickers marked "Organic" were on most of the individual items on display.

In another area of the department, a framed recipe from a salad dressing company was placed above a display of the main ingredients. Oranges, avocados, cashews and bottles of the salad dressing were all grouped together; the recipe was simple to remember and looked quick and delicious — so I added all the ingredients to my cart.

Store 2

On a Friday afternoon, the produce department of this small, upscale, regional chain was filled with beautiful, colorful displays. Many of them contained prominent signs, stating "Grown in California," "Northwest" or "Locally Grown." Apple pears carried a sign that read "Grown in Korea." The signs for peaches, nectarines, cherries and grapes announced, "Grown in Chile."

Another sign read, "The following items are coated with food grade vegetable, petroleum, beeswax, lac-resin based wax and/or resins to maintain their freshness." A a sign near some refrigerated items in clamshells said the containers were made of corn-based plastics. I asked the clerk if many people had commented on the sign, and he said, "No, there hasn't been much reaction because consumers don't really notice a difference from the previous ones." He then told me the containers were biodegradable and explained why that was beneficial.

The market also uses signs to call attention to locally grown produce. Large signs displayed the flavor benefits of locally grown produce and spotlighted a local supplier the market partners with.

I chose a melon and asked the clerk if it was ripe enough to eat that evening. He felt it, said it was a bit hard and felt several others. He went into the backroom and returned with a melon that was just right — sweet, juicy and delicious.

The produce personnel seem knowledgeable and are very helpful. I really appreciate being able to ask for help — and to get it in such a pleasant manner. The market has many informative signs, but the personal touch is wonderful.

Store 3

On a weekday morning, I visited a popular independent market with an affluent clientele and nearby Asian and Latino populations. The produce department was beautiful, though much smaller than the other markets I visited. Much smaller displays offered a wide array of products carefully arranged in rows with a minimum of layers. The selection included 14 apple varieties, six hard squash varieties and six types of onions, including a sweet onion labeled from Peru.

There were no signs anywhere in the department indicating if the produce was imported or not. I asked a produce clerk if people questioned him about where produce came from at this time of year. He replied, "Yes, a few, but there are identification stickers on each item so you can tell. For instance, the Asian pears are from Japan." The peaches and nectarines had stickers indicating they were from Chile, and the limes were in pack-

Reader Service # 44

Reader Service # 75

"... I bought a container of your strawberries... WOW!

They were the best berries I've had this year!

They are attractively packaged, they look great, and oh-so **sweet!**"

Carole Kriste • Long Beach, CA

• *Great Strawberries make Happy Customers* •

Red Blossom
CALIFORNIA STRAWBERRIES

www.redblossom.com • 162 Montgomery Ave. Oxnard, CA 93030 • (805) 981-1839

Reader Service # 110

aging that showed they were from Mexico. However, the packaged grapes and most of the vegetable items had no form of identification.

I asked the clerk to help me select a good cantaloupe for the next day. He sorted through the melons and handed me one. He said they were from Central America and the quality right now was not the best. The melons were all marked with stickers, indicating Costa Rica or Honduras as the source for the cantaloupe and honeydew, and Mexico for the watermelon.

The department was neat and clean and the produce looked washed and polished. There were traditional items, but also more unusual ones. Cocktail grapefruit [a cross between a pomelo and a Frua mandarin] were in a small carton, and kale, dandelion and collard greens, daikon, fennel, celery root, red and green chard, fresh horseradish and shelled green peas were available. Fresh-cut fruits were arranged on a bed of crushed ice along with containers of salsa and guacamole — all bearing the market's name.

Organic produce was integrated throughout the department. A shelf above the potato and onion display held a wide selection of packaged nuts, seeds, dried fruits and other snack items. The department offered many top quality choices in a limited but well-organized space. Prices tended to be higher than the major chain I visited and more in line with the upscale regional chain.

A clerk was working the displays the entire time I was in the department and two people were filling orders for delivery. I overheard the clerks talking about a particular order, which included fresh beans; evidently, the person who placed the order was specific about where in the department the beans were displayed and what size she wanted.

SOUTHWEST REPORT

Store 1

I visited this large regional chain store at 9:08 AM on a Monday. The interior could use some remodeling to bring it up-to-date, but things were tidy and orderly. The produce department was laid out in a classic U-shape with refrigerated cases on the perimeter and back-to-back angled racks in the center. It was well stocked and clean.

I asked a clerk stocking a refrigerator case with some bell peppers about an item that appeared to be a very small papaya, but it had no signage or label. He confirmed it was a papaya but couldn't comment on the flavor — he had never tried one because they were "too expensive."

None of the signs listed a country of origin. The country was discernable on most bagged items and many bulk items had stickers that included country of origin. When I asked the same clerk how I could tell where an item came from if it didn't have a sticker, he said he wasn't sure. He then chuckled and said, "Sooner or later, we'll probably have to put bigger signs up here," gesturing to the header, "but I hope it's later."

Of the 46 items surveyed, 12 did not have COOL All items in packages were labeled except for iceberg lettuce. Of the items that were labeled with COOL, Mexico accounted for 15.6 percent, Chile 18.7 percent, and Ecuador, Costa Rica, Honduras and Guatemala each had one item. U.S. produce accounted for 25 percent. There didn't seem to be any rhyme or reason to the items that weren't labeled. Bulk lemons were labeled, but bulk limes were not. Acorn squash was labeled, but spaghetti squash was not.

Store 2

I visited this small independent grocer at 9:53 AM on a Monday. With only eight aisles, this community store features a butcher shop catering to consumers who buy large amounts of meat. The store's owner operates the only checkout register.

The store is clean and neat with well-stocked out-of-date shelves. The produce section consisted of one refrigerated case about 12 feet long with several bushel baskets on the floor adjacent to a case containing potatoes, onions and squash. About half of the produce was less than fresh — and not very appealing.

There was COOL labeling was on some of the produce itself but no signage. At this store, if a shopper wants to know where an item is from, it better have a label.

Of the 18 items I checked, eight didn't have

Reader Service # 24

COOL FAQs

At the time this issue went to press, the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives had not agreed on the final wording of the 2007 Farm Bill, and that lack of agreement impacts country-of-origin labeling (COOL) requirements. Right now, there are no mandatory federal regulations that apply to the produce industry, but this is likely to change with the Sept. 30, 2008, deadline for implementing the mandates set out in the 2002 Farm Bill, which may or may not survive intact in the 2007 bill.

Until the 2007 Farm Bill is passed and signed into law by the president, the industry may be faced with stiff mandatory regulations beginning Sept. 30, 2008. If the Farm Bill is passed, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), which will be responsible for the nuts-and-bolts decisions that will regulate compliance, will begin to set rules, standards and penalties.

Since nothing is "writ in stone," it is impossible to delineate COOL compliance specifics, but PRODUCE BUSINESS *has put together some of the best research-based guesstimates from industry associations, including the Food Marketing Institute (FMI), Washington, D.C.*

Q. Is signage OK or must everything be labeled?

A. Retailers will have a choice between using signage and direct labeling as a means to comply.

Q. If my signage is wrong, what would be my liability? Is there a "Good Faith" safe harbor?

A. USDA will seek to enter into partnerships with states that have existing enforcement infrastructure to assist in the administration of this law. USDA will determine the scheduling and procedures for compliance reviews. Only USDA will be able to initiate enforcement actions against an organization found to be in violation. USDA may also conduct investigations of complaints made by any person alleging violations of these regulations when the secretary identifies reasonable grounds for an investigation. It is unknown whether Congress will create a "Good Faith" safe harbor.

Q. What if a supplier mislabels product — what is my liability?

A. Although the 2002 Farm Bill contains wording about fines to retailers who willingly mislabel product and to suppliers who willingly or unwillingly mislabel products, final guidelines have not been established.

Q. Do products I prepare in-store — for example, cut melons — need COOL?

A. According to the Federal Register/Vol. 68, No. 210, Oct. 30, 2002, Proposed Rules: "In cases where a retail item is derived from a perishable agricultural commodity that has been combined with another covered commodity or other substantive food components resulting in a distinct retail item that is not marketed as a covered commodity, such an item is considered a processed food item and would be excluded from these regulations. Examples include a frozen prepared pie that includes frozen sliced apples, a fruit cup containing cantaloupe, honeydew, and watermelon, or a vegetable tray containing both carrots and celery."

Q. What are the rules for blends? Say a salad mix with 10 items? Can I list five countries — "May contain product of . . ." — or must it specifically relate to that batch? What order must countries be listed in?

A. The proposed mandate states all "blended or commingled items," such as bagged lettuce, must contain labels alphabetically listing the countries of origin for all raw materials contained in them. The current rule would also require facilities to document that the origin of a product was separately tracked and the labeling to specify precisely the countries of origin represented within each individually packaged retail product.

Q. If no law is passed, is COOL mandatory Sept. 1, 2008?

A. Technically, yes, but Congress is considering changes to that law right now. There is no real clear standard right now.

Q. What has been the experience of the seafood industry with COOL?

A. FMI surveyed its members on their experiences with the implementation of COOL as it relates to seafood. Several told FMI they ended commercial relationships with small seafood suppliers that could not provide the records required by the law. FMI predicts the implementation of COOL for produce and other covered commodities to have similar impacts, particularly on smaller entities throughout the supply chain.

Q. How can retailers prepare for upcoming COOL regulations?

A. • Pull together a team, including IT people, that will be in charge of implementing COOL.

• Look at how your seafood department has implemented COOL.

• Work with suppliers to compile a list of things that will be needed to comply with the law.

• Look at products already being sold with COOL, and figure out what other steps to take.

Q. Is COOL mandatory for produce anywhere in the United States now by state law?

A. Florida and Maine currently have mandatory origin labeling requirements for fresh produce.

Q. What does voluntary compliance really mean?

A. According to the Federal Register/Vol. 67, No. 198, Oct. 11, 2002, Notices: "A distinction was made by Congress when constructing the legislation authorizing this program between the voluntary labeling program and the mandatory labeling program. During the voluntary labeling timeframe covered by these guidelines, the Agency has no authority to pursue enforcement action against entities participating in this voluntary program. However, it is important to note that when retailers and their suppliers choose to adopt the guidelines that all of the provisions contained within must be followed. Any reference by retailers and their suppliers to the use of these guidelines when certain provisions are not being met could be considered a labeling claim that is not truthful and therefore may be a violation of the PACA and other applicable labeling laws and subject to enforcement under these laws."

Q. What is the role of identification by state, province, region — for example, Idaho potatoes, Vidalia onions, Maui onions, Prince Edward Island potatoes, Florida Citrus? Do these names all meet COOL standards?

A. If the original COOL law is enacted in September 2008, every product will have to be labeled with country of origin. However, the issue of local/state identification is addressed in the proposed COOL modifications in the 2007 Farm Bill. [*Editors note: Please see* Proposed COOL Modifications *sidebar on page 16.*]

COOL. Of the items that had labels, U.S. products accounted for 39 percent; two items were labeled as grown in Mexico and one item was marked as coming from Chile.

Store 3

I visited this large national chain at 10:29 AM on a Monday. Small compared to its sister stores, it feels like a throwback to the late '70s. The produce section has an L-shaped refrigerator case section with three freestanding angled racks in the open area of the L. The produce is high quality and fresh looking. The entire department is clean, particularly its bins.

I asked a clerk stocking apples how I could tell where stuff came from. He said I wasn't the only customer who wanted to know, adding, "All of that *E. coli* was from the United States, but we still have a lot of customers that ask us where things come from."

He told me he tries to pay attention to the

cases when he is stocking, so if the items aren't labeled, he can still tell customers where they come from. "For most of the bulk stuff, I have to go back to the case," he added. I asked if the store ever thought about putting up signs to help customers and he said he thought that would be difficult to do because at several times of the year, the same product comes in from different places, He also thought it would be tough to correlate what's on the cases with what's in the bins.

It appeared COOL depended solely on labels being applied by the grower/shipper or other suppliers. Of the 48 items surveyed, 14 items had no labels. Of the labeled items, 31 percent were labeled USA. Mexico accounted for 21 percent, Guatemala 3.25 percent, Chile 10.4 percent, and Costa Rica and Honduras each had for one item.

MIDWEST REPORT

Store 1

One immediately walks into this national chain store's produce department, which features six freestanding aisle displays filled with items. Produce also lines each wall on either side.

This store has lots of helpful signage; imported and domestic produce items are side by side. Laminated cards — with bold, easy-to-read type — are placed below each product. It was easy to spot pineapples from Costa Rica, mangos from Peru, organic basil from Illinois and organic kiwi from New Zealand. I also noticed a neat, colorful section devoted to rutabaga, burdock root, black radishes, turnips, parsnips and beets.

A large kiosk displayed bananas and plantains of all types, sizes and origins. They were grouped together with signage saying they were grown in South America, Ecuador and Costa Rica.

There were individual signs on every product display and in most instances, labels on the product themselves. The store also had signs offering guides to various produce categories, such as citrus, potatoes and tomatoes.

I struck up a conversation with another customer, who said, "It's important for me to know where the produce is coming from and to know it's free of pesticides and diseases. You can find everything right away here, you know where it came from, and it's organic. I like that — and I like that [this retailer] gives you so much more information than other stores."

Even ordinary items, such as apples and oranges, had signs or labels. Asian roots and other Asian items were well marked and, in some cases, displayed alongside seafood products, such as sushi, at the back of the produce department near the seafood area.

I love shopping this store when I want organic produce. The only downside to this particular store was there was no one in the produce department to answer any questions or offer any help.

In regards to COOL and consumer-friendly signage, I think this retailer's eye-catching displays and abundant information are terrific.

Store 2

At this regional grocery store with a very large produce department, most of the items sold in containers, such as blueberries, red seedless grapes and blackberries, feature COOL on the packaging. Another freestanding colorful display features signage reading "Chilean peaches, plums and nectarines."

I found small, COOL stickers on individual pieces of produce, such as organic avocados, greenhouse bell peppers and tomatoes from Mexico and onions from Peru. The store has an area devoted to Mexican papayas, mangos and star fruit, Brazilian sunrise papayas, Florida light avocados, Hawaiian coconuts and New Zealand kiwis. The country of origin was in very small type underneath the large, bold price.

I didn't see any signage or labeling for a display of lemons, limes and oranges. I checked out a huge display of onions in all colors — red, yellow, and white — but didn't see any signs or labels. Nearby was an attractive presentation of cantaloupe from Honduras with small COOL stickers but no additional signage.

Large, colorful, easy-to-read banners above the produce items in the aisle cases touted the benefits of products from local growers in Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana and Michigan.

I told a produce clerk I was glad to see local produce in the middle of winter. "We do a lot in conjunction with the seasons," she replied. "A lot depends on the seasons here. We let our customers know if something is locally grown. If it's from another country, we try to promote that country whenever possible. We also try to tie it in with holidays or special promotions."

This chain provides great customer service. The staff was numerous, friendly and helpful.

Store 3

This family-owned business with six stores is known for its abundance of international items. I visited a store in a trendy downtown section. Its produce department was a disappointment.

The department is sequestered in the back corner of the store, requiring a bit of diligence to find it. The store itself is quite large, but the produce department commands only a tiny section and appears to be an afterthought in this otherwise unique local chain.

I found several varieties of onions, roots and mushrooms neatly arranged in small containers, but very little was labeled with country of origin. A few exceptions included avocados from Mexico and a small display of mangos from Peru. There was a nice selection of kumquats, star fruit, heirloom tomatoes, Clementines and pomegranates but no information that was helpful if you didn't know what they were or how to use them.

I asked an employee stocking produce if there was any information — besides price, of course — that was available and he responded, "We rarely put any signage out about the products."

Even a small amount of signage would spruce up this dull produce department — and make it easier to choose items. I'm surprised shoppers in this upscale neighborhood have not demanded a better level of produce service from this retailer.

SOUTHEAST REPORT

Store 1

Four locations of this fast-growing Southeastern chain are within two miles from my house. I wasn't surprised to find the parking lot quite packed by 10:30 AM the day before Super Bowl Sunday. As I approached the produce department, I didn't see any employees, so I stopped in the deli department. I figured this would buy me some time to discreetly make observations and jot down some notes while I waited in line.

The produce department was neat and heavily decorated with Valentine's Day balloons and several large signs advertising fresh-cut fruit. An associate, who appeared to be a manager, walked out to the floor from the back, stopped, glanced around the department and walked to the front.

When I left the deli, I walked over to produce. The fresh-cut fruit section was bright and inviting. However, some of the fresh-cut products were a little disheveled and could have used a quick straightening up.

As I moved toward the peppers and greens, another employee rolled a large cart of bagged potatoes out from the back. He politely acknowledged several customers as he walked pass them to the potato section, which included a nice display of potatoes labeled as grown in Texas. I watched as the clerk culled the old bags by plopping them down on the floor. I thought this was a little odd; why didn't he drop them into a bin or place them at the bottom of his cart?

The produce was clearly marked with COOL, either with a sticker, a display sign or both. An attractive display of oranges had a sign stating, "Grown in California." COOL stickers were either on the items themselves or attached to the

I asked [the clerk] if the store ever thought about putting up signs to help customers and he said he thought that would be difficult to do because at several times of the year, the same product comes in from different places.

AN INSIDER'S SEARCH FOR COOL

BY JOHN PANDOL

For the occasional individuals who want to know the origin of their produce, they can find out, even during the night shift at a lower service format.

Usually I don't read no stinkin' labels. I felt real funny going into stores asking about the country of origin of products because 1) I know more than the clerks do, 2) I don't care where the produce comes from, and 3) I think most people don't care where the produce comes from. I hit three stores between 7:00 and 8:00 PM on a weeknight so I would not see the varsity produce clerk. I wanted to test for bench strength.

METHODOLOGY: I checked the ad flyer, signage and product for clues to the origin. I don't know if the average consumer would check a box on a display. I hope not because many times this method is unreliable. I looked at a core group of items. The fruits were bananas, grapes, apples, peaches and citrus. The vegetables were lettuce, tomatoes, potatoes, carrots and bagged salads. I then looked around the department for anything goofy. Finally, I mentioned to the duty clerk that I had read something in the paper about stores being required to post signage and asked if many people ask about origin.

Store 1: Extreme price format, 50,000 square feet, three of eight registers going with customers two deep, some private label produce.

There was no country-of-origin information in either the ad flyer or the signage. All five fruit products were labeled. About half of the vegetable items were. Bagged potatoes yes, bulk potatoes no. All tomatoes except the Romas. The Maui Sweet pineapples come not from the country of the United States, not from the state of Hawaii, but from Maui. It didn't say whether it was the island of Maui or the county of Maui (four islands) but we'll let that slide.

So where does a Mayan Sweet onion come from? Mayans come from southern Mexico and Guatemala, and the sticker says…nothing. The carton left on the clerk's pushcart says *Product of Peru*. Maybe they grow Inca Sweets in Guatemala.

A cello-overwrapped tray of six green bell peppers bearing the label of a regional repacker states *Product of USA and Mexico*. Could have fooled me. They look like they came from the same field. Why do I not believe the label?

The clerk was piling up 10-pound cellos of Russets (U.S.) when I asked if people ask about COOL. Clerk Ray, who obviously spends a lot of time in weight rooms and tattoo parlors, pointed to the bananas and informed me that very rarely do people ask, but that most of the stuff was labeled and if asked, the clerks would go in the back room to look at a box.

Store 2: Extreme price format, 90,000 square feet, four of 14 registers going two deep with customers. No private labels.

Store does not use ad flyers and there is no country-of-origin signage. The percent of products labeled was the same as Store 1 but this store displays many products in their original cartons on racks. Between labels and cartons, it is possible to determine 90-plus percent of the country of origin of the produce.

I asked the two clerks cleaning up the department about the interest in country of origin. The 300-pound broom-pusher told me that people didn't ask very much, that all the stuff was labeled (truth — most stuff is labeled), that a lot of stuff came from Mexico and Chile, and some people seemed to get upset about that, but, "Hey, man, it's a choice."

Store 3: Traditional supermarket, 60,000 square feet, three of seven registers going with two customers total and some private label in produce.

Flyer identified one item with the *CA GROWN* license plate logo, although it was not the only California product on ad. It also announced Texas grapefruit. Product labeling was consistent with Stores 1 and 2. I was in the department for more than five but less than 10 minutes and no produce clerk appeared. Odd, because usually I can't get through this store without two or three clerks asking if I need help.

CONCLUSION: The two clerks' responses that very few people ask is consistent with consumers' attitudes toward other products and research I have seen concerning produce and meat. While stores are not required to provide country-of-origin signage, they are not prohibited from doing so. For the occasional individuals who want to know the origin of their produce, they can find out, even during the night shift at a lower service format.

P.S. It has been nearly a year since the formal roll out of *Fruits and Veggies — More Matters*. I regret to report *5-A-Day the Color Way* or *5-to-9 a Day* messaging on packaging in all three stores, on the private labeled items in one store and used in the ad flyer in one store. After all the work that was put into designing the new campaign, I saw no *More Matters* messaging. Shame! Drop and give me 20.

John Pandol is vice president of special projects at Pandol Brothers.

shelves or bins. I picked up a bunch of green scallions from Guatemala for 69¢, a red bell pepper from Honduras for $2.99 per pound and a sweet onion labeled as grown in Peru.

A few minutes later, the employee looked up and asked if I was looking for something. I asked where the bagged sun-dried tomato bits were and he stopped what he was doing and walked over to the display to show me where they were.

I was impressed with how easy it was to identify where various products were from. While the amount of exotic produce was limited, the store offered a sizable selection of organic produce, including spinach, lettuce, apples and carrots.

Store 2

This independent single store, popular among kitchen enthusiasts, boasts a large assortment of freshly prepared foods and full-service meat, seafood, produce, deli, bakery, floral wine and cheese departments. But the tiny store can be difficult to shop on Friday evening or Saturday morning.

I visited the store at 9:15 AM on a Monday, just after it opened. It was pretty empty as I made my way through the produce department. There's a clear focus on organic and natural foods at this store, but there were several items that did not include COOL. I found mangos and bananas without any labels or signs. I did, however, find blueberries marked as grown in Chile and strawberries as coming from Mexico.

The store was in good shape for the morning after the Super Bowl. COOL was evident in most of the vegetable area, although I did see green onions and yellow squash without any identification. On the flip side, I found iceberg lettuce, romaine lettuce and celery marked as grown in the USA. All the veggies were fresh and enticing.

One of the things I enjoy most about this store is the variety of exotic fruit products, such as kiwi-flavored vinegar and star fruit. The apple section is tremendous and some of the displays had items, such as nuts and some meat products, that went well with the produce. Still, with space limited, there was no room for recipes or product information. Organic produce was abundant, but if an item was available in conventional, it was not available in organic. It was mostly a choice of either/or.

Overall, the store offers a unique and upscale take on traditional produce items. Although limited in terms of offerings, the products this store does provide are high in quality and for the most part, properly identified with COOL. Unfortunately, that level of quality comes with a price higher than that at a conventional large chain.

Store 3

The produce department is the first thing customers see when they walk into this large, national chain. I visited the store at 9:45 AM on a Monday and the parking lot was already full. When I walked inside, I saw eye-catching displays and a colorful array of conventional fruit, such as apples and citrus, attractively displayed with more unusual products, such as fresh aloe. The store is inviting and lively.

The department uses bins and stackable boxes plus traditional product cases and shelving along the walls in the fresh-cut case. Several sampling stations were in the department. There is a clean, enticing salad bar with all the fixings.

COOL was evident throughout the department. Many of the displays contained bright cards showcasing where various products were grown, such as mangos from Peru, coconuts from Mexico and organic kiwi from New Zealand.

An employee working in the lettuce section greeted me but didn't ask if he could help me with anything. My past experience with employees at this store has been more positive. Last summer, when I asked if there were any zucchini left, the associate went to the backroom and returned with the last one in the store. He told me it was bruised a bit, but it would taste good anyway. Without me asking, he adjusted the price to reflect 50 percent off.

Prices tend to be higher here than may chains. You can't purchase items such as run-of-the mill cake mixes or soda here so it's difficult when I want to do 1-stop shopping. On the flip side, this is a good place for out-of-the-ordinary produce items, such as dragon fruit. **pb**

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Wholesalers Talk Traceability

Knowing the origins and destinations of product is one practice that dates back decades.

BY DUANE CRAIG

Traceability at the wholesale level is nothing new, but in recent years, wholesalers have begun to look closer at how they test and strengthen the processes they have in place for tracing product.

Many welcome recent initiatives to standardize traceability throughout the produce chain while exploring additional standardization in the third-party auditing process.

Alan Siger, president and CEO of Consumers Produce Co., Inc., headquartered in Pittsburgh, PA, reports customers, such as large retailers and foodservice companies, require his company to have traceability. He says Consumers Produce has an advantage in meeting that requirement because, as with many wholesalers, the company can trace its origins to commissioned merchant roots. Under the Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act (PACA), Consumers Produce and other companies have always been required to identify exactly which suppliers' loads went to which customers. While the PACA requirements were focused on accounting, they provided the processes that support today's traceability systems.

Photo courtesy of Liberty Fruit

"Obviously, we are much more sophisticated than we were then in terms of speed," he notes. "In a split second, I can tell you where I sold a load of tomatoes that we moved in 1996, and exactly which customer it went to."

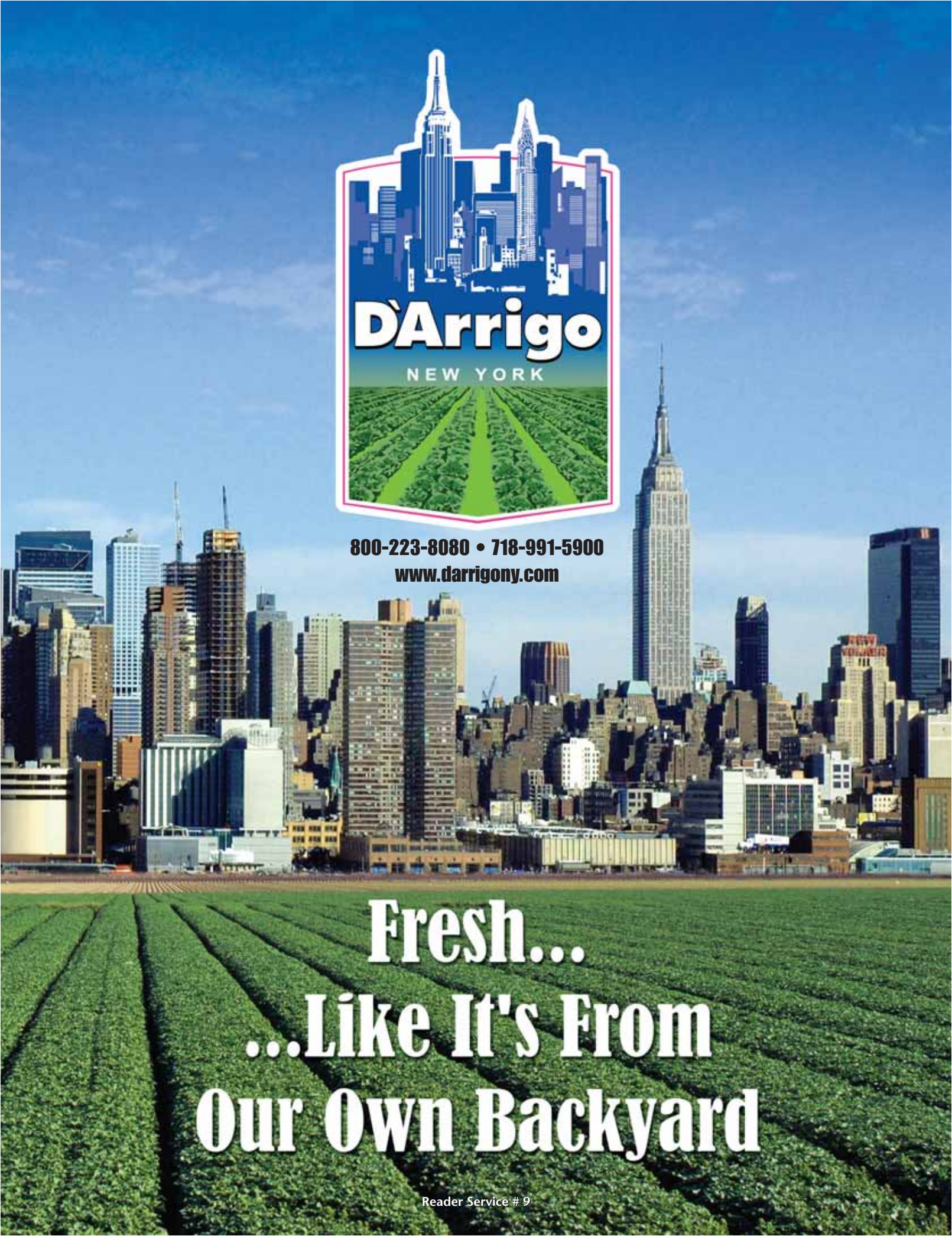
Matthew D'Arrigo, vice president of D'Arrigo Bros. Co. of New York, Inc., Bronx, NY, thinks back more than 10 years ago, when his company was required to track down origins of some berries that had sickened people in the Mid-Atlantic states.

"That was quite an interesting learning experience that was done quite successfully," he notes. "We have always had lot accounting systems, so we know where everything goes when we sell it. It's more sophisticated now than it was a dozen years ago but, basically, it's the same. We keep track of every product that goes out the door and we know where we send it — whether it's the smallest customer or the largest chain store."

According to Ron Carkoski, president and CEO for Four Seasons Produce, Inc., headquartered in Ephrata, PA, his company, like most wholesalers, has software packages with traceability functionality. In Four Seasons' case, traceability is handled through the purchase order system.

Carkoski says every time he has needed to trace purchases, the systems have performed quickly and accurately. Moreover, whenever the company needs to repack, the company's process creates a new lot that is still traceable to its origins.

Beyond recognizing the inherent contribution to food safety that traceability plays, Shane Towne, marketing and new business development coordinator for Indianapolis Fruit Company, Inc., headquartered in Indianapolis, IN, notes his company counts it as an important area for differentiation.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"More retailers rely on companies like Indianapolis Fruit to take care of that part [food safety and traceability] of the business," explains Towne. "If they're going to buy product from someone, they want to make sure it is safe and of high quality. They just know we're going to deliver that."

INFORMATION RUNS DEEP

In many cases, there is quite a bit of ancillary information that is linked with traceability records. For instance, Consumers Produce's records provide information about the grower, shipment date, trucking company, trailer identification, temperature recording instrument readings from the trailer, how long the product was in the warehouse, the location it occupied in the warehouse and where and how it was shipped. The company also regularly conducts mock recalls that test its ability to identify the movement of produce.

"Retailers can feel confident when they are buying product from a wholesale distributor because, by definition, major wholesalers would have a built-in ability to trace product just because of the way their businesses were set up years ago," according to Consumers Produce's Siger.

David Watson, president and CEO of Strube Celery & Vegetable Company, headquartered in Chicago, IL, explains that the Chicago International Produce Market (CIPM), in Chicago, IL, was key in establishing the kind of facility needed to ensure food safety and traceability. Before the CIPM was built, the South Water Market served as the terminal market from 1925 until 2002. Not only did outdated facilities and narrow streets limit productivity, but they also brought down the impressions people had of the market.

"In the new market, food safety and traceability is a lot easier," Watson explains. "Today, it's a very modern facility, making things more achievable than they were in the old market."

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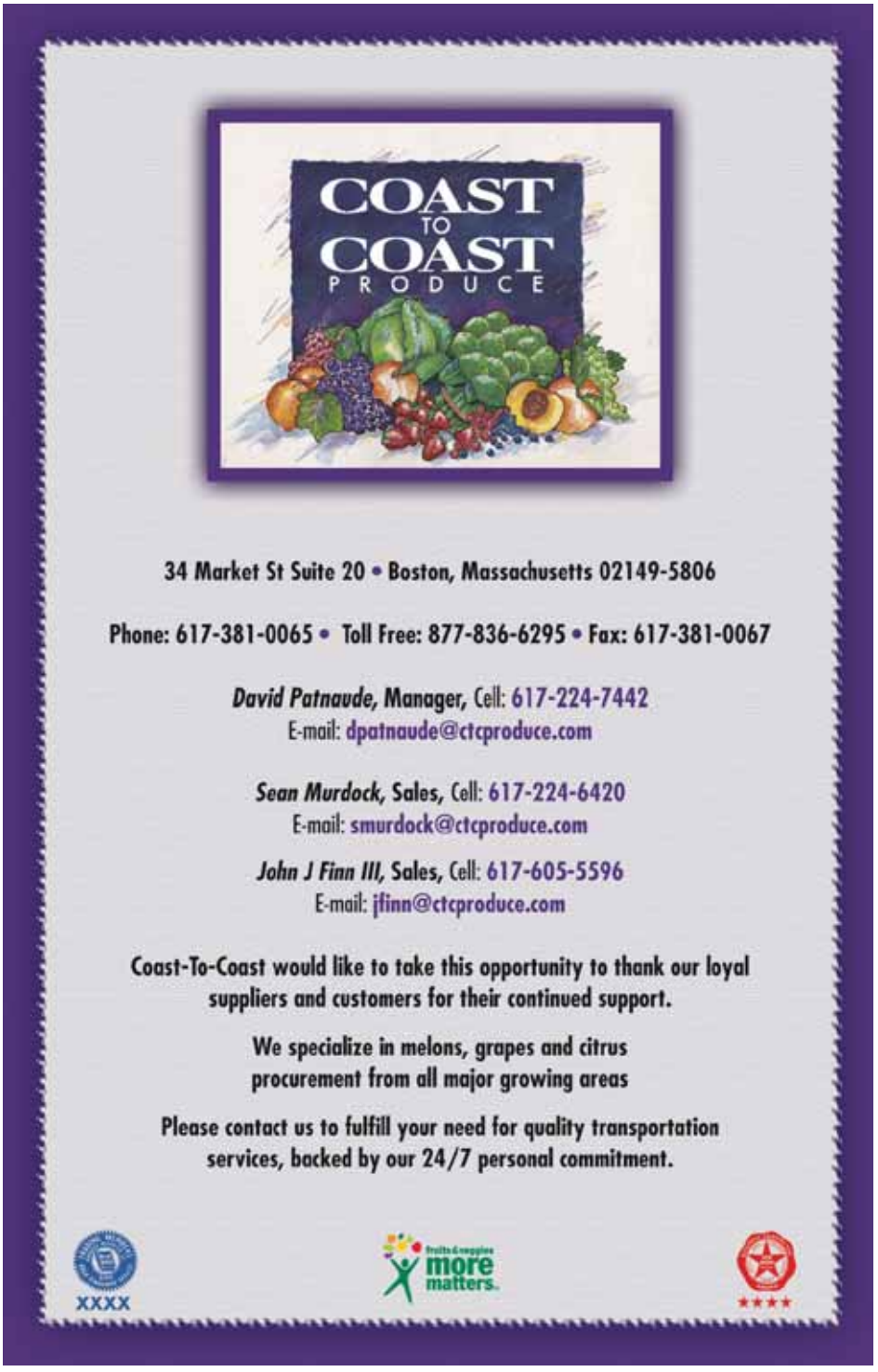
>
> **— Alan Siger**
> **Consumers Produce Co., Inc.**

Wholesalers on terminal markets report increasing customer interest in traceability. Kevin Maher, manager of Coosemans Boston, Inc., located on the New England Produce Terminal in Chelsea, MA, reports that he sees very strong interest in traceability from the larger foodservice institutions and retailers. He says the smaller specialty markets are somewhat less interested, but he expects that to change in the near future.

"The consumers always want to know



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With roots as commissioned merchants under PACA, wholesalers have always had to identify which supplier's product went to which customer.

where their product came from and whether it is actually safe to eat," explains Coosemans' Maher. "They want to have that peace of mind. I think that as we go further into this year, there's going to be a lot more done about it, not only in the specialty lines but also all across the food produce distribution channel."

"We don't get a lot of requests from our customers as of yet," explains Steven Piazza, president of Community-Suffolk, Inc., located on the Boston Market Terminal in Everett MA. "There have been some inquiries from the chain stores to make sure that we could provide it if it is needed, but we have always done it just in case there were ever any kind

"Consumers always want to know where their product came from and whether it is safe to eat. They want to have peace of mind. As we go further into this year, there's going to be a lot more done about it, not only in the specialty lines but also all across the food produce distribution channel."

— Kevin Maher
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Traceability Standardization Initiative

On Jan. 17, 2008, the United Fresh Produce Association (UFPA), Washington, DC; the Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA), Ottawa, ON, Canada; and the Produce Marketing Association (PMA), Newark DE, announced an action plan for further development of the Produce Traceability Initiative. These industry groups billed the effort as a "consistent, industry-wide traceability solution."

Gary Fleming, PMA vice president of industry technology, explains the framers of the initiative revisited the mix of participants to make sure that every segment of the industry was represented.

"Most of the bigger wholesale houses have the capability of some sort of traceability, but they're all in-house systems," notes Mike Maxwell, president, Procacci Brothers Sales Corp., headquartered in Philadelphia, PA. "I can tell you who I bought something from and I can tell you who I sold it to and do it very, very efficiently. As the industry is starting to grasp this thing, it's seeing that traceability needs to be universal. So if there are numbers on a case or on an item, everybody can trace it. And that's where I think the industry is going. We've always had traceability, but everybody's done it differently."

"I believe it's the future," states David Watson, president and CEO, Strube Celery & Vegetable Company, Chicago, IL. "If you can't tell a customer how long that product was in your facility and where it came from, you'll have a problem if someone gets sick from it."

According to Ron Carkoski, president and CEO, Four Seasons Produce, Inc., Ephrata, PA, "I liked what I read, and I think it's awesome that we have a non-produce person [Cathy Green, chief operating officer, Food Lion LLC, based in Salisbury, NC] heading the group. I think Cathy is a great choice, and I think she will be one of these people who will be very beneficial to the industry."

Eryn Landis, food safety specialist for Kegel's Produce, based in Lancaster, PA, views the Produce Traceability Initiative in a very positive light. "Fresh produce is extremely perishable and the faster a problem can be identified, the faster the source of the contamination can be determined and handled."

"Anything that keeps the playing field level for everybody — so everybody is doing the same thing in the same fashion — makes it better for everybody in the long run," explains Steven Piazza, president of Community-Suffolk, Inc., Everett MA. "I think a lot of it goes back to who you are comfortable doing business with and who you have been doing business with. I think if you establish a relationship with certain market companies, you get an understanding of their professionalism. If they take care of one thing well, they usually take care of everything pretty well." **pb**

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Photo courtesy of Yotta Mark

Stickers can be made to provide far more information than the typical PLU; they can provide traceability information.

Wholesalers pride themselves on the speed with which they can trace one level up and one level down.

of problem. We are a growing company and we want to stay on the cutting edge of protecting our customers and ourselves."

THIRD PARTY VIEWS

Towne reports Indianapolis Fruit has taken many of its third-party audit requirements to levels two to three times more stringent than needed.

"Third-party certification is really for the customers," according to Consumers Produce's Siger, "It's so they understand that we have the ability to do what we say we can do. For traceability to work, the link has to be unbroken from the producer to the end user. This means everyone in the supply chain must be able to trace one level up and one level down, and if everyone can do that, then it works."

Strube's Watson has only needed to certify with one third-party auditor. Other wholesalers are seeing multiple audits and multiple audits simultaneously from one auditing company. Some are not happy with the

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duplication of effort and additional expense.

"I think multiple audits are undesirable because there are so many different people going so many different ways with this," explains Four Seasons' Carkoski. He feels multiple third-party audits that look at mostly the same things are wasteful from a cost perspective, and he is hopeful a standard third party audit with widespread appeal might come into being. "There are too many independent requirements," he adds. "Multiple third party audits are causing a lot of additional expense to distributors."

Scott Danner, CEO, at Liberty Fruit Co., Inc., based in Kansas City, KS, agrees, adding, "I conduct about eight to nine third-party audits each year and there's not much difference between all the audit companies. The problem is each company wants its own certifier. I'll have one company come in and do three or four audits and spend three or four days here."

Danner questions why the auditor can't use the same results from the first day for the others. "The customers all say they have higher criteria. Everybody is looking to cut costs, but we can't pass these expenses on. I want to do it, but I just want to do it once." He wouldn't mind quarterly audits. He also thinks audits would be more valuable if they were unscheduled. "If we're really serious about food safety, we need to move to unannounced audits," he concludes.

> **"I think multiple audits are undesirable because there are so many different people going so many different ways with this. There are too many independent requirements."**
>
> **— Ron Carkoski**
> **Four Seasons Produce, Inc.**

Peter John Condakes, president, Peter Condakes Co., Inc., located on the New England Produce Terminal in Chelsea, MA, acknowledges that the process of certification is complex and time-consuming. "Certification involves many issues. How are you tracing lots? What if your customers are being investigated? I run mock recalls to see how quickly my guys respond. In one I play the customer and say, 'I'm calling from company A and there's a problem with some tomatoes. I need information.' In another the shipper says we have a problem. We see what the lot numbers are and find out what customer bought them."

"We have a manual of GMPs [good manufacturing practices]," says Ed Duval, food safety and security manager, who has been with Condakes for three years. "Some things are added, some things are already in practice. It contains job descriptions for everyone who works here. It also sets safety standards — who is in charge of what."

"Audits point out things we should have seen ourselves — but sometimes you miss what's right under your eyes," Duval continues. "AIB [American Institute of Baking, Manhattan, KS] does our certification —the demand is so great they're now international. Our rating is higher this year. We're going to be as close to flawless as you can get." **pb**

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The Rising Cost Of Trucking

Shippers and carriers are teaming up to find ways to offset rising costs.

BY JACQUELINE ROSS LIEBERMAN

Higher fuel prices, rising insurance costs and limited capacity have contributed to the increased price of trucking in recent years. What can be done to counteract the financial impact of these factors that are beyond our control?

Industry insiders suggest that there are several possible ways to solve the problems caused by soaring prices. These include:

- Alternative fuels, various pricing scenarios and using multiple vendors
- Resurrection of rail as a viable mode of transportation
- Growing more product locally
- Developing stronger bonds between shippers and carriers.
- Airline hubs
- Advanced monitoring systems

Although the costs for shipping produce have dropped slightly in recent months, industry experts predict prices will continue to climb overall for some time.

"On average, I think pricing for trucking has increased about 40 percent in the last couple of years," according to Jimmy DeMatteis, president of Des Moines Truck Brokers, Inc., headquartered in Norwalk, IA. That's a big jump compared with decades past. "I've been doing this for 24 years and during the previous 22 years, the increase was probably close to 10 percent."

According to Robert Goldstein, president and owner of Genpro, Inc., based in Rutherford, NJ, "It goes back from the capacity crunch that started in 2000 and 2001."

This mixed with rising fuel prices is a costly combination. "[Current costs are] at least 75¢ to a $1 per gallon," estimates Rick Fryman, member of Top Class Logistics, LLC, based in Napoleon, OH.

"We have seen freight rates increase on average by 10 to 20 percent in very recent times and that increases and decreases with spikes and dips in fuel costs," explains Jeff Moore, vice president sales of sales for Lange Logistics, Inc., Midwest Region, headquartered in St. Louis, MO.

"The rates we have seen over a 3-year period are complex," reports Steve Bukowski, Target Transportation, based in Cranford, NJ. "We have seen a significant increase in our dry-freight operation's cost to move product over the last two years. The same is not true in produce. We are seeing that the average cost has increased less than 2 percent year over year for the last three years, but in the tighter trucking periods, there is a more dramatic cost increase in purchasing transportation under these micro conditions. I attribute this to the changing ways in which we procure our business.

"There are more fixed cost loads in our yearly volume, such as contracts with chain stores, keeping us more aggressive on slower markets to make up for the excessive rates on the higher markets," he continues. "Terminal market business, which in the past made up about 75 percent of our volume, has been cut to about a 50-50 split. This contributes to a more stable year-round rate."

In the past few months, "The market has become a little softer," notes Goldstein. "With produce, it's supply and demand. It's a commodity and it has fluctuations in pricing." He emphasizes the need for carriers to make money during times

Money-Saving Technology

As fuel prices rise, monitoring systems can help control costs, according to Janet Williams, manager, Cargo Data Corporation, Ventura, CA-based makers of the Independent Monitoring and Tracking System (IMAT), which provides temperature and GPS location of perishable and temperature-sensitive commodities online at all times.

"We're using 21st century technology to provide as much information as possible to all parties," explains Williams. "The driver has the ability to know what the temperature is in six locations in the trailer. He can control not only the product but also the energy used for that. By being able to adjust the temperature in-route, he can be pro-active and fix a situation in-route rather than after the fact."

Access by all parties to the GPS location can also save time and money. If, for instance, a truck is taking longer to reach its destination than expected, "Arrangements can be made in advance to avoid delays," Williams adds.

The system is global and can be used on shipments of all kinds, although it can only transmit where there is cell-phone capability, making it ideal for trucking and rail. "We've had a very good response to it when we go out and show it," notes Williams. **pb**

when demand is low. "There's been some stability if you try to have contractual commitments."

In recent months, "The capacity has increased in trucking, rail and ocean liners," notes Kenny Lund, vice president of support operations, Allen Lund Company, Inc., headquartered in La Cañada, CA.

But some say that too few new drivers are entering the profession. A driver shortage combined with new rules limiting the amount of time each driver is allowed to spend on the road each day presents a major challenge. "There will always be a capacity crunch," notes Genpro's Goldstein.

Chuck Holt, general manager for Sunrise Logistics, Inc., based in Ephrata, PA, says increased trucking costs have forced carriers and suppliers to look closely at delivery sizes and frequencies. "It's causing

"We have seen freight rates increase on average by 10 to 20 percent in very recent times and that increases and decreases with spikes and dips in fuel costs."

— Jeff Moore
Lange Logistics, Inc.

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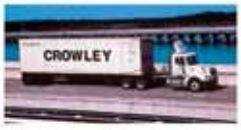

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Reader Service # 96

Savings Out Of Texas

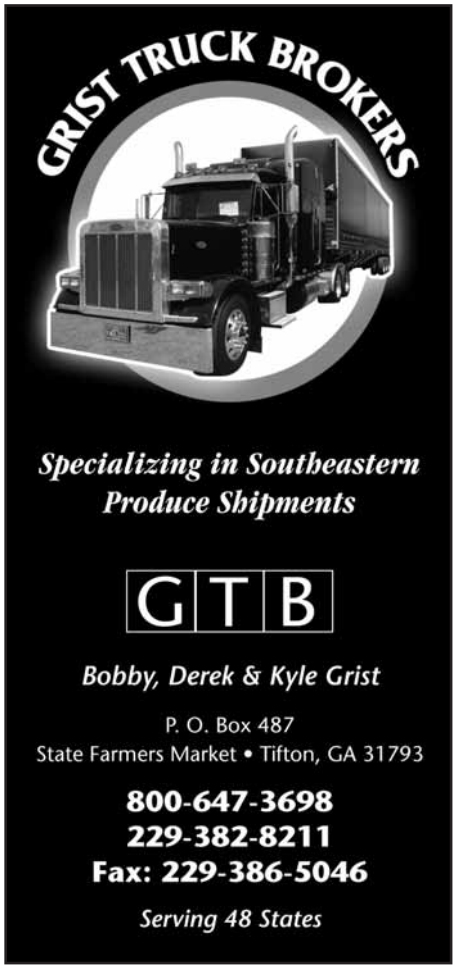
This spring, the George Bush Intercontinental Airport in Houston, TX, will open a new cargo area capable of handling perishables on a large scale. This will allow shippers to fly in produce from Latin America.

"Ninety percent of the produce that comes into the United States right now comes through Miami," explains Robert Wigington, deputy director of aviation, Houston Airport System, Houston, TX. From Miami, produce must then be trucked to the rest of the United States.

By allowing produce to be flown into a city farther west, the cost of trucking to many parts of the country will drop significantly, according to Wigington. "We are very strategically positioned, geographically. We not only have a population of about five million consumers but we also have access to about 30 million consumers within a 6-hour drive."

Bush Intercontinental has other advantages, as well. "We have a lot of space and a lot of capacity," according to Wigington. "And while other airports are saturated and congested, we have a lot of potential and room for a good amount of expansion. Right now, we're targeting flowers, but the facility will be able to handle a whole range or produce. It's an exciting time." **pb**

Photos courtesy of Houston Airport System



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everyone in the transportation industry to think out of the box. We're looking at alternative fuel costs, various pricing scenarios and using multiple vendors."

Tony Horzen, president and CEO, High Street Logistics, Inc., a San Luis Obispo, CA-based freight transportation provider, agrees, adding, "Shortage of drivers has been a real big challenge, and the quality of service has gone down a lot, too. Transportation is in a tough place right now. A lot of people have left due to pay cuts. Something's got to give."

Photo courtesy of Railex, LLC

As freight rates rise, rail transport becomes more attractive.

"I see an increase in the use of rail. With the Railex facility adding additional trains to handle volume off the West Coast, this could take a considerable toll on truck volume, especially on the more durable commodities that are considered hardware."

— Steve Bukowski
Target Transportation

IS RAIL VIABLE?

Bukowski of Target Transportation notes some companies are using railways to cut down on money spent on trucking costs. "I see an increase in the use of rail. With the Railex [LLC, Riverhead, NY,] facility adding additional trains to handle volume off the West Coast, this could take a considerable toll on truck volume, especially on the more durable commodities that are considered hardware. I believe this will spur other rail companies to be more competitive and efficient to try to compete amid this rebirth of a once-dying mode of transportation."

Top Class' Fryman agrees, adding "There are people in Detroit who get stuff in on the

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Reader Service # 101

rail. I know that in New York and Philadelphia they do, too, but a lot of people don't have access to rail," he says.

Railex utilizes the latest technology, including state-of-the-art refrigerated capabilities and different temperature rooms for shipping all types of commodities. The distribution platform features two refrigerated, mega-transload facilities in Wallula, WA, and Rotterdam, NY. Paul Esposito, vice president of logistics, reports the company is in the process of opening a California facility.

Railex currently runs a scheduled 5-day 55-car refrigerated service until such time as a train with the capacity to transport the equivalent of 220 trucks of refrigerated merchandise each and every week is available.

"There's a definitive movement toward rail," Esposito states. "Our company uses high-speed dedicated trains created for refrigerated freight." Trains carry everything from refrigerated produce to frozen foods.

Still, some believe rail may simply not be a good option for most of the country. "The rail seems to have gained momentum in recent times, but it seems like it's more of an East Coast solution," according to Moore of Lange Logistics.

"For the first time, we're seeing some decent rail stuff on produce," adds Lund of Allen Lund Co. However, "That's a ways off before it has even a small impact on produce transportation. It is 99 percent truck transportation."

Although shippers are the ones to absorb most cost increases when it comes to produce, consumers are not left out of the loop. Some say that shoppers are most likely to see price increases on less expensive items.

Because produce shipped by rail is handled more and moves more slowly than by truck, it is not the desirable method for highly perishable items. "There are some products it can work for, but it's not going to be significant real soon," Lund notes. "Rail has enough dry freight that there's not enough incentive."

Horzen of High Street Logistics points out that trucks will continue to get product to its destination faster than rail, even though rail seems to be the cheaper route. "I haven't seen a major movement to rail just yet."

"It'll never take the place of trucking. It never can," agrees Genpro's Goldstein.

PASSING THE BUCK

Although shippers are the ones to absorb most cost increases when it comes to produce, consumers are not left out of the loop. Some say that shoppers are most likely to see price increases on less expensive items.

"If you've got a load of asparagus that's worth $30,000 and your freight cost is $1,000, the percentage is not going to be that much. But if you've got a load of lettuce that's worth $5,000 and the cost is up $1,000, then you start to see the cost passed on to the consumer," explains Lund, "so a guy shipping onions might want to negotiate more intensely."

In some cases, this may mean a shift to

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buying locally grown produce. "I think buyers do try to buy as much locally as possible," Lund states. However, "We see the move to local stuff as more a part of the organic movement. I don't think it's as much transportation cost as you'd think."

"Some of our bigger customers are in New York City. When New Jersey has locally grown produce, we don't come close to matching the price," explains Fryman of Top Class Logistics. "But local produce has a very short season. It's not really going to replace anything else."

> **"Food is one item that's always recession-proof. When it comes to food, if you want to eat it, you're going to buy it. Will people pay $5 for tomatoes? Maybe not. But our food here in the United States is the cheapest in the world. I actually think an increase is long overdue."**
>
> **— Jimmy DeMatteis**
> **Des Moines Truck Brokers, Inc.**

In most states, buying produce locally year-round is simply not an option. "California grows as much produce year-round as the rest of the United States combined," notes Lund of Allen Lund. Meanwhile, seasonality has all but disappeared in the American supermarket. "People now expect apples year-round."

Target's Bukowski agrees, adding, "I don't believe that locally grown product will be directly affected by transportation cost. Consumers are looking for quality and convenience over cost. This may change with our economy in its current condition. As money gets tighter and families consider new ways to save, demand for locally grown produce may grow. But, with the overwhelming determination of people to stay healthy, I don't see any reason for the demand on year-round product to diminish."

In other words, "If they want a tomato, they'll buy a tomato," adds Fryman.

"Food is one item that's always recession-proof," notes DeMatteis of Des Moines Truck Brokers. "When it comes to food, if you want to eat it, you're going to buy it. Will people pay $5 for tomatoes? Maybe not. But our food here in the United States is the cheapest in the world. I actually think an increase is long overdue."

But for families with lower incomes, even the world's cheapest food may not always be considered affordable. "Certain households are turning to frozen fruits and vegetables versus the higher prices of fresh," notes Moore of Lange Logistics. "This is a major concern for me. Fresh produce should be readily available in Mom's house. Something is wrong when it's priced where only the wealthy can afford it."

WORKING TOGETHER FOR BETTER PRICES

Lund says the key to cutting costs is making sure shippers and carriers work together to develop strong relationships.

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"Treat your trucking companies well," he suggests. "That will help keep prices down. It's very important for shippers to have driver-friendly freight if they want to lower shipping costs."

Building connections with carriers and shippers is something High Street strives for, explains Horzen. "It's important to build and retain trust and open communication."

Sunrise's Holt agrees, adding, "No one's got the sole answer. It's going to take people working together. One person can't do it alone. You're going to have to team up to come up with an idea."

"That's the key," according to Railex' Esposito. "Building a solid network is what we've been spending a great deal of time working on."

Lange's Moore recommends "eliminating pick-ups and drops and creating more efficient routing schedules. Because our business is so diverse with foodservice, retail, etc., we can often build loads at one or two locations — basically consolidating loads — and eliminate our customers from making those LTL [less than truck load] picks. We also have been able to round-trip trucks to growing regions by utilizing Lange Logistics' services. This has helped average out costs versus all of it being focused on the produce loads. More importantly, it helps us keep regular trucks in those seasonal areas to prevent the horrors of paying spot market rates in the heat of the battle."

Photo courtesy of Railex, LLC

Rail transport, especially in the Midwest and Northeast, is becoming viable once again.

"As I stated earlier, we are seeing a significant increase in the cost of transportation of dry goods to the West Coast," Target's Bukowski notes. "This adds to the carriers' bottom-line profitability on a round-trip basis. It also adds some logic to the viability of carriers to continue operations under current economic conditions."

"Everybody needs to make a buck," Des Moines' DeMatteis points out. We try to go into our transactions where everyone comes out with a win-win situation." **pb**

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Reader Service # 115

In-Store Marketing Goes High-Tech

From new ways to shop to store automation, a different world is emerging for supermarkets and their customers.

BY DUANE CRAIG

While some consumers look forward to a leisurely stroll through supermarket aisles, others prefer to get in, get out and get on with their lives.

The latter group can thank technology for turning the once tedious task of grocery shopping into an event that now takes very little effort. Today, the industry is busily creating new devices and systems that allow consumers to shop with very limited interaction with anyone in the store.

The MC-17 is a perfect example of this, according to Frank Riso, marketing and operations executive, retail for Motorola in Holtsville, NY. The handheld computer is used in 2,000 grocery stores worldwide and is on the verge of rapid expansion in North American markets.

When consumers enter the supermarket, they check out the device, which is unlocked when they scan their loyalty cards. As they shop, they scan items and place them in shopping bags in their carts. The MC-17 keeps a running total of their purchases, alerts consumers to specials on things they've purchased in the past and reminds them of additional items they have previously purchased as they move through the store.

Photo courtesy of Pay by Touch

Consumers who have opted in to share their purchase history with store suppliers can receive gifts and special offers that are triggered by those past purchases. At a self-checkout register, consumers scan a barcode with the MC-17, scan their loyalty card again to update their history, pay, take their receipt and wheel their already-bagged purchases out the door. Store staff return the MC-17 to the rack, which also serves as a charger.

Approximately 20 to 25 percent of customers in a given store use the devices, says Riso. Since the MC-17 uses the same software as store inventory devices, it can do double duty and serve store operations at about half the cost of other inventory devices. Additionally, the units can act as mobile kiosks and provide information about products.

Gary Fleming, vice president of industry technology for the Produce Marketing Association (PMA), Newark, DE, notes the trend toward self-scanning of products is a key direction of supermarket technology. He cites the promises of radio frequency identification (RFID) to allow on-the-fly checkout by consumers who simply pass a basketfull of products through a scanner, swipe their payment card, grab the receipt and leave. While this is possible today, the cost of outfitting each product with an RFID tag is still too costly and there are some small challenges related to metal and water.

Despite the obstacles, many are preparing for the RFID revolution. "We're prepared for it," reports Rachel Alvarado, director of information services for Piggly Wiggly Carolina Co., Inc., a Charleston, SC-based chain with more than 600 independently owned stores. "We implemented advance ship notices with our suppliers, and we have upgraded our warehouse management system to be able to handle RFID data. So when the time comes, we're in a good position for it."

MULTIPLE WAYS TO BUY

Offering multiple options for purchasing is showing up as another convenience for consumers.

Robert Kramer, media relations manager, explains how Atlanta, GA-based NCR Corporation's FastLane Order and Pay becomes an extension of a store's self-checkout when it's placed in areas, such as the deli or bakery, where customers typically place an order and then wait. "Retailers don't have to

re-invent the wheel with software and system integration to deploy this system in the deli or bakery," he explains. "For the consumer, the user interface is based on the same kind of interface we use for the self-checkouts at the front of the store, meaning the consumer has some familiarity with it so it is easy for them to use." It also allows them to use their time better because once they place their order, they can continue shopping as they wait for their order to be filled.

Biometric checkout technology has captured attention for reasons beyond customer convenience and security. Even as Pay By Touch, a San Francisco, CA-based leader in biometric transaction processing, undergoes reorganization, some retailers, such as Piggly Wiggly, stay loyal to its promising technology. "We do love the technology and our customers who use it are very faithful to it," notes Alvarado. "About 5,000 customers a week use it. People who understand its security and value have been quick to adopt it and continue to use it on a regular basis."

Piggly Wiggly was keenly interested in finding alternatives to high processing fees for credit and debit transactions. Pay By Touch technology relies on Automated Clearing House (ACH) transaction processing, so it doesn't have high transaction fees. She says her company is looking at a system of associating loyalty cards with bank accounts for customers who will not use biometric payments.

Another checkout payment method uses cell phones. MocaPay, Boulder, CO, recently announced pilots with major retailers. Lance Gentry, chief marketing officer, notes, "The key driver for grocery chains is the ability to reach the millennial demographic via their mobile devices and to associate their brands directly with the cutting-edge services provided via mobile phones. New technology can allow them to save considerably per transaction over other forms of payment."

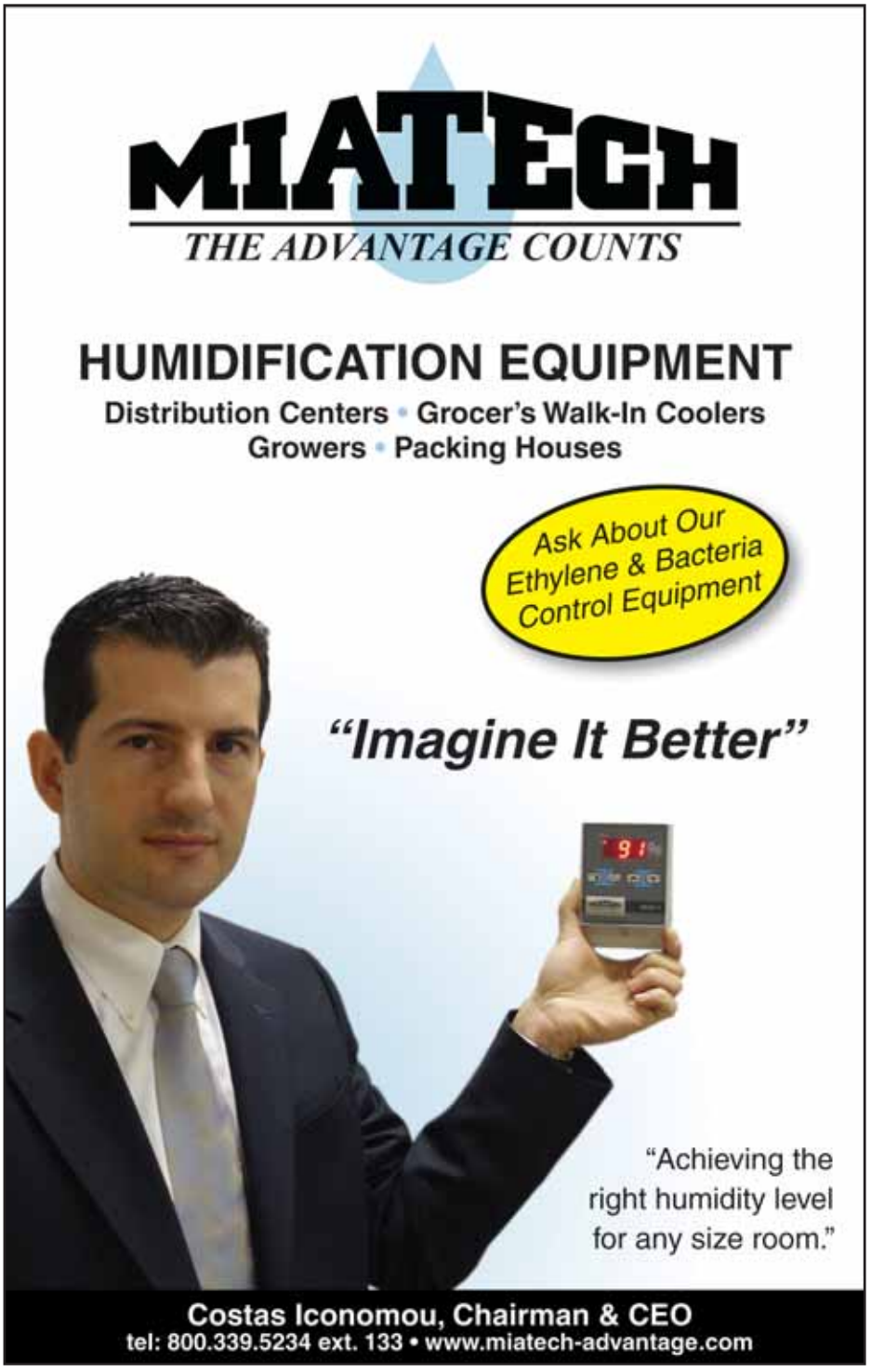
KIOSK INVASION

Kiosks continue to pop up in the produce department. Consumers can print shopping lists from kiosks, find dietary information and information about specific fruits and vegetables. "In response to growing consumer interest in health and healthful eating, we unveiled a stand-alone Healthnotes Kiosk in our Publix GreenWise Market [in Palm Beach Gardens, FL] to target busy, health-conscious shoppers looking for high-quality products and an exceptional shopping experience," explains Maria Brous, director of media and communications, Publix Super Markets, Inc., Lakeland, FL. "The Healthnotes kiosks are being provided as a service to customers as a means to educate them about the benefits of fresh foods and health-related products."

In the produce department at Baesler's Market, a fresh foods and specialty item store in Terre Haute, IN, consumers flock to an informational kiosk for recipes. "I saw it at a food show and thought it would work well in our wine section," notes Paul Engle, produce manager. "I didn't expect it to end up in produce, but I'm glad it did. Customers will purchase the ingredients available in the department. Nowadays, people are shopping on a meal-to-meal basis, so a lot of times, they'll end up at the kiosk, see a recipe for dinner and go shop for those items."

"There are consumers now who have grown up with technology and are more comfortable in getting information themselves," explains Kevin Dunleavy, president, Super Marketing Promotions, Inc., Orlando, FL. "They are more comfortable going to a digital device, such as a kiosk, than they are in talking to a person. The technology, though, is not a replacement for the personal touch — it just works hand-in-hand with it."

Dunleavy specializes in helping retailers match technology to their look, needs and abilities. He sees a delicate balance between making kiosks accessible and fitting in with the departments where they are deployed.



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Branding Reaches For The Item Level

Branding has not been lost in the technology shuffle as at least two efforts promise to bring technology to the item level.

HarvestMark, traceability technology created by YottaMark, Inc., Redwood City, CA, allows anyone in the supply chain, including consumers, to trace a product back to the field where it was grown, explains chief marketing officer Elliot Grant. The HarvestMark label gives individual products unique identities rather than just a UPC. For instance, it can assign every box of strawberries a unique identity that would include information about traceability, quality, origin — even a picture of the farmer who grew the item.

"It has captured the imagination of brand owners who are struggling to find new ways to differentiate their products," he explains. "It is meeting an urgent need in the food industry to provide traceability." Supermarket private labels are positioned well for the technology, he adds.

By intention HarvestMark is not currently read by POS readers, so it is used in conjunction with a retail kiosk in the department. "It's just like a price check kiosk," Grant notes. "Instead of giving you the price, it gives you all the traceability information." That information includes details such as where the product was grown and on what day it was harvested. Consumers are very interested in this type of information, Grant believes, and this system makes it readily available at the point where consumers are making purchasing decisions.

If an expiration date were included in the mark, consumers would be able to see it. Growers can have a data stream coming to them that shows velocity, turnover and lead time at retail. For retailers, it makes constant updating of special signage unnecessary.

Another technology set to impact the produce supply chain is the DataBar, an extension of the lowly UPC that holds only 14 characters. Formerly called Reduced Space Symbology, the name was changed to DataBar because its acronym conflicted with the internet-based RSS (really simple syndication).

Gary Fleming, vice president of industry technology for the Produce Marketing Association (PMA), Newark, DE, states DataBar fits comfortably on loose produce, meaning product movement data will be identifiable at the grower/shipper level. "We'll be able to treat it just like it's a packaged goods item. For retailers, this means more effective category management. They can start tracking shrink, and the traceability mechanism gets a lot tighter. The suppliers will love it, too, provided they have a superior product. They now can show a retailer their product sells faster and better based on product movement data.

"Now we're moving away from a commodity-type business into a unique item-type business like the packaged goods industry" he adds. "When you brand your products, advertising can be focused on your brand rather than benefiting your competitor who is carrying the same commodity. This will be a revolution in the way that we do business in the produce industry. If companies are able to brand their own product, then they're also able to price it differently." **pb**

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"How you integrate kiosks into your fixtures, where you place them and how they look should add to the department, not detract," he notes. "But also you don't want it to blend in so much it can't be found easily."

Electronic coupons may be the answer to the challenges of handling paper coupons. Bi-Lo, a Mauldin, SC-based chain with 222 stores, adopted the EZ-PIC paperless coupon technology from Unicous Marketing, Inc., Chicago, IL, to add value for consumers by offering savings. "Customers recognize the service provided by having an electronic coupon offer from a manufacturer where they do not have to remember to cut it out, bring it to the store and present it to the cashier," reports Steve Mayer, group vice president of perishables for Bi-Lo. "The shopper also recognizes that many of the electronic offers have higher limits or no limits at all, whereas paper coupons restrict the offers to the number of coupons, typically one, they can clip. The customer acceptance has been noted in sales lifts of items promoted through EZ-PIC."

BEYOND CUSTOMER FOCUS

Some promising technologies go beyond being customer-centric. Electronic shelf labels (ESL) that make prices and per unit prices easier for customers to read are now poised to improve store operations. Early attempts at this technology revealed problems, including cost, as limiting factors. Neil Patil, vice president of marketing for W5 Networks, Fremont, CA, explains that the tags didn't have some necessary features, such as being able to show the right promotional information or confirmation that they had been updated. Early ESL innovations also had marginal attachment devices, so they had trouble staying on the shelves.

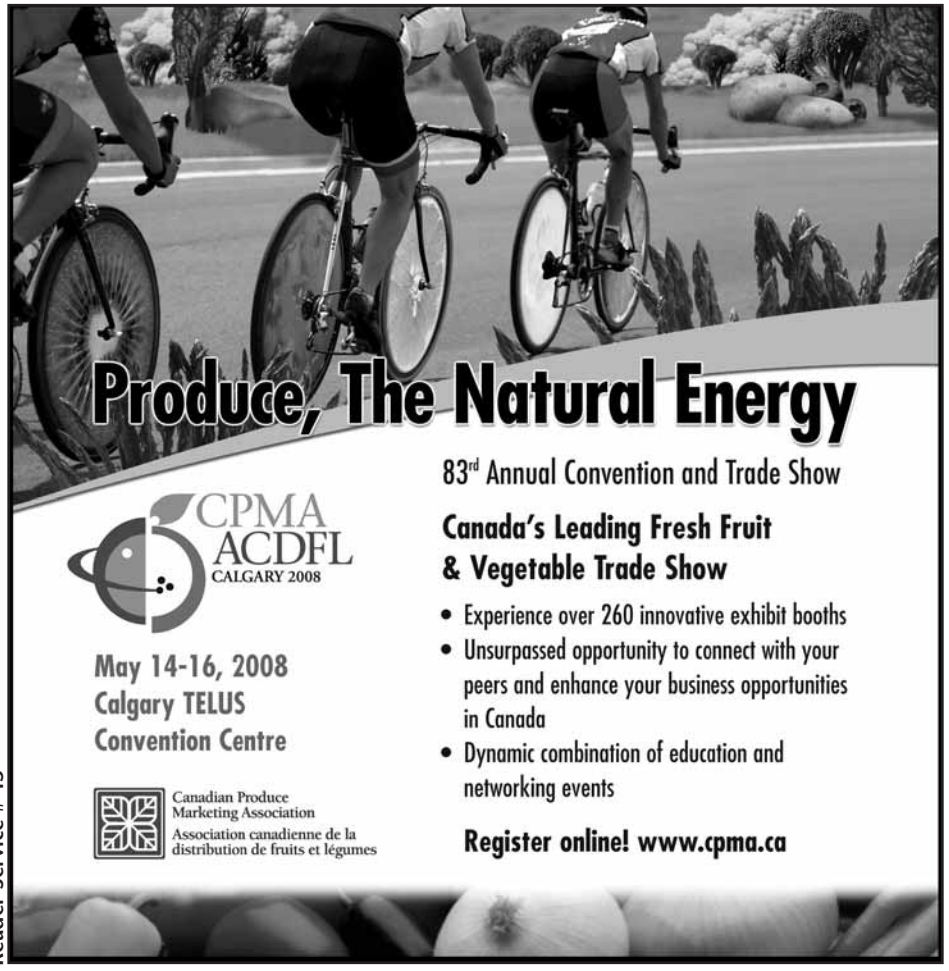
Technology has since overcome these problems, and Patil points to W5's offerings as the ESL of the future. "One of the things we've built our system around is the ability to put these electronic shelf labels anywhere in the store, including produce," he notes.

The waterproof units have temperature sensors, so they can increase their voltage if used in cold places, such as refrigerated or freezer cases. One ESL reporting device monitors temperature and reports out-of-range readings. Temperatures record at the server, so there is a continuous record.

The units are extremely smart and communicate over a proprietary wireless network with a server. They can be instructed to blink when they are supposed to have shelf talkers attached, so associates need only look for the red blinking light to know where to attach shelf talkers. Once the shelf talker is attached, the unit stops blinking and notifies the server the task is complete.

ESLs also check in with the server periodically to let it know they are okay. ESLs for the produce department are in the 4x6-inch size range. Beyond all of the other immediate uses, including synchronizing pricing at the shelves with pricing at checkout and handling inventory tasks, this technology is primed for expansion to other uses that may extend directly to the consumer.

"Today, much of the technology consumers use at retail is largely unknown to them," says Amy Philpott, vice president of marketing and industry relations at United Fresh Produce Association (UFPA), Washington, D.C. "A tremendous amount of cutting-edge technology goes into the packaging, labeling and merchandising of produce. In the future, we could see more technology in the marketing of fresh produce at retail. For example, a supermarket might send a text message to its consumer card holders announcing the arrival of new fruit or exotic vegetables, or it may e-mail photos of the fresh produce on sale that day. Technology has opened up exciting new ways to promote fresh fruits and vegetables at retail." **pb**



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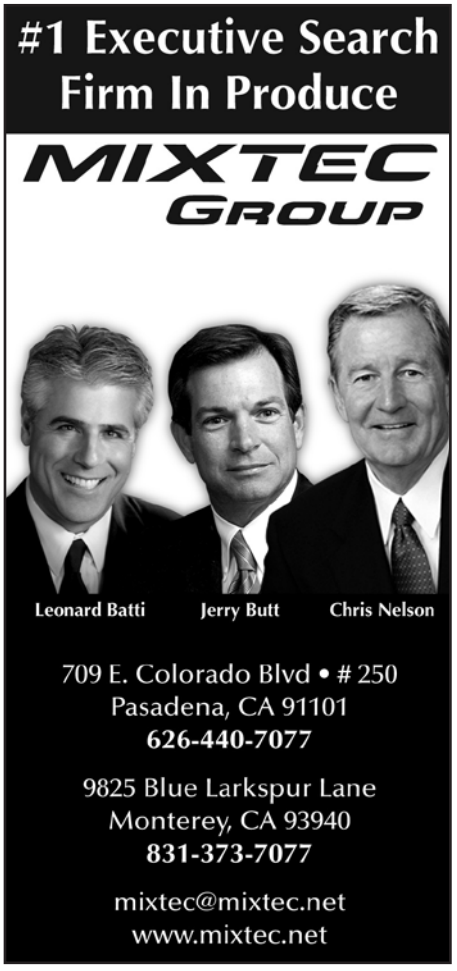

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7th Annual MASTERS OF MERCHANDISING

Every once in a while, the opportunity presents itself to do well while also doing good. Such is the case with this, our seventh annual Masters of Merchandising supplement. The industry owes a tip of the hat to the collection of industry leaders who elected to invest with us in a marketing vehicle that is both promotional and educational.

Each vendor worked hard to produce a piece of advice for the industry on how to more effectively merchandise the product category at hand. By sharing knowledge acquired while working with retailers throughout North America, these vendors help retailers move more product, help producers find outlets for production and help the world by encouraging a more healthful diet.

Increasing sales of fruits and vegetables is more than a matter of big pronouncements, such as the *Fruits & Veggies — More Matters!* program. Sales in general can increase only if sales of specific items increase. That means knowing how to build consumer trial and how to offer the most effective assortment; it means knowing how to market things on a day-to-day basis and how to do some out-of-the-box things just to keep consumer interest high.

As retailers consolidate, they are in a position to expect more support from producers, and intellectual capital is just about the most valuable support one can provide.

Retailers, please take the time to review this offering carefully. When did you last think about how to increase sales of pluots? Or plantains? Or leafy greens? Here is a chance to think of things in a different way. When did you last really consider how to best sell bananas — was it when you were a produce department manager 10,

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20 or 30 years ago? Here is an opportunity to revisit old subjects with a different perspective.

The sponsors of this year's *Masters of Merchandising* section are a special breed. We spoke to many producers who declined to participate, saying they simply had no idea how to merchandise their own items effectively. When we offered to help them research the matter, we encountered all too many vendors who said, "That is the retailer's problem; we just book loads."

Merchandising is everyone's problem, and in the produce industry, *The Times, They Are A-Changin'*. As retailers consolidate, they are in a position to expect more support from producers, and intellectual capital is just about the most valuable support one can provide.

There is always a temptation to try to keep knowledge tightly protected and controlled, but oftentimes what goes around comes around, and in sharing their knowledge, our sponsors are giving the industry a great gift. May it return to them many times over.

As an added service to our retail readers, we're printing additional copies of this guide, so if you would like extra copies of the 2008 *Masters of Merchandising* supplement to give to your colleagues, please fill out the form below and fax or mail it to us. For the cost of shipping and handling, we'll send you up to five supplements, so they will be available on a first-come basis.

If you require larger quantities for distribution to store-level personnel, please call our offices at 561-994-1118 for information on customized reprints. **pb**

YES, please send me _____ copies of the *Masters of Merchandising* supplement
Cost: $5 for one copy, $10 for 5 copies. Amount enclosed $_____

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PB Masters of Merchandising
P.O. Box 810425 • Boca Raton, FL 33481

WWW.NYAPPLECOUNTRY.COM
NEW YORK APPLE ASSOCIATION
P.O. Box 350
Fishers, NY 14453
Phone: (585) 924-2171
Fax: (585) 924-1629

Recommended Display Ideas

Focus on advertising local, buying local and supporting your local agricultural community. Two thirds of North America's population lies within 600 miles of NY's apple orchards, which means that New York apples can be delivered more quickly and use less energy to get them to more people than apples grown elsewhere.

Point-Of-Purchase/Signage

NYAA provides some of the best point-of-purchase materials in the industry. We use creative messaging to communicate with consumers in English and Spanish. We support COOL and we proudly display on our signage *USA Apples*!

Variety And Availability Guide

The NYAA supplies the best apple variety guide available. Our 10-page *New York State Apples to Apples Guide* not only gives information on New York's 20 most popular varieties but also offers nutritional and health facts, apple usage and storage tips, seven tasty apple recipes and cider tips and recipes. The Guide is packaged in a high-graphic display ready carton allowing the retailer to open and place directly at the apple display.

Promotional/Advertising Ideas

The NYAA offers creative and customized promotional programs for retailers to use to increase apple sales. Our main focus is to sample our apples at store level and to use cause marketing to encourage customers to choose New York apples. Over the years, we have teamed up with the American Cancer Society to promote good eating and the health benefits of eating apples. We have promoted numerous research studies about helping to prevent cancer by eating more fruits and vegetables, and more apples. Each March we raise cancer research funds through the sale of New York apples and by teaming up with retailers to communicate the message to customers: "Buy New York Apples and help Beat Cancer. Eating NY Apples is the easy way to protect your family everyday!"

This year the NYAA teamed up with our registered dietitian and nutritionist, Linda Quinn, M.S. R.D., to release our *New York Apple Advantage* book, a sensible guide to healthful eating. This 36-page book includes a plan to help guide your eating habits by incorporating more apples into your daily diet. It incorporates healthful recipes, work-out schedules, suggested shopping lists, and addresses the high protein and low carb crazes in addition to offering a plethora of health information. Presently available on line at *www.nyapplecountry.com*.

Quick Tips

1. **Market apples as a grab-and-go snack item by placing popular varieties in baskets around the store, near the sandwich or sub bar, or at checkout. If stores have carryout counters or a coffee counter, provide customers with the chance to buy healthful, nutritional fresh apples — a grab-and-go snack. In today's world of obesity, customers can always be reminded how a fresh apple, individually priced, is a great alternative to a higher calorie or higher fat snack.**

Display Care And Handling

NYAA offers retailers a 13-minute DVD designed to help train and educate produce personnel on the proper handling of fresh apples, from the back room to the point of sale.

Cross-Merchandising Opportunities

Along with more traditional products, this year we recommend cross-merchandising the *New York Apple Advantage* book in the produce department. It is an excellent way to help educate your customers on why they should be eating more apples — and buying them from you.

Out-of-the-Box Promotional Ideas

- **Find a way to promote the *New York Apple Advantage Book* as a premium to customers, such as "Purchase eight pounds or more of apples and receive a free book." The NYAA will provide the publication to the customers.**

FROM BLOSSOM TO AWESOME ...

MILLIONS OF LOCAL BRANCHES

near YOU

Did you know that 2/3 of the population of North America lives within 500 miles of New York State? That means millions of people can get New York apples fresher and faster than from anyplace else! So the apples they love for eating, baking, salads, sauce and recipes arrive crisper and tastier. Plus, shorter shipping and travel times help save energy and protect our environment.

APPLE COUNTRY NEW YORK STATE

WWW.NYAPPLECOUNTRY.COM

Reader Service # 92

KINGSBURG ORCHARDS
The Flavor Farmers

KINGSBURG ORCHARDS
Phone: 559-897-2986
Fax: 559-897-4532
www.kingsburgorchards.com
Sales@kingsburgorchards.com

Recommended Display Ideas

Though apple pears, pluots and white-fleshed stone fruit may appear to be unrelated, there are several characteristics uniting them:

1) All of these items are upscale alternatives to the conventional items sold in the produce department. Therefore, they are extremely effective at positioning your department and store as leaders in variety and in keeping consumer interest.

2) These items are relatively unknown to consumers so when merchandising, you should always have them sliced open so consumers can see their interiors. This is particularly important for the white-flesh fruit, where the marketing key is the distinction of the flesh.

3) Many specialty items are interesting but lack the flavor necessary to bring back the consumer for more. The flavor of apple pears, pluots and white-fleshed stone fruit, however, is delicious and interesting. As such, sampling and demos are to be highly recommended.

All three of these items offer the retailer the chance to increase the total dollars spent in the produce department by offering consumers a higher priced, higher value alternative. The key is to merchandise the items to emphasize their distinction and quality so the consumers are happy to pay more.

Point-Of-Purchase/Signage

In thousands of letters received from consumers who have sampled apple pears, pluots and white-fleshed stone fruit, the three most-used descriptions are: 1) great tasting, 2) juicy and 3) crunchy. Signage reflecting these attributes will increase impulse sales.

Variety And Availability Guide

Apple pears are available year-round, with supplies mainly coming from California, Washington, Oregon, Chile, Japan and New Zealand.

Pluots are available May through September.

White-fleshed peaches and nectarines are available May through September.

Promotional/Advertising Ideas

Promoting these items can be fun! Lots of interesting stories can be told of how Mr. Plum met Miss Apricot and how the delicious pluot was born. Consumers love apricots and plums for their uniqueness. Now you can give consumers a little twist of the unique flavors of a plum with the special characteristics of an apricot. Displays having pluots centered with plums on one side and apricots on the other illustrate the bridge between the two stone fruit varieties.

For apple pears, retailers can conjure up images of an exotic voyage of the apple pear coming across the ocean to North America.

White-fleshed peaches and nectarines also have a unique story to tell: Instead of Mother Nature taking the time to make the fruit colorful, all her efforts are put into the flavor of the fruit.

Quick Tips

1. **Color splash. Give your produce display some color. Carry multiple pluot varieties at once. All different, all delicious!**
2. **In-store demos: One bite of our fruits and you're hooked!**
3. **Cross-merchandise: Asian pears and pluots are great in salads and desserts.**

Ripeness Recommendations

Apple pears, pluots and white-fleshed stone fruit are picked with optimum ripeness and will retain high sugar levels throughout the sales process. These tree-ripe fruit are sweet and crunchy all the way to the consumer's counter.

Display Care And Handling

Remember, as in all fruit, apple pears, pluots and white-fleshed stone fruit are perishable, so work your displays accordingly. At Kingsburg Orchards, we go to great lengths in the field to harvest the fruit in cotton gloves, wrap the fruit in tissue, place the fruit in small individual boxes so the fruit does not bruise and then transport the fruit on smooth-paved roads to take them to our state-of-the-art packing facility.

At store level, merchandisers should show great respect for the fruit, by not dumping the fruit from the box, but hand-placing the fruit in order to continue the chain of presentation all the way to the consumer.

Cross-Merchandising Opportunities

Not only are apple pears, pluots and white-fleshed stone fruit perfectly suited for eating out-of-hand, but they are also excellent dessert items. All three fruits offer a unique taste many dinner guests may not be familiar with, so the following suggested dessert options and complementary product pairings will encourage sales:

- After dinner, try fresh apple pears with Stilton cheese.
- Pluot and white-fleshed fruit tarts — don't forget the pie shells.
- Fruit suspended in gelatin.
- Pluot and white-fleshed fruit sorbet makings
- Ice cream goes well with apple pears, pluots and white-fleshed stone fruit. Offer coupons attracting shoppers to the frozen dessert aisle and vice versa.
- A new twist on salads these days is incorporating sweet fruit in mixed-greens salads. All three of these fruit lend themselves well to salads.

Out-of-the-Box Promotional Ideas

Grower guarantee! Our family growers guarantee with every bite of our exclusive fruits, your shoppers with encounter a "wow" experience. If not, have them fill out our "wow" guarantee card and one of our growers will hand select and mail a box that will go to their home. Create a nothing-to-lose mindset in your produce department.

KINGSBURG ORCHARDS:
ALWAYS FIRST TO THE PLATE

Kingsburg Orchards leads the league in shipping the season's first peaches, nectarines, apricots and apriums. This year, we're introducing new proprietary varieties with phenomenal early-season flavor. Nurtured by the unique growing conditions in the Kettleman region of central California, they're surefire All-Stars.

KINGSBURG ORCHARDS

The Flavor Farmers

P.O. Box 38 Kingsburg, CA. 93631 • ph 559-897-2986 • fax 559-897-4532 • www.kingsburgorchards.com

Reader Service # 10

OCEAN MIST FARMS
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Castroville, CA 95012
Phone: 831-770-6435
Fax: 831-633-4363
www.oceanmist.com

Availability

Ocean Mist Farms is the only year-round grower of fresh artichokes. Three growing areas allow us to have a 52-week harvest schedule.

The peak of the annual Castroville, CA, crop will start in March and go through the end of May. Traditionally, the larger sizes peak at the front end in March and April with the smaller sizes peaking in April and May.

- **APRIL:** Heavier volume on larger sized artichokes (12-18-24 count)
- **MAY:** Heavier volume on medium and baby sized artichokes (30- to 36-count and baby sizes)

We suggest retailers utilize the variation of the crop volume (by size) to maximize their sales.

Promotional Ideas: Holiday Promos

Artichoke sales exhibit sharp peaks in volume and dollars during holiday weeks and elevate from February through May, including the following holiday weeks: Valentine's Day, Easter, Mother's Day and Memorial Day.

Recommended Display Ideas

Most artichoke shoppers (72 percent) prefer to purchase individual artichokes from bulk displays. This preference increases with age and income.

Best Practices For Merchandising Artichokes

Shoppers say the quality of artichokes on display is the single most important factor when deciding to buy artichokes. Top 5 Reasons for impulse sales of artichokes:

- On sale/price reduction – 29 percent
- Attractive display caught my eye – 22 percent
- In-store advertising – 14 percent
- Coupon – 10 percent
- Signage in the store – 8 percent

Key Category Trends

Artichoke household penetration is approximately 30 percent nationally, at approximately the same level as Brussels sprouts.

With less than half of consumers making the decision to buy at the store, it increases the importance of reaching out to consumers at home on artichoke usage, nutrition and preparation.

The antioxidant level of fresh artichokes seems to present a potentially powerful sales opportunity.

Seventy-nine percent of survey respondents said the fact artichokes are higher in antioxidants than any other vegetable will have a significant impact on future purchases.

Seasonality shows Memorial Day weekend the second biggest event of year. Opportunity exists to capitalize on key grilling occasions such as Memorial Day, Fourth of July and Labor Day weekend.

Trends In Artichoke Packaging

More than half (54 percent) of consumers who buy packaged artichokes say it is because they are more convenient. Others purchase packages because of perceived value (31 percent).

Ocean Mist offers the following clamshell packs:

- 4-count (48- or 36-count size artichoke)
- 6-count (36-count size artichoke)
- 9- and 12-count baby size artichoke

Other artichoke trend items:

- Organic Artichokes
- Long Stem Artichokes

Both have Large Hang Tags with UPC code and cooking instructions.

Cross-Merchandising Ideas For Artichokes

Promote the "Edible Flower" for Valentines or Mother's Day.

Cross-merchandise the following items:

- Lemons
- Mayonnaise
- Olive oil and balsamic vinegar
- Stuffing Items such as Brie or Gouda cheese with bread crumbs

Retail Promotional Tips

Retailers can build sales by converting occasional purchasers into everyday consumers. Strategies include:

- Reducing discount percent on some promotions while maintaining a few "hot" promotions to generate excitement
- Heightening visibility of the category with POS messaging
- Increasing display space with secondary display locations to get artichokes into more consumers' minds and into their shopping carts

Display Ideas And Tips For Retail

The photo(below right) shows how a great display showcases the artichokes attractiveness and color.

Go to our merchandising Web page for ideas: *www.oceanmist.com*

POS Options

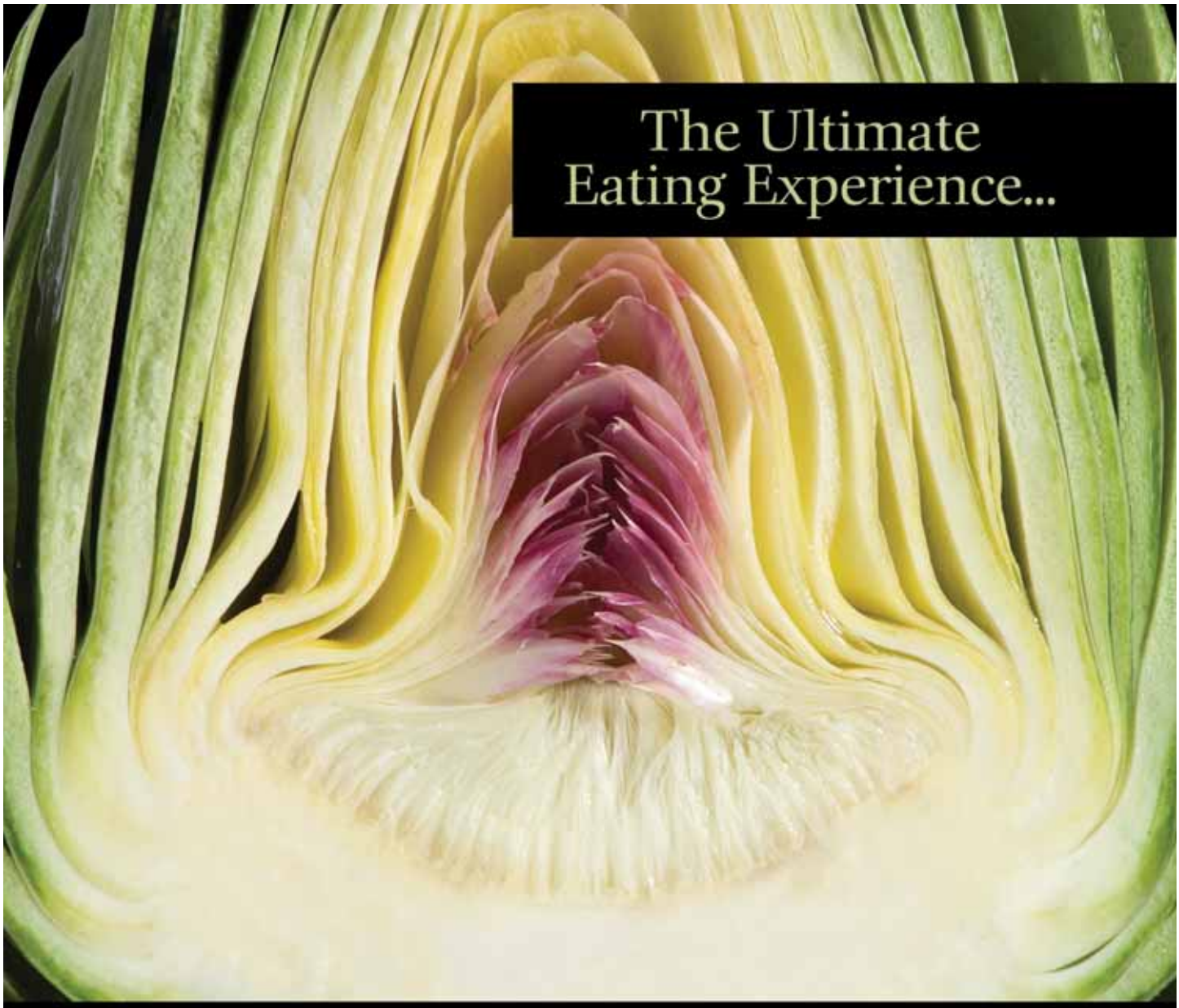
For the winter season, use Frost-Kissed signage to educate the consumer on frost-kissed artichokes.

Go to our Web page to learn more on Frost-Kissed artichokes: *www.oceanmist.com*

Antioxidants

Promote the health benefit message of artichokes — cooked artichokes have more antioxidants than any other vegetable.

Go to our Web page to learn the facts on antioxidant content: *www.oceanmist.com*



... An Ocean Mist Artichoke.

Ocean Mist Artichokes boast a robust flavor you won't find anywhere else. The superior edibility, meatiness, and heart size elevates our artichokes to an exemplary level you – and your customers – deserve.

And because appearance is just as important as taste, our leaf count is unparalleled, the color, shape, and weight of our artichokes leave the competition in the dust.

There's simply no substitute for an Ocean Mist Artichoke!

OCEAN MIST FARMS

www.oceanmist.com

Reader Service # 64

CALIFORNIA AVOCADO COMMISSION
38 Discovery, Suite 150
Irvine, CA 92618-3105
Phone: 949-341-1955
Fax: 949-341-1970
CaliforniaAvocado.com
dcruz@avocado.org

Key Strategies To Increase Sales

- Offer a 2-size program
- Merchandise bagged avocados
- Promote and advertise RIPE California Avocados frequently

What Makes This Category Important To The Produce Department?

- Consumer demand continues to climb with retail sales growing in every region of the country
- Consumption of one billion pounds annually is the norm — and growing

Promotional/Advertising Ideas

Special occasions and events drive avocado sales: Final Four Basketball, Cinco de Mayo, Mother's Day, Memorial Day, Father's Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, St. Patrick's Day, Tailgating opportunities, World Series, Thanksgiving, New Years, Super Bowl, and local events and celebrations

Ripeness Recommendations

- Advertise and display Ripe California Avocados to capitalize on your shoppers' demand for ripe avocados (as much as four to one over firm fruit)*
- 77 percent of shoppers purchasing avocados plan to eat them within 48 hours*

Recommended Display Ideas

- Display California Avocados in a large prominent, permanent location and in a secondary impulse location to boost shopper awareness and sales
- Bagged avocados make an excellent secondary SKU and can generate sales of up to 53 more units per store, per week than stores without bags*
- A 2-size strategy (selling both large and small size avocados) can increase category volume and sales by nearly 100 percent*
- Avocados stickered as "RIPE" can outsell non-stickered fruit by as much as 28 percent*
- When advertised and promoted, "RIPE" stickered avocados can increase sales by 44 percent*

Quick Tips

1. **The time is right to Insist on California Avocados**
2. **Visit *CaliforniaAvocado.com/retail* for all your merchandising information, materials and retail support**
3. **Order *Hand Grown in California* POS materials to drive demand**

Signage

- Use *Hand Grown in California* POS materials to increase shopper awareness and help boost sales
- Use "RIPE" and "Ready to Eat" signage on displays of RIPE California Avocados
- Feature recipes and usage ideas to spark consumer purchase
- Draw attention to displays of Organic California Avocados with point-of-sale signage

Nutrition

Provide shoppers with nutritional information to encourage purchase:

- One-fifth of a medium avocado, or about one ounce, has 50 calories and contributes nearly 20 beneficial nutrients to the diet
- Avocados contribute nearly 20 vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients. Phytonutrients are thought to help prevent many chronic diseases,
- Avocados contribute nearly 20 vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients, including 4 percent of the recommended Daily Value (DV) for vitamin E, 4 percent vitamin C, 8 percent folate, 4 percent fiber, 2 percent iron, 4 percent potassium, with 81 micrograms of lutein and 19 micrograms of beta-carotene
- Avocados act as a "nutrient booster" by enabling the body to absorb more fat-soluble nutrients, such as alpha- and beta-carotene as well as lutein, in foods that are eaten with the fruit
- Visit *CaliforniaAvocado.com/healthy_living/nutrition* for complete details

Cross-Merchandising Opportunities

- California Avocados provide excellent cross-merchandising opportunities with grocery and produce items to maximize sales opportunities: bagged salads, limes, lemons, peppers, tomatoes, chips and snacks, sandwich and hamburger items, soups, pizzas, ethnic foods, wines and more

Display Care And Handling

- Rotate and refresh displays daily
- Never display avocados near misting systems, on wet-racks or on refrigerated displays below 42°
- Handle avocados gently to avoid bruising

Backroom Receiving And Preparation Procedures

- Bring the avocados inside the store immediately upon arrival
- Place boxes with soft fruit on top and those with hard fruit on the bottom
- In general, firm preconditioned fruit can be held at room temperature for three to five days and breaking-to-ripe fruit for two to three days
- Breaking and ripe fruit may be stored in a cooler
- Avoid chill damage; do not store hard, non-breaking fruit below 45° F

Variety And Availability Guide

- Hass avocados represent over 96 percent of the total avocado category volume*
- Other delicious California varieties include Lamb Hass (a summer Hass-like variety), Bacon, Gwen, Fuerte, Pinkerton, Reed and Zutano
- Organic California Avocado production continues to rise as consumer demand for organics increases

Contact the California Avocado Commission for more information about:

- Nutritional research and studies
- In-store ripeness audits
- Best practices merchandising research
- Avocado business reviews
- Promotional opportunities
- Co-marketing programs
- Customized promotions
- Point-of-sale material
- Consumer advertising

Insist on California Avocados

**Based on California Avocado Commission Best Practices Research*

CALIFORNIA AVOCADOS HAND GROWN FROM THE MILES FAMILY TO YOU

It's a perfect balance. Mother Nature provides warm sun, cool ocean breezes and rich fertile soil. And the Miles family generously supplies the time and nurturing hands to grow fresh California Avocados.

On the Miles family farm in Ventura County, it is not unusual to see Emily and Bradley walking through their groves in the morning, carefully inspecting each tree. It is this attention to detail, combined with eco-friendly, sustainable farming practices that ensures that hand grown goodness is in every California Avocado they send to market. This same care and concern for quality is in every California Avocado retail marketing and merchandising program—hand crafted with you and your customers in mind.

Visit **CaliforniaAvocado.com/retail** or contact the California Avocado Commission Merchandising Department for more information at **(800) 344-4333.**

Insist on California Avocados

HAND GROWN IN CALIFORNIA

Reader Service # 66

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BROOKS TROPICAL
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www.brookstropicals.com/chefscorner

Increase Avocado Category Sales With SlimCados

It's the green-skinned avocado from Southern Florida with less fat and fewer calories.* The SlimCado's large size complements your current avocado offering, grabbing attention from the value-conscious customer and even the dieter – normally an infrequent visitor in the avocado aisle. Don't forget your Hispanic shopper, who will appreciate having a wider selection of a favorite fruit.

It's an avocado aficionado's dream, eating more avocados with fewer worries about fat and calories — mashing, slicing, dicing or scooping to their hearts content, adding the distinctive light avocado taste to:

- Green salads — morsels of SlimCados when tossed in make each forkful more delectable.
- Hot soups — cold cubes of these avocados floating on the top push the soup's zest appeal over the top.
- Chunky guacamole — mashed, SlimCados become the party favorite of the buffet table.
- Sandwiches or hamburgers – diced into sandwich spreads or sliced thin to top the feast, these green-skinned avocados make bagged lunches hard to beat.
- SlimCado bowls — cut in half and filled with your favorite seafood salad, SlimCados give a new meaning to dishing it out.
- And finally, there's the simple joy of a Florida avocado cut in half with just a squeeze of lime on top and eaten with a spoon.

So it's official, avocados aren't just for parties. Any meal can be made into a little celebration with SlimCados. Besides being lower in fat and calories, the Florida avocado is also rich in vitamin A, high in potassium and cholesterol free. SlimCados are not genetically modified — they come by these characteristics naturally.

Promotional/Advertising Ideas

Make a big splash in mid-July to kick off the SlimCado season. Look for promotional volumes of 12-count fruit in July and 10-count in August — just in time for chopping up into salads that make their yearly debut during summer barbeques.

Play up how SlimCados add gusto to the guacamole, hamburgers and salads of tailgate parties. The Florida avocado's tropical taste goes well with autumn's typical fare.

And don't forget, traditional holiday favorites, which can be high in calories and fat. SlimCados make a healthful alternative side dish for those special meals.

Display Care And Handling

Display enough to sell in one day, roughly 15 to 30 pieces (depending on the traffic in your store).

Quick Tips

1. **Make sure customers know the Slimcado stays green as it ripens. To determine ripeness, give it a squeeze and if it gives a little, it's ready to eat.**
2. **Keep Slimcados cool but not cold. To ripen, keep them at room temperature. Communicate this to your customers as well.**
3. **Retail customers and culinary professionals can find great recipes and tips at Chef's Corner on the Brooks Tropicals Web site.**
4. **Easy to access nutritional information is also available on the Brooks Tropicals Web site, along with additional care and handling information.**

When replenishing, rotate any leftover day-old fruit to the front. Remember, avocados are sensitive to ethylene.

Optimum Shelf Life

Brooks' Continuous Cold Chain® keeps SlimCados at their best from the field to your store. The first link in the chain is the hydro-cooling that is done immediately after harvesting. hydro-cooling takes the tropical heat out while keeping the fruit's freshness in. The chain continues with these green-skinned avocados being stored in dedicated coolers set at optimum temperature and humidity levels. The final link is the refrigerated loading docks that allow SlimCados to be shipped to your store at optimum freshness.

As the largest grower, packer and shipper of green-skinned avocados, Brooks Tropicals has a reputation for delivering this fruit with the best in shelf life. SlimCados have approximately a 4-day shelf life with the fruit being ready to eat for another one to two days.

Backroom Receiving And Preparation Procedures

Store SlimCados by keeping their environment cool and humid, between 42° and 48° F. Do not store below 40° F. Optimum humidity is between 85 percent and 95 percent.

SlimCados are UPC/PLU coded and boxed in flats, doubles and bruces.

Recommended Display Ideas

Add SlimCados to your avocado section and give your customers a choice of great avocado tastes. But don't stop there. Place SlimCados near other salad ingredients. These green-skinned avocados make delicious sense in salads. When the avocados are displayed near bagged salads, your shoppers have a quick and easy way to make their salads special.

When you're rounding up ingredients for your guacamole display, make sure to include SlimCados for a fresh-tasting guacamole.

Merchandise Florida avocados targeting your South and Central American customers. This is the avocado of choice for many Hispanic dishes.

Variety And Availability

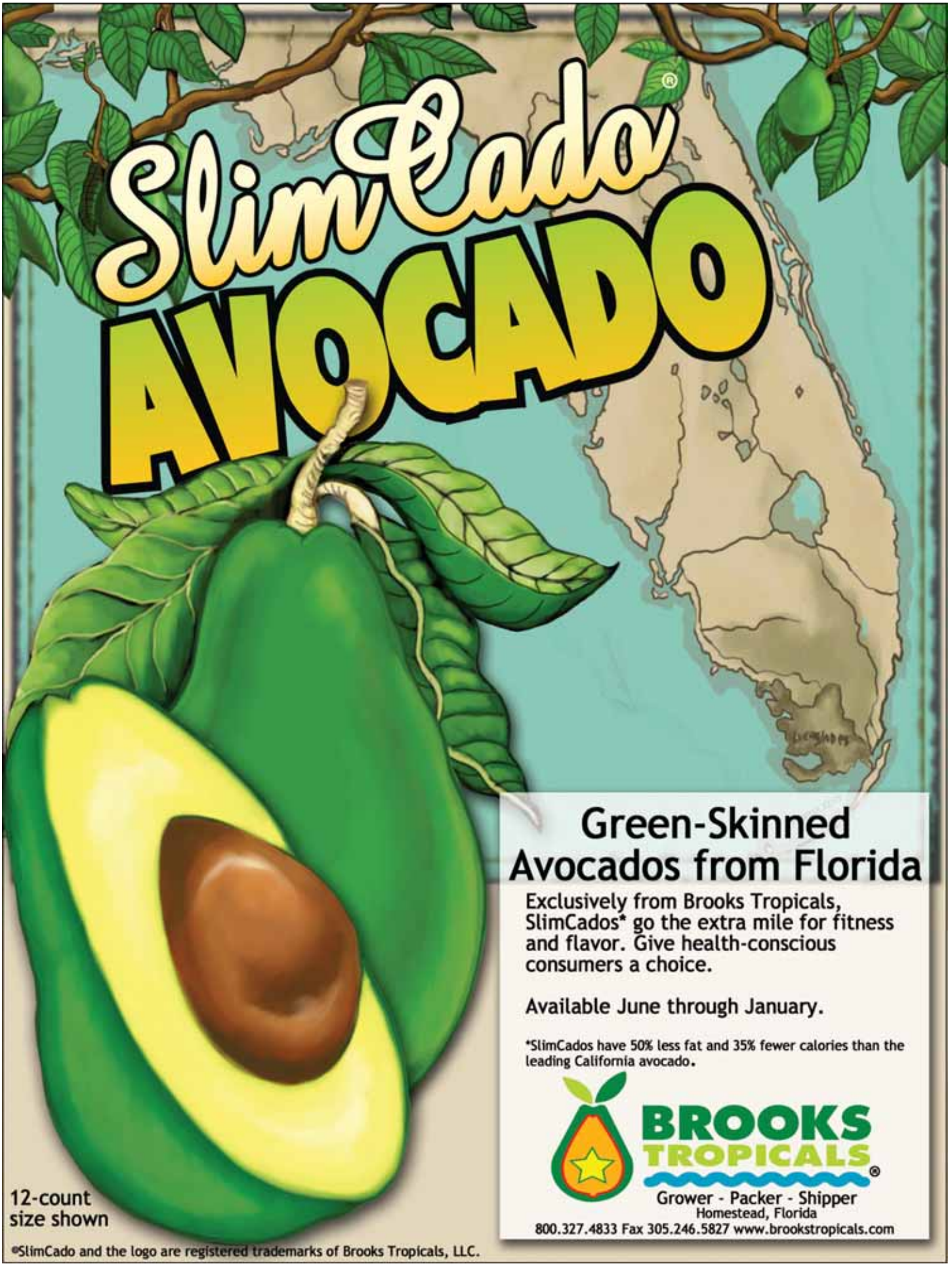
Available July though February, Florida avocados are generally pear shaped and green skinned. Their weight can vary from 14 ounces to a hefty 34 ounces. The avocado will vary in size from four to 12 inches long and up to six inches wide.

**50% less fat and 35% fewer calories than the leading California avocado.*

SlimCado, Continuous Cold Chain and the Brooks Tropicals logo are registered trademarks of Brooks Tropicals, LLC.

Out-of-the-Box Promotional Ideas

- **Think big displays at the beginning of the season. SlimCado aficionados wait for its arrival. As the season progresses, create small multiple displays to cross-merchandise with bagged salads and guacamole ingredients.**
- **Remember the SlimCado in mid-July; the 12-count is available in promotional volumes. It's a great spark for summer produce sales. In August, ask about promotional volumes for the 10-count.**
- **For a handy pocket care guide for SlimCado® Avocados, e-mail *maryo@brookstropicals.com*.**



Reader Service # 29

DOLE – BANANAS
One Dole Drive
Westlake Village, CA 91362
Phone: 818-874-4000
Fax: 818-874-6501

Recommended Display Ideas

When building a profitable banana display at retail, there are several items to take into account. Brand recognition and loyalty are key. A recent independent study showed that consumers look for specific brands that they trust to buy. The study found, "DOLE continues to stand out as the brand consumers say they seek out and buy when available." Thirty-five percent of respondents surveyed said they buy DOLE products. The next brand mentioned received only 14 percent.

Your DOLE Banana display should be positioned in a prominent area, preferably the front-end display unit in the produce department. A beautifully stocked display will draw consumers into your produce department.

Stocking is important. With the busy lifestyles that most people lead today, the time people shop is scattered around the clock. The morning and afternoon will bring in the stay-at-home-mom crowd, as well as seniors. Both of these demographic groups are loyal DOLE Banana consumers. In the evening, late at night and on weekends, you will have an influx of shoppers who work full time and fit shopping into their schedules.

All these consumers have one thing in common; they all like to buy their DOLE Bananas from a neat, fully stocked banana display. If the display appears half-empty, they get the impression the fruit has been picked through, leaving them with the leftovers. This is why it is critical to keep your DOLE Banana display fully stocked, cleaned and culled throughout business hours.

Point-Of-Purchase/Signage

While shopping, busy consumers want quick and clear information on what they are buying and how much it will cost. Colorful Dole price cards, placed at or above eye level, will provide your customers with these details.

Dole Fresh Fruit Company has designed colorful point-of-sale (POS) materials that will help draw attention to your banana display. Dole has POS materials that feature Bobby Banana as well as visuals of ripe DOLE Bananas. These fun and colorful pieces draw both adults and children to your DOLE Banana display.

Variety And Availability Guide

DOLE Bananas are available year-round. Aside from conventional bananas, Dole also offers baby bananas, red bananas and plantains. These specialty varieties help grow the category and appeal to today's diverse and increasingly adventurous consumer tastes. Dole also markets organic bananas, providing a choice to consumers who prefer to purchase organic products.

Quick Tips

1. **Keep your DOLE Banana display fully stocked and clean throughout business hours.**
2. **Fun and colorful Dole POS materials will draw attention to your DOLE Banana display and ultimately your whole produce department.**
3. **Have nutrition and recipe information available for your customers or direct them to *www.dole.com*.**

Promotional/Advertising Ideas

Fun is an important theme to consider when creating promotional and advertising ideas for your retail store. Consumers don't associate shopping with fun. If you make the shopping experience enjoyable, consumers will buy more and return to your store more often.

Using Dole's costume character, Bobby Banana, at grand openings and special store events, will generate fun for both adults and children within your supermarket. Consider theme displays, decorated with colorful Dole POS materials and timed with store ads, to generate fun in your produce department.

Provide your shoppers with nutrition information. The Dole Nutrition Institute (DNI) has developed tools that can help you communicate to consumers the importance of eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables in order to live long, healthy lives. Go to *www.dolenutrition.com* for more information.

Make sure to use good, colorful produce photos in your weekly circulars. A beautiful image of DOLE Bananas can be downloaded from *www.multi-ad.com*, by clicking on Kwikee.

Backroom Receiving And Preparation Procedures

Dole Fresh Fruit Company provides its retail and wholesale customers with services that improve the way products are received, handled, ripened and displayed. A knowledgeable team of technical service representatives work directly with Dole customers to perfect ripening, equipment management and handling procedures. Our team of merchandising representatives works at retail stores to help develop displays that will move more DOLE Bananas.

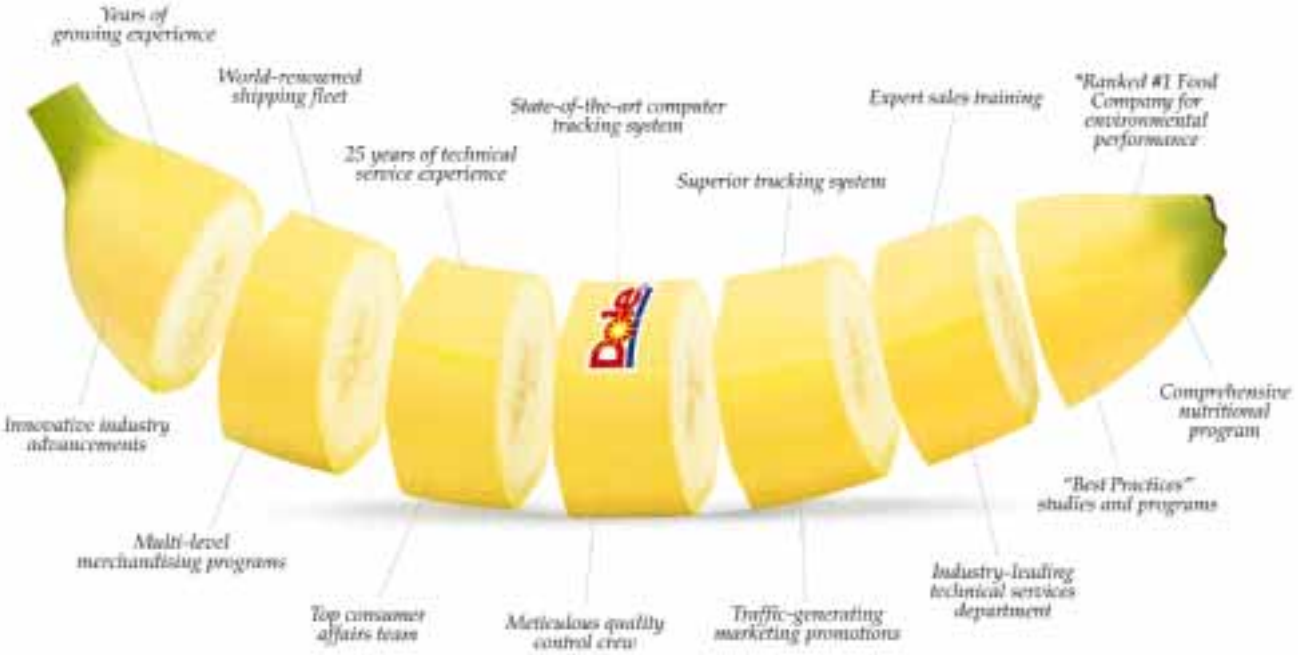
Other Suggestions

Dole is committed to nutrition education to communicate to the public the health benefits of eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables. The Dole Nutrition Institute offers information on the latest findings through brochures, newsletters, published articles, the Web site (*www.dolenutriton.com*), quarterly magazines, videos and television programs. Contact your local Dole sales representative to learn more about DNI and its offerings.

Out-of-the-Box Promotional Ideas

- **Bobby Banana appearance.**
- **World's largest banana display.**
- **Create your own banana split.**
- **Offer coupons for free bananas.**

It takes a lot to be number one.



Take advantage of all that America's #1 Banana has to offer.

Call your local DOLE® Sales Representative today.

www.dole.com

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* by the Council on Economic Priorities, published in *Shopping For A Better World, December 2000.*

Dole

America's #1 Banana

Reader Service # 124

ROSEMONT FARMS
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The bell pepper category offers a unique double-barreled opportunity to the alert retailer — pointing the way to high levels of profitability with a significant produce department staple while also offering the variety and color to pique consumer interest and make a retailer the destination of choice among shoppers.

The key is to capitalize on the bell pepper's unique roll in the department. It is a common staple item, but it is not part of most salad mixes. It is well accepted as a core produce department item but is also available in a multitude of colors that allow consumers to be adventurous without asking them to sample unfamiliar items.

The starting point is a generous display of green and red bell peppers offered both in larger and smaller sizes. The colored peppers get the attention but, like an auto dealer promoting the sexy convertible and selling a lot of sedans, the attention to the category created by a multitude of colors helps sell more green and red peppers.

The different sizes are important as peppers have different uses. The most common use is as a salad ingredient, but peppers have long been used in cooking whole, as stuffed peppers, or sliced or cubed in many dishes. More recently, in sliced strips, they have become important parts of crudité trays, and decorative ring slices are increasingly being used as garnish. Delicious whole roasted bell peppers have taken off as a healthful and flavorful appetizer.

The core display should be accented with a wide variety of colored peppers, both in bulk and in various types of packaging. Particularly effective are multi-color packs in which consumers get a combination of green, red, yellow, orange, chocolate, purple or white bell peppers in a convenient tray, bag or net. This device is particularly important for increasing the size of the average sale. Also offer multi-packs of small- and medium-size peppers promoted for stuffing.

The base display is typically on the wet rack amidst other salad vegetables. Secondary displays near the fresh-cut salads along with tomatoes, cucumbers and other salad favorites can remind consumers to customize their bagged salads with fresh items. Colored peppers also make fantastic color breaks between other produce items.

Bell peppers are one of the few items in the produce department that can successfully be marketed at different price points simultaneously. Don't be afraid to experiment with offering a greenhouse-grown line, often imported from Europe, at a higher price point, while maintaining your large display of traditional product.

Quick Tips

1. **Remind consumers that sweet bell peppers are delicious both cooked and raw.**
2. **Use the variety of colored peppers to attract attention to the category.**
3. **Tie in with "Fruits & Veggies – More Matters" to get people eating the full line of sweet bell peppers.**

Point Of Purchase/Signage

Signage near the bagged salad display should encourage consumers to add peppers and other items to their favorite salad mix.

Highlight the national "Fruits & Veggies – More Matters" promotion and show how sweet bell peppers can fit into many different color categories.

Remind consumers to think of bell peppers for cooking. Recipes and photos of stuffed green peppers and roasted red, green and yellow peppers are mouthwatering and guaranteed to boost sales of peppers and related items.

Variety And Availability Guide

Most sweet bell peppers are sold at an immature green stage. If allowed to fully mature, most varieties will turn to red, though some will turn yellow or other colors. Bell peppers are available year-round with extensive production in Florida, California, Georgia, New Jersey, North Carolina and other states. In addition, Mexico is a substantial supplier of both field-grown and greenhouse peppers. Greenhouse product is also imported to the United States from the Netherlands, Canada, Belgium, Israel and other countries.

Promotional/Advertising Ideas

Successfully promoting bell peppers involves reminding consumers of the key use categories:

- **Salads** — Have a Salad-of-the-Week promotion and feature sweet bell peppers and other produce items. The more salads people make, the more sweet bell peppers you will sell.
- **Snacks** — With people looking to eat healthfully, encourage sliced bell peppers as a great snack alternative. Pair them with low-cal salad dressing for a tasty dip.
- **Cooking** — Suggest that consumers consider grilling or roasting some sweet bell peppers, adding a little garlic and brushing with olive oil to have a delicious and healthful alternative to deep fried appetizers.
- **Garnish** — No other produce item offers the range of colors of sweet bell peppers. Remind shoppers that they can add beauty to any plate with slices of sweet bell peppers.

Display Care And Handling

Peppers do not require misting but can tolerate light misting. Do not allow colored pepper displays to sell down excessively. No one wants to buy that last orange pepper.

Backroom Receiving And Preparation Procedures

Peppers are highly sensitive to ethylene and should not be transported or stored with commodities that are ethylene-producing.

Peppers are sensitive to excessive cold and freezing. Maintain temperatures of 45° to 50° F and a relative humidity of 85 to 90 percent.

Cross-Merchandising Opportunities

In the produce department: Cross with all salad items, bagged salads, salad dressings and dips; bring in some fine olive oil to showcase roasted peppers with garlic.

Out of the department: Set up a secondary display in the meat case for stuffed peppers.

Out-of-the-Box Promotional Ideas

- **Run a coloring contest where school children have to sort the colored peppers into the categories used by "Fruits & Veggies – More Matters".**
- **Showcase a variety of stuffed peppers, both traditional hot, stuffed with beef, pork, veal or chicken, and cold, stuffed with shrimp, tuna, chicken or egg salad.**
- **Sample slices of all colors of sweet bell pepper with produce department salad dressings and dips. They are a healthful snack everyone will appreciate and will boost sales of sweet bell peppers and the dressing or dip. It is a two-for-one success.**

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... But Exceptional Results Are The Only Measurement

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Reader Service # 58

Driscoll's

DRISCOLL'S
345 Westridge Drive
Watsonville, CA 95076
Phone: 831-763-5000
Fax: 831-761-5988

Recommended Display Ideas

Vibrant color, aroma, variety, great taste! Few things in the produce department can energize your customers like a destination Berry Patch display. Build excitement and profits year-round, by merchandising strawberries, raspberries, blueberries and blackberries in one power-packed display. Strawberries and blueberries are among your department's top power items. Merchandising them together creates an irresistible consumer draw

especially by adding other variety berries and organics to the mix. A destination Berry Patch establishes a consistent display space for the berry category in a prime location. Retailers have the flexibility to adjust space allocation to meet the specific needs of customers, respond to supply situations, reduce out-of-stocks and maximize sales and profits. A signature, branded Berry Patch in place all year generates berry category sales far exceeding national averages — often as high as 10 percent of total produce department sales! Use the versatility of the Berry Patch to shift display allocation to take advantage of seasonal marketing opportunities while maintaining the optimum profit mix.

For best results remember that consumers are emotional about berries! That's why Driscoll's mission is to continually delight berry consumers with every package. A Driscoll's branded Berry Patch keeps your customers coming back for more and Driscoll's year-round availability ensures that you are always fully stocked with The Finest Berries in the World®.

Variety Berries And Organics, All Year Long

At Driscoll's, we find the best climate to grow each berry variety at every time of the year and team with the best independent growers to produce berries that will delight consumers. The result is year-round availability of luscious strawberries, juicy raspberries, plump blueberries and tasty blackberries. Consumers like having choices. Offering the complete variety of berries — raspberries, blueberries and blackberries in addition to strawberries, both conventionally grown and organic – in one powerful display generates add-on impulse sales.

Organics can play an important role in merchandising your Berry Patch, giving consumers more options in their berry purchases. Offer multiple package sizes to increase purchase options for increased sales volumes, incremental purchases and higher profits.

Point-Of-Purchase/Signage

POP signage to accent your destination Berry Patch display, available from Driscoll's, associates your store with premium quality, branded produce. The link between your store and the highest quality berries available year-round creates a halo effect that extends to everything else you sell. Equating your store with top quality berries never fails to boost overall store image.

Backroom Receiving And Preparation Procedures

- Receive berries directly into refrigerated warehouses.
- If berries arrive wrapped in plastic, remove the plastic immediately.
- Optimal temperature for berries is between 32° to 34° F with humidity levels at 90 to 95 percent.
- Transport to the store on refrigerated trucks.
- Quickly move berries from the loading dock to the cold storage room.

Display Care And Handling

- Keep your berries refrigerated from the receiving dock to the shelf.
- Keep berries dry. Any moisture will hasten breakdown, shorten shelf life and shrink sales.
- Make sure your Berry Patch display is fully stocked at all times.
- Remove packages with leaky or moldy berries. One bad berry package will impact your sales and store image.

Cross-Merchandising Opportunities

Berries are a natural for cross-merchandising opportunities to build transaction size. Let your creativity and imagination run wild and watch your profits grow.

Promotional/Advertising Ideas

Appeal to the widest range of consumers by merchandising a mixed assortment of berries and packages. Berry Patch versatility allows you to promote hot items, while maintaining gross margins for the entire category throughout the year. BOGOs, multiple package and price promotions all have tremendous draw for the berry category, and frequent berry ads establish the Berry Patch as your chain's signature category.

Don't forget to highlight the great nutritional value of berries!

Every berry in the category is a potent source of antioxidants — A great way for your customers to boost fruit consumption when *More Matters!*

Ripeness Recommendations

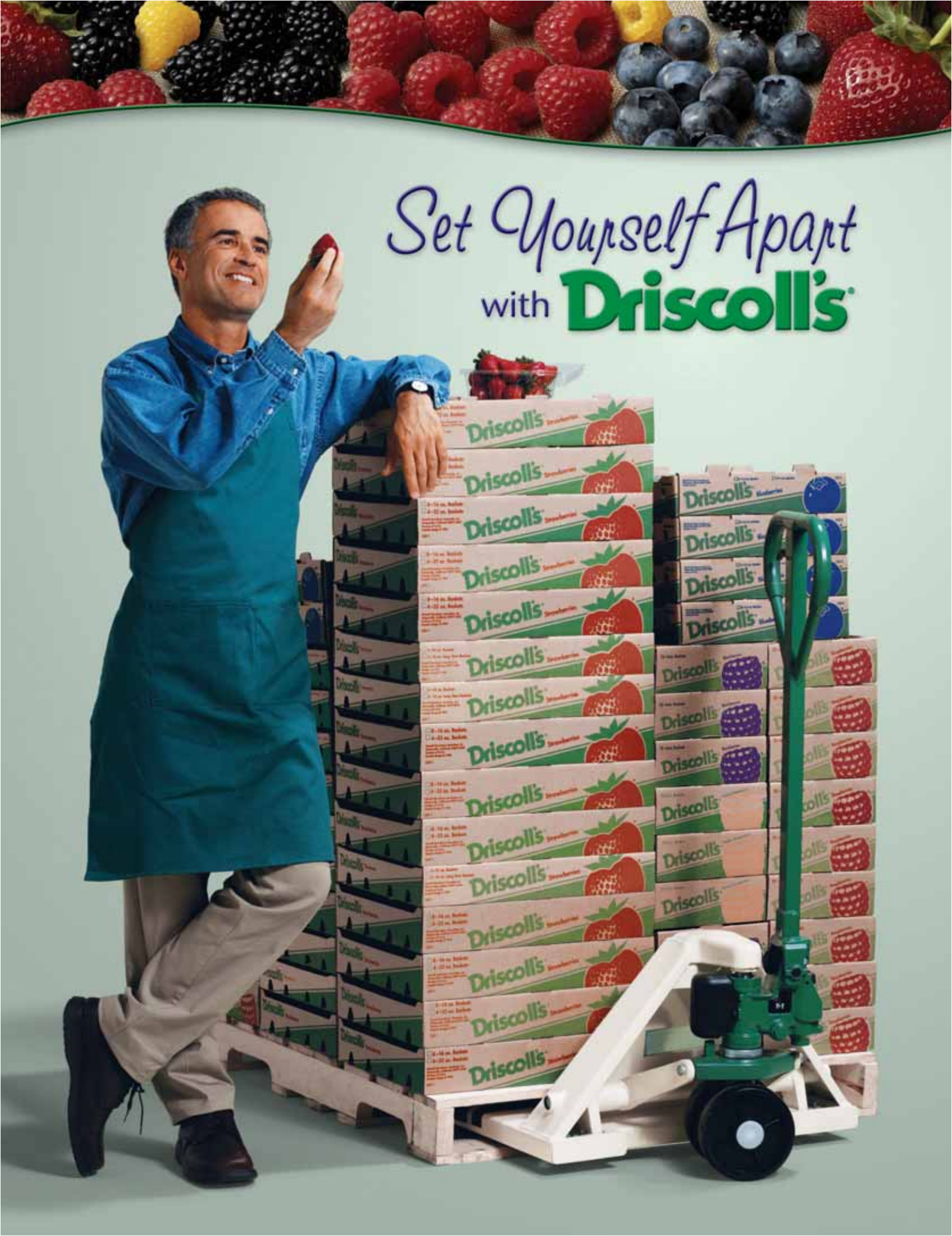
Look for brilliant, even-colored, symmetrically shaped berries. The calyxes (green leafy caps) of strawberries should be fresh and not wilted. Berries should be uniform in color, round and full — without dents or bruises — and should be dry but with a nice sheen. A leaky berry is the first sign of deterioration. Blueberries — and some raspberries — should have a hazy, white coating (called Bloom), which is part of the berries' natural defense mechanism.

Build A Profitable Partnership For A Profitable Category

A branded Berry Patch builds consumer satisfaction with reliable quality and steady supplies year-round. Driscoll's offers unparalleled variety, availability and superior quality of the complete berry line throughout the year. Berries that delight consumers — The Finest Berries in the World®.

Safety First

In addition to producing berries that delight consumers, Driscoll's berries are grown with the highest standards of care and food safety possible. All independent farmers around the world that grow Driscoll's berries must adhere to the same strict GAP and GlobalGAP guidelines enforced by a rigorous system of internal and independent third party audits second to none in the produce industry.


Set Yourself Apart
with Driscoll's

Create a Driscoll's Berry Patch in your produce department…

and watch the results stack up—and profits grow!

Consumers are passionate about fresh berries. Show that you are, too, by creating a power-packed display of Driscoll's premium fresh conventional and organic berries. A year-round, destination Driscoll's "berry patch" in place will generate category sales far exceeding national averages.

Driscoll's
The Finest Berries in the World.®

www.driscolls.com

Reader Service # 76

A family of *Growing* companies.™
GRIMMWAY FARMS
P.O. Box 81498
Bakersfield, CA 93380
Phone: 661-845-9435
www.grimmway.com

Recommended Display Ideas

Carrots are among the categories that have most benefited from the value-added revolution. The merchandising opportunities available have led to dramatic increases in carrot category volumes, which justify substantial attention being paid to the proper merchandising and marketing of carrots. Some key display points:

1) Carrots sell best when they receive a high-visibility central display that includes the full range of carrot items plus a generous secondary display in the produce department, tying into similar items and being used as color breaks throughout the department.

2) The main carrot display should include baby carrots, microwavable petite carrots for cooking, carrot chips, carrot Stixx, crinkle-cut coins, shredded carrots, multipack baby carrots and Carrot Dippers snack packs, jumbo carrots, table carrots, cello carrots, bunch carrots with tops.

3) A large secondary display with other value-added produce should include baby carrots, carrot chips, carrot Stixx, crinkle cut coins, shredded carrot and microwavable petite carrots for cooking.

4) In addition, both baby carrots and table carrots, with their natural orange color, should serve as a terrific color break for use throughout the department.

5) Don't forget to include carrots as part of your organic display. Bunny Luv and Cal-Organic brands, offers 52-week-a-year availability of a large range of certified organic carrots. Organic carrots consistently rank among the top selling organic items.

6) Salad bars also benefit from a full complement of carrot items. Grimmway offers foodservice packs perfect for putting baby carrots, carrot chips, carrot Crisps and shredded carrots in any salad bar.

7) Finally, all juicing programs require fresh carrots to be a success — the sweet juice of the carrot makes it a perennial favorite for those ordering fresh juices.

Quick Tips

1. **Carry the full variety of value-added Grimmway carrot products.**
2. **Emphasize the healthful attributes of carrots.**
3. **Display carrots in multiple locations in the store.**

Point-Of-Purchase / Signage

Carrots are a naturally healthful snack. Let consumers know that the top messages are:

- All natural
- No fat, no cholesterol
- The kid-friendly vegetable™

Channel strips are an excellent way to grab the shoppers' attention. At *Grimmway.com*, we offer a range of point-of-sale material including a set of 1x 8-inch strips to add eye-catching clarity to your carrot displays.

Variety And Availability Guide

Grimmway Carrots are available year-round with consistent quality. California's abundant sunshine and range of growing areas produce approximately 85 percent of the nation's carrots.

Promotional/Advertising Ideas

Carrots, due to their brilliant orange color, can be part of eye-catching displays.

Carrots and carrot products are appropriate for sampling. You can keep up with Grimmway's latest ad campaigns on our Web site: *Grimmway.com*.

Display, Care And Handling

With bulk carrots, maintain temperatures from 33° to 35° F with relative humidity of 98 to 100 percent. Bulk carrots can be lightly misted but are ethylene-sensitive and should not be stored or transported with ethylene-producing items as they give carrots an off flavor.

The tops of bunched carrots should be fluffed to maintain air circulation. Beware that the tops draw moisture from the carrots themselves and will cause these carrots to have a shorter shelf life.

If the exterior of carrots starts to appear white, dunk them in ice water to freshen the carrots.

Maintaining the cold chain is of prime importance with value-added carrots including baby carrots.

Cross-Merchandising Opportunities

Carrots and fresh-cut carrots are traditionally cross-merchandised with dips and salad dressings; one can also use peanut better, yogurt, etc.

Carrot cake is a favorite for everyone. So cross-merchandise with all the ingredients. Sample carrot-cake cupcakes and give out a recipe.

Soups and stews create many cross-merchandising opportunities. And signage indicating that any salad can be enhanced with carrots is always a good idea.

Finally, don't forget to suggest carrot curls as a garnish with holiday meals.

Out-of-the-Box Promotional Ideas

- **Merchandise carrots in the deli next to fresh roasted chickens and other ready-to-eat items to integrate a healthful, colorful, vegetable meal-solution display.**
- **Put carrots in the meat case next to the assortment of ready-to-cook meal items to remind consumers to serve healthful fresh carrots with their protein-based main course.**
- **A display of baby carrots at the seafood counter reminds consumers of the need for a fresh vegetable with their fine fish.**

Reader Service # 13

DOMEX SUPERFRESH GROWERS
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lqueen@superfreshgrowers.com

Cherry consumption continues to trend upward. In fact, between 2000 and 2007, cherry consumption in the United States doubled to 1.5 pounds per person! Remember that cherries are available for only two months in many markets. How many other fruits or vegetables do your customers get this excited about eating? Cherries signify an exciting time for has arrived, a time of outdoor activities, barbeques and picnics. Because of this, you need to make sure they know when cherries have arrived. Large signs and full-page ads are money well spent on this amazing category.

Recommended Display Ideas

Nothing attracts attention and generates sales like a large cherry display. The display should be well signed and placed at the front of the department in your primary selling location. A secondary display toward the back of the department during the peak of the season will attract additional sales.

Make sure you offer a mix of dark sweet cherries and the delicious Rainier cherry. Rainier cherries continue to grow in popularity each year and are critical to successful cherry category sales. Be sure to offer your customers a mix of cherry packaging — a large clamshell for customers who are heavy users and a 2-pound bag for those looking for a smaller option.

Finally, the key to a great cherry display is to have cherries for the entire season. The days of having only one big ad during the season on the 4th of July are over. Cherry season now extends for multiple weeks, and your success relies in part on your selling plan for the entire season. Plan early to lock in your supplies and work closely with Domex Superfresh Growers for merchandising ideas, point-of-sale materials and packaging opportunities.

Point-of-Purchase / Signage

Since cherries are seasonal, it is important to remind your customers when cherries are back. This can be done through in-store signage, your circulars and in-store radio/TV. Studies have shown that in-store radio and TV can drive up sales of cherries by as much as 14 percent. Signage is also a great way to educate your consumers on special items such as Rainier cherries, extra large cherries and more. The Rainier cherry demands a premium price and a quick sign identifying its super sweetness and unique color can help drive sales.

Variety And Availability Guide

Superfresh Growers cherries are available from early June into mid-August. The primary variety remains the Bing, and there are several other dark sweet cherries that help extend the season on the front and tail ends. Promotable quantities of Rainier cherries are typically available from June 25th through July 25th. It is imperative that you run ads that include Rainier cherries during this small window of huge opportunity and increase shelf space by at least 25 percent to realize maximum category lift potential. Make sure you offer your customers a premium large Rainier cherry. Although the per pound price might be more, once consumers experience them, they keep coming back during the entire season.

Quick Tips

1. **Provide an assortment of packaging — all consumers are not alike.**
2. **Promote cherries in a high-traffic area — their seasonality creates excitement.**
3. **Promote dark sweets and Rainier together — they make a great team.**

Promotional/Advertising Ideas

Cherry promotions have no limits. Whatever you dream, you can put together. Fourth of July is a natural as are promotions featuring summer and picnics. One small Midwest chain runs a *Cherries for Charity* promotion each year. This chain moves 3,000 pounds of cherries per week per store during the event. By comparison, the average across the United States is 770 pounds of cherries per week per store. That's more than five times the average sales! Be active with cherry promotions and you will be rewarded with amazing stories of your own.

Last season Domex Superfresh Growers created additional excitement by conducting a display contest that also included a trip for a family of four consumers to one of our premier growing sites, Flathead Lake, MT. Generating excitement and return visits to the display, this event was so successful we will be doing it again this year. When creating promotions it pays to think outside the box and beyond pricing.

Ripeness Recommendations

Cherries are picked ripe on the trees and are delivered ready-to-eat to your produce departments. Dark sweet and Rainier cherries should have nice green stems and be firm to the touch.

Display Care And Handling

The cold chain is king when it comes to cherries. Keep your cherries in your cold room until they are ready to be displayed. Your large displays may not always allow for a refrigerated display, so make sure you are properly rotating your supplies and put cherries back into the cold room in the evening.

The seasonality of cherries creates excitement. Display your cherries in your high traffic area and draw attention to them with the merchandising tips previously suggested. Maintaining an ample supply of cherries is critical for a successful cherry season; your cherry plan needs to include securing supplies from early June into early August.

Backroom Receiving And Preparation Procedures

KEEP CHERRIES COLD. When it comes to cherries the higher the storage temperature, the shorter the shelf life. Internal fruit quality drops more in one hour at 68° F (20° C) than in 24 hours at 32° F. You keep significant shelf life when you keep your cherries cold as long as possible.

Preparation for cherries is simple: Allow ample shelf space in a high-traffic area and steadily rotate your supplies during the course of the day.

Cross-Merchandising Opportunities

Cherries usually sell themselves quite well, but a good recipe for cherry cobbler or cherry pie with all the fixings laid out for that family BBQ would really boost sales around the 4th of July. Chocolate sauce is another delicious side that blends well with the sweet flavor of cherries. For the consumer thinking more healthfully, a nice non-fat yogurt with cherries cut in half makes a great combo. Visit *superfreshgrowers.com* to see more great recipes.

Out-of-the-Box Promotional Ideas

- **Place clamshells of cherries in the dairy section next to the yogurt. They are a delicious snack for those wanting a low-fat treat.**
- **Run a summertime promotion using cherries in clamshells or bags that are ready for the family outings.**
- **Offer samples of Rainier cherries to drive their sales. One bite and the higher costs won't affect consumers' decisions.**
- **Run a *Superfresh Cherry* ad featuring larger sized cherries.**

Supplies you can trust is worth getting excited about too. Our season-long cherry planning program assures that you will have the cherries you need, when you need them. That's Superfresh.

DOMEX superfresh® growers

The Force Behind Fresh

Domex Superfresh Growers, 151 Low Rd., Yakima, WA. 98908 | TEL: 509 966-1814 | www.superfreshgrowers.com

Reader Service # 85

DNE World Fruit Sales

DNE WORLD FRUIT SALES
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Fax: 772-465-1181
www.dneworld.com
dne@dneworld.com

Year-Round Supplies And Profits

With the availability of great tasting citrus year-round, retailers now have the opportunity to grow citrus sales and profits significantly. Navel oranges from Florida and California complemented by imported summer navels from Australia and South Africa lead the way for a full year of navel profits. Clementines, with their nearly year-round availability, are imported from Chile (mid May-August), South Africa (June-September), Morocco and Spain (October–February). They continue to be very popular with all ages because they are easy to peel and virtually seedless.

Specialty items, such as Minneolas in the summer from Australia and South Africa and during the winter from Florida, along with a full line of tangerines (Fall-glos, Sunburst and Honeys) can bring even more profits to the lineup. And finally, delicious juice oranges from Florida are available during most of the winter season for your customers who love fresh squeezed orange juice.

Florida and Texas grapefruit offer consumers the best tasting grapefruit available in the world. Peak flavor often comes in January and February. However, fruit is eating well as early as late October to November depending on the season. California grapefruit fills in the summer void and the Star Ruby variety out of the desert areas in the late spring are becoming more popular as well.

Be sure to offer an alternative option for customers with single-person and small families who don't want to buy a 5-pound box of Clementines or large bag of grapefruit/oranges. Either display loose fruit by the pound or in smaller bags, such as 2- or 3-pound bags of tangerines or Clementines.

Promotional/Advertising Ideas

Promoting citrus regularly will help boost citrus sales. There are enough different citrus varieties to have a weekly citrus ad with a different item — you can offer loose fruit one week and bags the next week. Offer the consumer a variety; promote multiple items at the same time. Select one as your feature and the other as a sub-feature.

Strive to appeal to the consumer and create awareness by designing themed ads that promote the season and the benefits of including fresh citrus in your daily diet. Draw attention to the produce department by creating a display that includes multiple in-season citrus varieties that are well organized and eye appealing with excellent signage. Remember to offer a variety of choices to meet the needs of all your consumers.

Quick Tips

1. **Educate Consumers to increase consumer awareness and boost sales.**
2. **Promote citrus during its peak taste.**
3. **Conduct in-store sampling.**
4. **Emphasize the health and nutritional benefits.**

Cross-Merchandising Opportunities

Florida juice oranges are a great way to enjoy fresh squeezed orange juice at home; they are also sweet and juicy to eat whole. A great cross-promotion for Moms and kids might be to give away a simple juicing apparatus (50¢ — $1) when your shoppers buy a 4- or 5-pound bag of juice oranges. A great time for this is February through June during Florida's Valencia orange — the premier juicing orange variety — season . Honey tangerines are also a great juicing item with their incredibly sweet taste; the juicing device separates the seeds from the juice itself. Kids will love it.

Cross-merchandise with self stable and refrigerated juices. At DNE, we offer two opportunities to cross-merchandise. Ocean Spray's new juice line – Grower's Reserve refrigerated

juices — are available on the East Coast and can be promoted together with fresh citrus. This not only increases product sold during the promotion but also grows both of the categories by introducing fresh citrus to the juice consumers and Ocean Spray branded juice to the fresh citrus consumer. It is a win-win situation. Right after New Year's is a great time to cross-promote the Ocean Spray Grapefruit juices with the 5-pound bags of Ocean Spray fresh grapefruit from either Florida or Texas. This is cold and flu season and kick-off time for New Year's diet programs.

Out-of-the-Box Promotional Ideas

- **Conduct contests or promotional giveaways to drive traffic and increase sales.**
- **Use child-friendly packaging to attract children to the product while promoting healthful eating. Mothers will buy food items that their children want and that are nutritionally good for them.**

Your Year Round Global Citrus Source

DNE

Ocean Spray

World Fruit Sales

Our experience in growing, packing and marketing fruit from Florida, Texas and California - as well as sourcing from around the world - can help grow your citrus profits all year.

Florida
800-327-6676

www.dneworld.com

New Jersey
865-603-2225

Reader Service # 69

ROSEMONT FARMS
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info@rosemontfarms.com

While generally associated with the tastes of summer, sweet corn can bring sweet profits to retail produce departments almost year round, and value-added products, such as our *Sweet'N Ready™ Gourmet Corn* offer even greater flexibility for retailers.

Recommended Display Ideas

Offering bulk and packaged product together increases sales because it appeals to all types of consumers.

Build bulk displays especially during summer months. Partially stripped husks will help prevent consumers from stripping husks themselves and may give the perception of fresher product. Have employees keep an eye on the display to ensure it is neat and clean.

Use Rosemont's patent pending *Sweet'N Ready™ Gourmet Corn* value-added product to highlight your sweet corn section with the high quality graphics on the *Sweet'N Ready™ Gourmet Corn* packaging. The vertical display orientation provides superior merchandising.

Display value-added corn products in a 'Convenience' section of your department with other bagged or packaged items. Makes a great "snack solution".

Point Of Purchase/Signage

Sell bulk product in multiples (6 for $X).

Use signs to promote freshness of corn as different sources enter the market.

Utilize the patent pending *Sweet'N Ready™ Gourmet Corn* high graphic packaging as POS material.

Value-Added

Use Rosemont's *Sweet'N Ready™ Gourmet Corn* to boost incremental sales year-round. The convenience and ease of this ready-to-go package will make it even easier for customers to purchase and prepare fresh sweet corn.

Availability/Variety

Fresh bulk corn is available year round from a variety of growing locations.

Rosemont's *Sweet'N Ready™ Gourmet Corn* is available year-round with consistent gourmet flavor and quality, and is a premium variety for an enhanced eating and cooking experience.

Quick Tips

1. **Promote corn sales, especially of value-added product, year-round and not just in summer months.**
2. **Utilize *Sweet'N Ready's* convenient packaging to display corn where bulk sweet corn is not feasible (meat and seafood departments, check-out).**

Promotional Ideas

Build displays combining several Bar-B-Que items during summer months.

Merchandise value-added products, like *Sweet-'N Ready*, as a Grab-n-Go item in produce as well as in the meat department.

Promote convenience by educating consumers that corn can be microwaved in two minutes.

Promote corn for grilling during the summer months and provide corn recipes such as soufflés, chowders, fritters and omelettes for the Fall/Winter months.

Care And Handling

Corn is odor-sensitive. Do not transport or store with products that produce odors.

Cross-Merchandising Ideas

Cross-merchandise other grilling vegetables around the corn display during summer months.

Create a 'recipe' display during winter months showcasing the main ingredients of corn chowder or another recipe together. Have on-site demo of the recipe.

Cross-merchandise *Sweet'N Ready* product in meat or seafood department, or in the prepared foods/Grab-n-Go section.

MICROWAVES IN 1 TO 2 MINUTES
Sweet'N Ready™
GOURMET ~ FULL EAR
Sweet Corn

Out-of-the-Box Promotional Ideas

- **Create a display of *Sweet'N Ready* in your Deli/Prepared Foods section and offer as a side with the rotisserie chicken.**
- **Create a 'Convenience' Section in your produce department with select bagged/value-added items including a packaged corn like *Sweet'N Ready*.**

Now Corn Profits are Really Going to Get Carried Away.

4-pack caddy carton* offers cooking instructions, serving suggestions, and nutritional information

- Vertical display provides superior merchandising
- Extended shelf-life (up to 21 days)
- Premium corn variety for enhanced eating & cooking experience

- Perfect for Grab-N-Go sections
- Safely transport corn
- Great value-added opportunity increases incremental sales

Each wrapped ear of corn features an easy-to-open pull strip

* Patent Pending

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Recommended Display Ideas

Cucumbers offer an unusual opportunity because, although the core of the category functions as a high-volume staple item, a basic building block of the salad, other parts of the category function as high-margin specialty items.

The key to maximizing cucumber sales and profits is large bulk displays of the basic salad cucumber accented with special varieties.

Large bulk displays of slicing cucumbers typically should be placed near lettuce and other salad ingredients. When lettuce prices are high, consumer substitution can occur, so extra large and supplemental displays may be required as well as careful attention to restocking of the displays.

The rich green color of the cucumber also makes it a perfect color mate to radishes, carrots and other colored vegetables.

Although slicing cucumbers traditionally are sold in bulk, film-wrapped packages containing several smaller cucumbers and, more recently, mesh bags filled with several cucumbers are often good sellers. Together they create interest in a familiar staple.

Sales also can be boosted with additional varieties. English/hothouse varieties — elongated, seedless versions of traditional slicing cucumbers — add a note of elegance and interest to the category and often support higher margins.

Kirby dills and other varieties can be marketed specifically for pickling and make a store appear to be a variety leader. In certain areas they can actually drive consumer store choice.

The growth in fresh-cut has created a double opportunity for merchandising cucumbers. First, fresh-cut cucumbers can be included in crudité trays, and packages of cut cucumber can be sold on their own as a snack.

In addition, retailers have found success with a secondary display near the fresh-cut lettuce packages, often involving cucumbers, tomatoes, peppers, onions and mushrooms, thus reminding consumers to add ingredients to fresh-cut mixes.

Point Of Purchase/Signage

Consumers may appreciate a quick tip to keep partially used cucumbers fully wrapped so as to extend the life of the product.

Signage near the fresh-cuts reminding consumers to add zest to fresh-cut salad mixes boost sales of cucumbers and other salad ingredients.

Pickling cucumbers can be profitably accented with a small reproduction pickle barrel filled with instructions on pickling.

Quick Tips

1. **Always have cucumbers positioned near both the bulk salad items and the bagged salad mixes.**
2. **Use the rich green color of cucumbers as part of a color break.**
3. **Signage near the fresh-cuts reminding consumers to add zest to fresh-cut salad mixes boost sales of cucumbers and other salad ingredients**

Variety And Availability Guide

The U.S. grade system for field grown cucumbers is as follows: U.S. Fancy, U.S. Extra 1, U.S. 1, U.S. 1 Small, U.S. 1 Large, U.S. 2. However, the trade typically identifies the cucumbers as Super Select, Select, Small Super, Small, Large and Plain. These terms do not refer to any USDA grade standard but are common lingo in the industry. Buyers should be cautious to understand what standards they are actually purchasing.

Cucumbers are available year-round. Florida, which produces a majority of the U.S. commercial cucumber crop, ships all year except for a brief lull in summer. Mexico is typically the largest supply source for cucumbers, with especially heavy imports in winter and spring. Canada produces a significant share of the English/hothouse cucumbers consumed in the United States. Most states produce cucumbers at some time of the year.

Promotional/Advertising Ideas

Because cucumbers can be eaten by themselves, they make an excellent choice for demos and sampling with salad dressings.

The key to promoting cucumbers is to build up consumption through the three basic usages:

1) Snacking — With weight loss on the minds of so many, snacking on a cucumber is a great choice. Not only are they better than chips and cookies, but they also contain fewer calories than a traditional snack fruit.

2) Salads — This is the No.1 use for cucumbers. The more interesting salad ideas retailers put out there, the more cucumbers sell.

3) Foods — Cucumbers can be cut up and breaded, they can be turned into baked cucumber boats with selections of cheeses, bread crumbs and proteins, etc. Chilled cucumber soup is a summer treat. Remember, ideas spark usage. If you suggest new ways to enjoy them, consumers will try the idea.

Ripeness Recommendations/ Display Care And Handling

Cucumbers should be maintained at 45° to 50° F. Of particular importance is adequate humidity — 90 to 95 percent — as cucumbers can shrivel as a result of moisture loss. Most cucumbers are waxed to retard this loss of moisture. Misting, however, is not recommended for cucumbers, as sitting water can result in spotting, pitting and even tissue collapse.

Generally, attractively shaped, deep green colored, firm feeling cucumbers are the choice of consumers. If the cucumber is yellow, it is generally overripe.

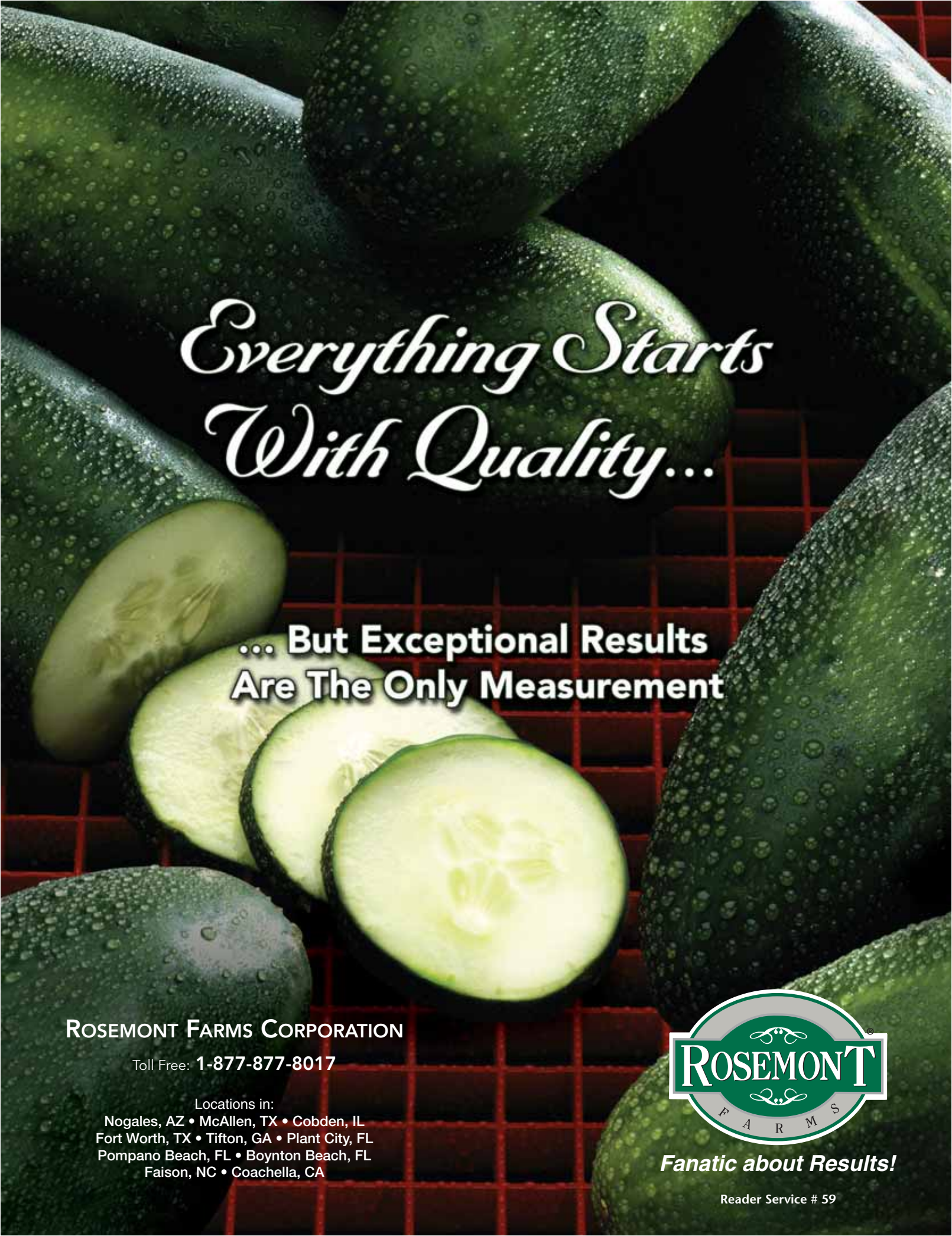
Cucumbers are sensitive to ethylene and highly sensitive to injury from freezing.

Cross-Merchandising Opportunities

- All Salad Items
- Bagged Salads
- Salad Dressings
- Dips

Out-of-the-Box Promotional Ideas

- **Demo cucumber cooking ideas such as deep fried cucumber slices served with tangy horseradish sauce or hot mustard.**
- **Showcase a fleet of baked and raw cucumber boats. Show baked ones filled with melted cheeses or meats. Show raw boats filled with cream cheese or cold salads including tuna salad, egg salad, chicken salad, lobster salad etc.**
- **Encourage cucumber snacking by sampling cucumber slices right in the department. They are addictive.**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Today's consumer wants it all…premium quality, freshness, taste, variety, convenience, health and wellness. And the produce department has it all! Veggie and fruit dips/glazes help make veggies and fruits taste even better! Dips encourage adults and kids to eat more fruits and veggies, which they need to do for overall health. Establishing kids' healthful eating habits is important, since they are formed during early childhood and continue through life. In a December 2007 Perishables Group survey, ⅔ of respondents said their kids eat fresh fruits and veggies with dips. Among those using dips/dressings with fresh veggies and fruits, ⅔ indicated dips motivate kids to eat more fresh produce! A University of California Davis study conducted by Impulse Research found kids ate 23 percent more vegetables with a moderate helping of ranch dip/dressing. And, 70 percent of kids say ranch dip/dressing is a must for veggies.

Merchandising a wide variety of fruits and vegetables, including premium offerings and creative fresh-cuts, can create a signature produce department destination for consumers. Displaying a wide selection of dips with those fruits and vegetables gives consumers premium, flavorful and easy options to enhance and complement fresh produce. Displaying dips with applicable fruits and vegetables adds convenience for the time-starved consumer and creates impulse sales and incremental dollars for the produce department. The produce dip category is 40 percent of the combined refrigerated dressing/dip category. Merchandising and selling dips in the retail produce department is a natural.

The T. Marzetti Co. created the produce dip category, developing products that complement the flavors of fresh fruits and vegetables. Marzetti continues as the No. 1 selling brand, driving the category by producing quality products and offering a wide selection of new and innovative flavors.

Recommended Display Ideas

The key for merchandising dips is high visibility to attract consumer impulse purchases. Veggie Dips should be merchandised next to bagged vegetables (i.e. bagged baby carrots) to create incremental, impulse sales. Secondary displays should be used with veggie trays, precut broccoli and/or precut cauliflower. If a vegetable, such as baby carrots, is on special, Veggie Dip should be displayed adjacent to it. Dips are often used for entertaining, so extra stock needs to be available for weekends and holiday gathering events.

Prime selling season for Apple Dips is August through October. Apple Dip Snack Packs should be displayed in August for back-to-school. In September/October, all apple dips (tubs and snack packs), apple pallets (with decorated cases), and shipper displays should be set up near the fresh apple displays to create high-impact fall displays. Apple Dips can also be used to separate apple varieties.

Cream Cheese and Yogurt Fruit Dips should be merchandised adjacent to the fresh-cut fruit section. Create extra merchandising by putting dips with fresh-cut fruit on ice or with fruit trays. Chocolate Dip should be merchandised next to strawberries.

Impulse-purchase merchandising locations are crucial to successful produce dip sales.

Quick Tips

1. **Dips should have fair share of space: 40 percent of dip/dressing sales.**
2. **Always stock plenty of ranch, the No. 1 refrigerated produce dip.**
3. **Stock a variety of flavors to satisfy consumer taste preferences.**
4. **Place dips adjacent to applicable veggie/fruit.**
5. **Use secondary displays to profit from impulse purchase opportunities.**
6. **Create merchandising events. Dips are often used for gatherings: order extra for weekends, holidays, etc.**

Point-of-Purchase/Signage

Signage is often available, particularly as new flavor varieties are introduced. Marzetti offers point-of-purchase displays for Apple Dip, Chocolate and Strawberry Glaze items. The easy-to-assemble displays offer quick, effective secondary placement opportunities. Whenever a store creates a tie-in promotion, signage should be used to gain visibility. Most recently we have joined with Upromise, and our signage/shelf tags will include the Upromise logo with participating retailers.

Variety And Availability Guide

A variety of fresh fruits and veggies are available year-round, so produce dips should be merchandised year-round. Veggie dips are often used for entertaining in the fall/winter, from tailgates to Super Bowl. Sales spike again for March Madness and again starting in May for graduation parties and Memorial Day through summer barbeque season.

Apple dips peak in fall with fresh apple crop displays and see a lift in spring with tie-ins with Granny Smiths.

Chocolate and Cream Cheese Fruit Dips are strongest when fresh strawberries begin (February) through the summer with stone fruits, melons and local berries. Sales spike again for tailgating in the fall and for holiday entertaining.

A wide variety of segments, flavors and sizes exist. Marzetti Ranch Veggie Dip is the No. 1 dip SKU nationally; it is available in value-size, special sizes for fresh-cut trays and portion control convenience packs. Marzetti offers other key varieties, as consumers want new and different tastes. Given health/wellness trends, lights, fat frees, organic and Marzetti Hummus Veggie Dips and Spreads are all showing strong growth and should be given adequate merchandising space.

Marzetti Apple Dips are available in original, light, fat-free and peanut butter varieties. The Snack Pack Sleeves continue to grow in popularity, and offer additional merchandising opportunities (particularly back-to-school). The Fruit Dip line offers original, strawberry cream cheese, and light yogurt fruit dip in addition to chocolate. A variety of sizes for fresh-cut trays and portion-control sizes for lunches are also available. To create fresh fruit pies, Marzetti offers a line of fruit glazes.

Most recently, in line with current snacking and portion-control trends, Marzetti introduced 100 Calorie 6-packs of Light Ranch Veggie Dip and Cream Cheese Fruit Dip.

Promotional/Advertising Ideas

Run combination ads to tie in the fresh veggie/fruit with the applicable line of dips. Or when running ads for certain veggies/fruits, add a line ad for the applicable dip.

As produce dips are often impulse, create displays/signage for holidays/special events, such as Super Bowl, March Madness, Memorial Day or graduation parties, to drive incremental sales.

Display Care And Handling

Veggie Dips, Hummus and the Cream Cheese and Yogurt Fruit Dips require refrigeration through the handling process. They should be displayed in areas under refrigeration in the produce department/or on ice in secondary displays. Chocolate, Apple Dips and Glazes do not require refrigeration.

Cross-Merchandising Opportunities

Cross-merchandising opportunities are limited only by imagination. Create sales events: display applicable veggies/fruits and dips for graduation parties in May, the Fourth of July , fall tailgates, Super Bowl, etc. Tie in fruits/veggies on special, and create secondary displays with the applicable dips.

Marzetti
Since 1896

The Category Leader
In Produce Dips

New 100 Calorie Packs

Light Ranch Veggie Dip and Cream Cheese Fruit Dip are now available in portion control packs for fresh fruit and veggie snacks.

Hummus...
for goodness sake.

Marzetti Hummus was created for the produce department, the perfect place to promote this delicious nutritious snack dip/spread. Available in a variety of sizes and shapes for retail or tray application. Marzetti is the brand consumers know and trust in produce.

Marzetti™

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Reader Service # 104

SUNSWEET GROWERS
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The dried plum category has been growing at phenomenal rates over the last year with the introduction of new individually wrapped Sunsweet Ones™. Once thought of as a wrinkly fruit only for the elderly, dried plums are now basking in outstanding success while driving new consumers to the category and increasing profits for retailers.

Quick Tips

1 **A recent IRI study revealed three-quarters of U.S. consumers report they are making changes in their diets in an effort to eat more healthfully. These changes include: 1) increasing consumption of foods offering nutrition, and 2) replacing high-calorie snacks with more healthful alternatives – a perfect solution is dried plums.**

Recommended Display Ideas

A freestanding display is a great way to draw attention in the section and create new trial in the category. Sunsweet Growers has enjoyed a great deal of success with secondary displays working congruently with their $15 million TV campaign to drive consumption.

Variety And Availability Guide

Sunsweet Growers offers a wide variety of dried plums from Ones (individually wrapped dried plums) to flavored – cherry, orange and lemon essence. Plus, a majority of dried plums are pitted, but whole dried plums are also available.

Ripeness Recommendations

A key benefit to dried plums is the long-shelf life allowing the provision of high quality product all year long with zero shrink as opposed to fresh fruit.

Cross-Merchandising Opportunities

Dried plums pose a variety of cross-merchandising opportunities with healthful products such as salads and nuts to name a few. Combining two healthful products can help attract the growing number of consumers concerned with eating more healthfully.

Out-of-the-Box Promotional Ideas

To capitalize on the growing health trends, Sunsweet Growers Inc. announces the launch of the Sunsweet Swap, an online initiative that encourages people to swap out their current unhealthful convenient snack for Sunsweet Ones™, individually wrapped prunes. When consumers visit *www.sunsweetswap.com*, they will learn about the nutritional benefits of swapping out their unhealthful snacks for delicious Sunsweet Ones™.

Ones™ Driving Category Growth

- Drove Category Growth up 15%
- Broadens Appeal & Usage of Prunes
- Named One of the Best New Foods 2007*
- 1.3 Billion Impressions Reaching Consumers
  - National TV & PR Campaign
  - $15MM Marketing Campaign

SUNSWEET

Contact your Sunsweet representative for more information.

sunsweetones.com

*Source: Prevention Magazine, July 2007

Reader Service # 23

CIRULI BROTHERS

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Eggplants (*Solanum melongena*) belong to the *Solanaceae* family, which includes items such as tomatoes, potatoes and peppers. They come in different colors, shapes and sizes, and have been a dietary staple in many cultures worldwide for hundreds of years. Eggplants are very nutritious; they are a good source of potassium and fiber, and some varieties contain high amounts of phenolics, which are powerful antioxidants.

This category is important to the produce department not only for its nutritional benefits but also for its growing popularity with U.S. consumers. Traditionally consumed by Mediterranean, European and Asian consumers, eggplant is becoming ever more popular with other ethnic groups in the United States. This is due, in part, to growing health concerns and the increased popularity of vegan diets. Eggplants offer consumers a very pliable product that can be consumed in a variety of ways.

Quick Tips

1. **Educate produce personnel how to properly handle an eggplant. Because its skin is very sensitive, any hard pressure on it will result in bruising and eventually decay.**
2. **Point-of-purchase communications featuring recipes and nutritional content are useful for encouraging sales and educating consumers about eggplant.**

Recommended Display Ideas

Conventional eggplants display well in supermarkets when placed alongside other fresh items such as colored bell peppers and cucumbers. These items' bright colors contrast well with eggplant's deep purple tone and catch the eye, drawing more attention towards them.

It is important to rotate eggplants in order to have nice appearance and color on display. They should be firm with smooth, glossy skin. Retailers should also instruct produce staff on the proper handling, as eggplants tend to be fairly sensitive. It is important to handle them gently; lightly touch and not squeeze or press on them, as this creates bruising in the eggplant later on.

Point-Of-Purchase/Signage

Point-of-purchase signs at the retail level can be very influential in spurring impulse purchases. They are particularly useful for consumers who are not too familiar with an item but are willing enough to try it. Given this, some useful information to display on signs can include nutritional information and preparation ideas.

Unlike mainstream vegetables such as cucumbers or lettuce, some people are not as familiar with how to properly cook or prepare an eggplant, therefore another great way to provide information to customers and increase sales is by placing attractive, easy-to-prepare recipe stickers on the eggplant's skin.

Variety And Availability Guide

Eggplant is available to U.S. consumers in a variety of shapes and sizes. The skin color can vary from almost white to green to a deep purple, with purple being the most common. Among the more popular varieties are the following, which are available from our southern neighbor, Mexico, from October through May each year:

— **Regular/Classic:** This is the most common variety group in the U.S. Among the most familiar are Black Magic, Black Beauty and Black Bell varieties. These eggplants have smooth skin in a very deep purple hue and a large, elongated oval shape with a green calyx.

— **Italian:** A deep shade of purple with smooth, glossy skin. It is smaller and thinner, with a slightly wider base. Italian eggplants also have a green calyx.

— **Sicilian:** Smaller and slightly elongated, with mauve-purple skin that has some light streaking and a green calyx. This variety is sometimes referred to as "zebra" eggplant.

— **Japanese:** Small and longer in shape with smooth, light purple skin and a dark, purple calyx.

— **Chinese:** Longer and more cylindrical in shape, with smooth purple calyx and skin.

— **Hindu:** Small (just a few inches long) and round in shape, like an egg, with smooth purple skin and a green calyx.

Promotional/Advertising Ideas

Retailers may take advantage of special holidays to boost eggplant sales, including Lent and Chinese New Year, when eggplant should be displayed in plentiful supplies. During Lent season, for instance, you may display them with meat-alternative recipes such as pasta dishes, soups or grilled vegetable casseroles.

Place some eggplant next to steak in the butcher section with a "Great for Grilling!" sticker on them. You can even do this in the produce department and display them along with similar point-of-purchase signs for grilling (include recipes and steak sauce).

Ripeness, Display Care And Handling

Eggplant should be firm but not too hard, and should be maintained refrigerated at a temperature between 45° and 48° degrees F. This will preserve the eggplant's shelf life and minimize scarring. It is important to check the product's temperature and overall appearance upon arrival.

It is also important that produce staff be educated in the proper handling of eggplants. They should not be squeezed or poked since their skin is soft and are very sensitive to pressure.

Cross-Merchandising Opportunities

Eggplant is a great item to cross-merchandise with pasta, bread crumbs and fresh cheese.

Other Suggestions

For photos or recipes, please visit *www.iloveeggplant.com* or contact our office at 520-281-9696.

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Reader Service # 82

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Did you know that 40 percent of U.S. consumers do not know by 4:00 PM what they will eat for dinner that night? Help shoppers find healthful answers fast with Eat Smart fresh-cut vegetables. As a growing subgroup, the fresh-cut vegetable category has continued to grow considerably. Last year, fresh-cut vegetable dollar volume grew over 8 percent (ACNielsen MarketTrack, Total US Grocery, 52 weeks ending 12/29/2007). Apio, Inc. is a recognized industry supplier of value-added fresh-cut vegetables and a category growth leader at retail, offering shoppers a complete selection of healthful fresh-cut meal solutions.

Recommended Display Ideas

Creating a prominent, fresh-cut vegetable section within the produce department is a key component to driving sales in the category. Offering Eat Smart fresh-cut vegetables alongside tie-in items such as refrigerated dressings and dips is a simple way to satisfy shopper needs for variety and convenience. To make the most of special merchandising opportunities, display Eat Smart Party Trays during peak holiday periods near the front of the produce section to stimulate incremental sales. Keep produce top-of-mind with shoppers all year and display Eat Smart Fresh Salads as a healthful side dish option for in-store deli selections and as a complement to any grab-and-go section.

Point-Of-Purchase/Signage

With increased focus on health and wellness combined with the challenge of convenience, help shoppers "Eat Smart" by adding eye-catching channel strips or shelf talkers highlighting the nutritional features of specific products. Use USDA-approved health claims to promote the consumption of fresh vegetables and inform shoppers of the distinct benefits of each. During the holidays, Eat Smart Party Trays can be complemented with signage encouraging healthful seasonal fare. Provide a shopping list of "good-for-you must-haves" including other quick and easy items for successful entertaining. This could include fresh avocados and tomatoes for salsa recipes, low-fat refrigerated dips and ready-to-eat fresh fruit trays.

Variety And Availability Guide

Over 40 Eat Smart fresh-cut bags, salads, trays and sides — including popular dips, dressings and a variety of ingredients — are available every day, 365 days a year.

Quick Tips

1. **Stock a variety of fresh-cut vegetables in a central location to ensure shoppers find what they need quickly.**
2. **Offer new and interesting ways to incorporate fresh-cut vegetables into everyday meals.**
3. **Help satisfy wellness questions by using colorful and informative POS to educate shoppers on product attributes and health value.**
4. **Frequent meal-solution promotions and cross-merchandising keep produce top-of-mind with shoppers and help to create a unique shopping experience.**

Promotional/Advertising Ideas

Programs highlighting the health and portability of Eat Smart fresh-cut vegetables can help shoppers seek quick, easy answers to their mealtime questions. Leverage the growing category by promoting Eat Smart fresh-cut vegetables as key ingredients in store publications and recipes to give your shoppers the tools and information they need to make healthful meal choices. Advertising Eat Smart fresh-cut vegetables with hot meal programs such as chicken, pasta or beef provides simple one-stop shopping. To maximize impulse "special occasion" sales during the holidays, promote Eat Smart Party Trays as a great addition to any get-together. While all lines of fresh-cut vegetables can experience lift of two to three times normal sales during peak holiday periods, such as Thanksgiving and Christmas, Eat Smart Party Trays are especially popular at this time of year. Year-round, offer smaller format Eat Smart Party Trays as a healthful snack item for the office, home or as a grab-and-go alternative to in-store sandwich or hot meal promotions.

Ripeness Recommendations

- All products should have a deep color.
- Products should be culled with attention to code date.

Display Care And Handling

Eat Smart fresh-cut vegetables are available in a wide range of sizes and combinations. Stocking a variety will ensure that shopper needs are satisfied when selecting their specific meal solution. Be consistent with the primary location within the produce department so shoppers can develop a habit of shopping for their fresh-cut items in the same place.

Backroom Receiving And Preparation Procedures

Fresh-cut vegetables should be received from adequately refrigerated trucks and transferred immediately into storage rooms ideally cooled to 33° to 38° F.

Cross-Merchandising Opportunities

Promoting Eat Smart fresh-cut vegetables with center-of-plate items such as poultry or fish helps shoppers quickly identify healthful solutions for their entire family. A few key ingredients such as a bag of Eat Smart fresh-cut vegetables paired with whole grains, lean meat and spices can open the door to a variety of custom-tailored meal options for all shoppers. In addition, Eat Smart Party Trays complement deli, meat and snack displays during peak holidays. Large cross-promotional displays featuring barbeque themes, tailgate parties or sporting events will entice shoppers to pick up all of their supplies for entertaining in one central location.

Shoppers need to find a healthy, convenient meal solution... Fast.

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Apio, INC.

Reader Service # 11

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Recommended Display Ideas

Garlic lies at the confluence of all that is hot and happening in produce. Ethnic cuisines? Garlic is key. Health-oriented eaters? Garlic is prominent. Dieters? Garlic instead of salt anytime. It also is a product family that runs the gamut from staple to specialty items — red garlic, elephant garlic, peeled, packaged, braided and certified organic.

It is a category that includes both fresh garlic and various processed and semi-processed items, such as whole peeled garlic, chopped garlic, minced garlic and a multitude of jarred products. There are even garlic options that can serve highly decorative purposes — such as braided garlic. Garlic can also be used to adorn holiday wreaths and other holiday decorations. Many items are sold in both bulk and consumer package sizes.

The key to making good garlic displays is to avoid the specialty jinx in which a small area is set aside for a tiny row, or worse, a little basket of garlic.

Instead, think of the romance of garlic: The Egyptians, Greeks and Romans all knew of garlic, and this rich heritage carries through to the cuisines of today, justifying generous space with a full range of garlic products displayed.

And it is well worth it to cultivate a garlic-buying clientele because garlic is never consumed alone. So every sale of garlic means the sale of other items both in produce and in other areas of the store.

Point-Of-Purchase/Signage

Signage and POP material near garlic should always have a three-fold message: First, make sure to highlight variety items, such as elephant garlic; this attracts attention to the overall garlic section and sparks consumer interest. Second, always highlight the health benefits of garlic: fat-free, saturated fat-free, sodium-free, cholesterol-free and certified 100 percent organic are all watchwords that are permissible with garlic and attract the interest of health-oriented consumers. Third, always provide recipes and usage ideas.

Garlic is a product whose sales directly relate to consumers adopting recipes that require garlic, so always have one type being promoted. Also remember that a festive display of garlic braids is great signage pointing to a garlic display.

Variety And Availability Guide

Garlic is available year-round with supplies coming from both California and other countries, including Argentina, Mexico, Chile and Spain. In recent years, Chinese-grown garlic has become prominent in the marketplace.

Quick Tips

1. **Display and promote the full range of garlic items.**
2. **Use jarred and fresh garlic, red, white, elephant and conventional garlic and garlic braids to make the section intriguing to consumers.**
3. **Focus on increasing usage, as that is the key to increasing sales long term.**

Its use as both a seasoning and an ingredient in food means that year-round promotion is appropriate.

Promotional/Advertising Ideas

Because of its comparatively long storage life, deep discounts on garlic are likely to steal sales from future periods. As such, the focus in garlic promotion should be on usage.

If it is barbeque season, promote the use of garlic in salads, marinades and rubs. Suggest that consumers try cooking whole garlic on the barbeque to serve whole as a butter substitute.

If the Super Bowl or another sporting event is coming up, do a promotion in which you suggest the use of fresh garlic to make salsa with a kick.

Salad dressing is a great garlic use. Have a salad dressing of the month that is always under promotion and always uses garlic.

Suggest ways that garlic can add flare to old favorites. Garlic mashed potatoes, for example, are a great way to jazz up a dish that may have grown boring.

And at major holidays, suggest adding an ethnic dish. For example, it is an old Italian custom to serve a fish dish, almost always prepared with garlic, at major holidays. Use the trend to ethnic food, healthful eating and variety to tie in garlic.

Display Care And Handling

Garlic should not be misted, and rotation is important since fresh garlic sitting out for long periods will tend to dry out. In addition, the skins of garlic tend to shed with handling so frequent attention to the display to keep it clean and dry will result in better sales.

Backroom Receiving And Preparation Procedures

Garlic should be stored in a cool, well-ventilated place and kept dry.

Cross-Merchandising Opportunities

Garlic is a cross-merchandiser's dream as it is always used in conjunction with other products. Cross-promote in the produce department with salad items since garlic is frequently tossed into salads as an ingredient as well as used in salad dressing. Put garlic next to ripe tomatoes, basil, cilantro, etc., to promote salsa. Suggest a make-your-own-pasta-sauce center with garlic, tomatoes and other ingredients.

Also consider secondary displays of garlic next to meat and poultry to promote as a rub and even next to baguettes in the bakery, promoting roasted garlic as a delicious and healthful alternative to butter.

Out-of-the-Box Promotional Ideas

- **Have a demo with the bakery in which roasted garlic is served with sliced French baguettes. The mild flavor, without the fat of butter, will make it a favorite with many consumers.**
- **Educate your customers about the taste benefits of rubbing the outside of their Easter lamb with cracked garlic prior to roasting.**
- **Provide recipes encouraging holiday chefs to insert whole peeled garlic cloves into slits cut with the point of a sharp knife into their holiday roasts prior to cooking. Watch your garlic (and meat) sales take off!**
- **Do a sauce competition in which consumers make homemade pasta sauce using garlic. Get a local newspaper to judge it and have the winning sauce recipes be part of a "saucy special."**

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Reader Service # 51

SUNLIGHT
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P.O. Box 1027
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Phone: 661-792-6360
Fax: 661-792-9070
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nick@dulcich.com

Grapes are available on a year-round basis. Besides adding bright colors, which help drive impulse sales, the bottom line is very impressive. From a seasonal standpoint, grapes can generate $96 per square foot and are the highest dollars per square foot for the produce department's fruit category for September through December. Moreover, for the same period, grapes ranked as second highest dollars per square foot for the produce department. (*source: California Table Grape Commission*)

We at Sunlight International Sales are specialists in California Table Grapes. As the marketing arm of Jakov P. Dulcich & Sons LLC, we are growers, packers and shippers of the finest quality and most flavorful grapes in the world.

Recommended Display Ideas

California table grapes should be prominently displayed from Memorial Day through Christmas. Two fundamental goals should always be kept in mind when building a display: quality and abundance. An abundant, fresh, high-quality display will generate even greater grape sales. Customers are inclined to buy more grapes from an abundant display. No matter how good the quality of product on display, partially stocked displays will make customers think they are getting lower quality, leftover product other shoppers did not want. To protect their quality while visually providing a picture of abundance, grapes should not be stocked more than one layer high. Fill and maintain the display frequently throughout the day/evening.

Point-of-Purchase/Signage

Point-of-purchase materials are used to draw customer attention to the display and drive impulse purchase activity. The key to success with point-of-purchase materials is to use the materials to create excitement at the display without taking away from the image of the produce department.

Signage is yet another call to action for customers to buy more grapes. Nutritional and variety information at the display or in the informational directories in the produce department fulfill customer needs while generating increased sales. With high consumer trust and preference for California-grown grapes, signage highlighting California provides additional sales opportunities.

Variety and Availability Guide

Variety is the spice of life, and we have variety. Today, Jakov P. Dulcich and Sons produces 14 varieties, including the new green seedless varieties Luisco and Autumn King, and is making plans to introduce new red varieties, such as Magenta, in the near future. With today's sophisticated shopper, displaying and promoting a wide range of red, green and blue-black grapes will generate excitement and sales. Research shows that chains promoting multiple varieties received a minimum of 200 percent item lift over baseline volume. Try displaying an eye-catching mix of product that generates a greater choice of product availability. Variety, display creativity and freshness all stimulate impulse purchase behavior.

Quick Tips

1. **Carry several colors and varieties — green, red, black, seedless and seeded.**
2. **Rotate stock frequently for bright, fresh-looking product.**
3. **Promote grapes frequently with expanded displays.**
4. **Fruit must be kept at proper temperature to preserve shelf life. Once chilled, keep chilled. The grapes should be kept refrigerated whenever possible.**

Promotional/Advertising Ideas

Red, white and blue for the Fourth of July; back-to-school with grapes packed in a lunch box for snacks; festive holiday ideas with recipe cards that include grapes for Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter. Marketing studies show front page grape ads generate a 72 percent increase in volume as opposed to back page placement, which generates only a 20 percent increase in volume.

Ripeness Recommendations

Grapes will not mature or gain sweeter flavor after harvest. We at Sunlight and Dulcich harvest only fruit that has matured to the optimum flavor and sweetness nature provides.

Display Care And Handling

To maximize sales, straighten grapes displays when passing by to work on other displays. When rotating the display, always move older product to the top and center of the display. Whenever low or poor quality product is found, it should be removed. When product on display begins to look tired, remove or rework the product to maintain a fresh quality image and maximize profitability.

Refrigerated displays will extend the shelf life of grapes. Cool temperatures will prevent grapes from drying out.

Backroom Receiving And Preparation Procedures

Never wash grapes in preparation for display. The natural protective layer created by the grapes, called bloom, will be removed,z allowing for dehydration or water loss to occur. While water may be refreshing for some produce, it will harm grapes. Always store with other fruits that require cold temperatures. Grapes should be kept at 34° F and high humidity. Never store grapes next to onions or other items that emit strong odors.

Cross-Merchandising Opportunities

1. Wine, cheese and crackers.
2. Whipped cream and gelatin.

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Reader Service # 87

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Merchandising Iceless Value-Added And Iceless Bunched Green Onions

Iceless green onions are a great way to add value to your produce department. With iceless green onions, you can not only reduce your freight costs but also extend your shelf life and reduce shrink with reduced product handling and no cell damage from ice. Value-added iceless green onions have many benefits, with increased freshness and ease of rotation with best-if-used-by dating and a UPC for guaranteed accuracy at register.

Display Ideas

Merchandising NewStar value-added iceless green onions in the value-added case gives you an upscale appeal with higher ring-through and proven substantial increased sales over the traditional display in the wet-rack.

Traditional bunched iceless green onions merchandise well on the wet-rack misted, chilled and rotated daily with usage tips and recipe suggestions on-shelf.

Display bunched green onions directly adjacent to head lettuces, co-promoting mushrooms, radishes, cauliflower, red onions, tomatoes, avocados, shredded cheese, and croutons as a Salad Solution grab-and-go destination stop.

Promotional Ideas

Think outside the box with bunched green onions, a natural fit for the BBQ season.

Merchandise jumbo green onions alongside portobello mushrooms, asparagus spears, bell peppers and sweet white onions, including seasonings and flavor-infused olive oils for Veggie Grillers.

Recipe and usage reminders on shelf equal increased sales through the register.

Quick Tips

1. **Merchandise value-added iceless green onions in the value-added case to give your produce department an upscale appeal with higher ring-through and substantial increased sales over the traditional display in the wet-rack.**
2. **Display iceless green onions with usage tips and recipe suggestions on-shelf.**
3. **Traditional bunched iceless green onions merchandise well on the wet-rack.**
4. **Keep iceless green onions misted and properly chilled for extended shelf life.**
5. **Rotate bunched iceless green onions daily.**
6. **Remember, with the majority of produce purchase decisions made in-store, solutions translate to sales.**

Merchandising Chopped Green Onions

The produce department is a natural destination for 4:00 PM shoppers in need of meal solutions for their dinner. Chopped green onions are a natural fit in the value-added case, merchandised alongside other fresh produce ingredients, toppers and flavor boosters.

Promotional Ideas

Recipe suggestions on-shelf or in ad greatly boost sales when offered with grab-and-go solutions.

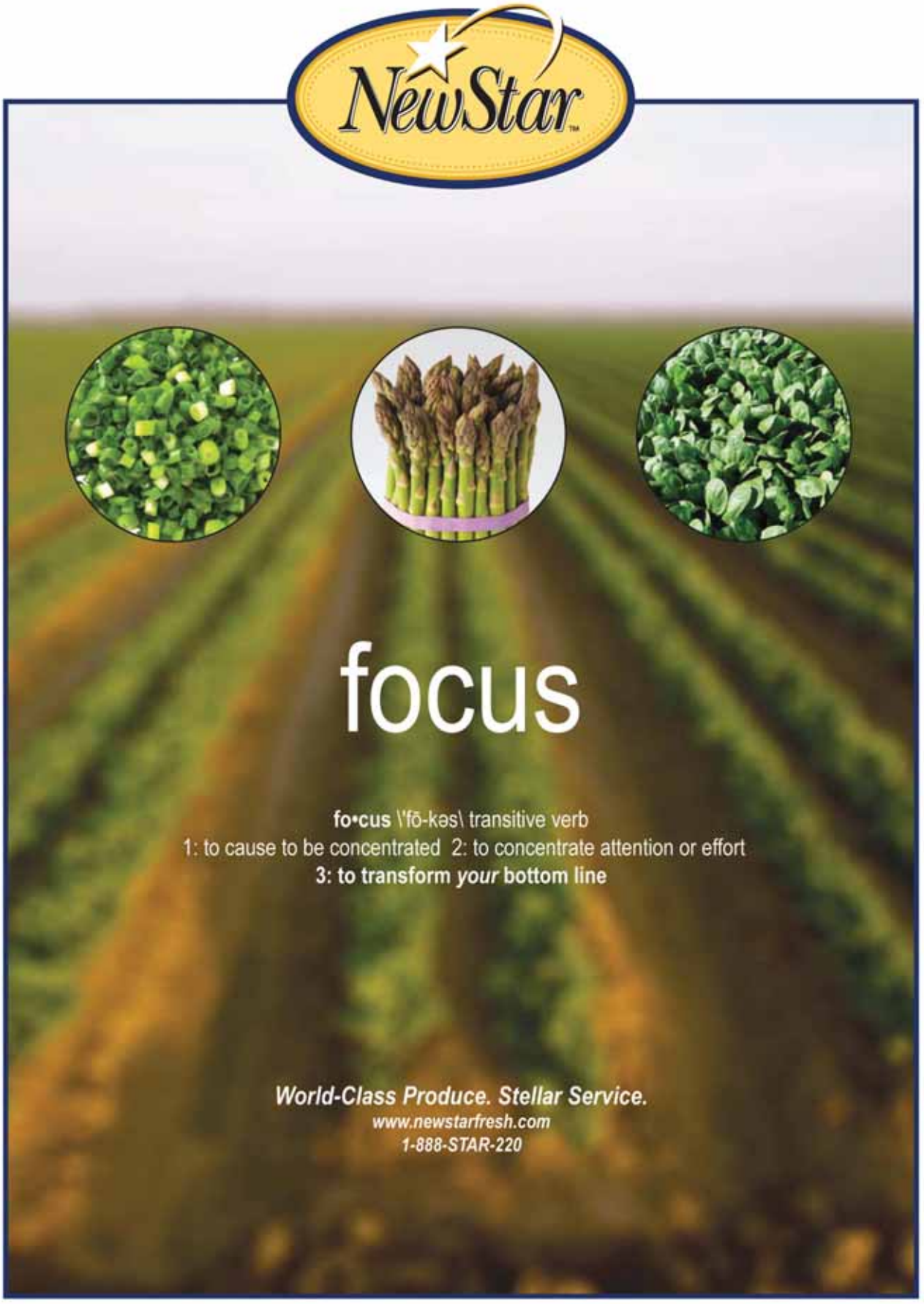
Think Mexican themed ingredients, co-promoting with sour cream, Roma tomatoes, shredded lettuce, cilantro, shredded cheese and avocados for a Taco Bar, or displayed with tomatillos, garlic, white onions, cilantro, jalapeños and tomatoes for a Salsa Stop.

Create an Asian-themed display of chopped green onions with recipe suggestions of an in-store rotisserie chicken, displayed with a teriyaki sauce, fresh stir-fry noodles, whole ginger and sliced almonds or sesame seeds.

Side-dish suggestions are a natural, including chopped green onions merchandised with white rice, chicken broth and pine nuts for your traditional rice with a kick.

Out-of-the-Box Promotional Ideas

- **Recipe suggestions on-shelf or in ad greatly boost sales when offered with grab-and-go solutions.**
- **Think Mexican themed ingredients, suggesting a Taco Bar or Salsa Stop.**
- **Create an Asian-themed display with protein for Stir Fry Tonight.**



Reader Service # 15

HERB THYME
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Fresh specialty produce is one of today's hottest trends, and fresh herbs are at the forefront of this growth. Produce trends follow public awareness created by celebrity chefs and TV cooking shows, along with national food and home magazines. This trend to fresh flavors, coupled with the desire for quick flavors that are not high in sugar or fat, make the fresh herb section a destination for both home chefs and soccer moms who want to prepare healthful, flavorful food quickly.

Top quality fresh herbs, then, can be the decision criteria for store choice for these "fresh" customers who are called the "best produce customers." They are called this because:

1) They buy more fresh produce than any other customer;
2) They buy more high-margin specialty items than any other customer.

Recommended Display Ideas

Fresh herbs do well prominently displayed in high traffic areas near other specialty produce including exotic mushrooms and specialty peppers. They can be displayed on multi-deck case shelving, on pegs or in specially designed display racks.

A secondary display of basil in the tomato section will help maximize the sales of the category's No. 1 item.

Point-Of-Purchase/Signage

HerbThyme Farms provides Herb Center header signs to make the fresh herb section clearly visible to consumers. HerbThyme also provides educational *How to Use Herbs* multifold handouts designed both to educate the first-time buyer and to encourage existing users to try additional varieties.

Variety And Availability Guide

HerbThyme Farms operates over 500 acres and over 3 million square feet of greenhouse ranges, all in California. We deliver a year-round supply of all major varieties of fresh culinary herbs both conventionally and organically grown.

HerbThyme offers a full variety of merchandising vehicles including clamshells in .66-, 1-, 2-, 2.5-, 3- and 4-ounce sizes, along with bunches, sleeves, foodservice packs and **new** extended shelf life retail packages. Additionally, we offer 12 varieties of seasonal promotional shippers.

Quick Tips

1. **Merchandise basil with tomatoes, especially larger size packages.**
2. **Don't get basil too cold — it is best at 50° F.**
3. **Order more basil — it is 40 percent of the category. And don't run out — check your stores in the evening, especially on Sunday. No basil = lost opportunity.**

Promotional/Advertising Ideas

We recommend quarterly full- line promotions and promoting basil with expanded tomato sections in the summer. Additionally we offer seasonal in-and-out shippers to generate excitement for the category and incremental sales for your bottom line.

Our display shipper offerings range from Salsa Blend shippers for Super Bowl to Rosemary Skewers shippers for summer holidays to Poultry Bouquet and Holiday Assortment shippers for the Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons.

Our **new** extended shelf-life micro-perforated bags are available in 6 and 12 count shippers for both year round display and seasonal promotions. These laser perforated film packages are designed to merchandise at room temperature with extended shelf-life

Display Care And Handling

Basil does not like temperatures below 40° F so merchandise away from direct cold air. Build a secondary basil display with the tomatoes, especially for larger value-pack and jumbo-pack basil offerings.

Backroom Receiving And Prep

Store basil at 50° F, other herbs in the cooler.

Cross-Merchandising Opportunities

Cross-merchandising opportunities are endless. Cross-merchandise basil with tomatoes, dill with seafood, rosemary with potatoes, rosemary skewers at the meat counter and Poultry Bouquet with the turkeys or stuffing ingredients. Our 12 varieties of seasonal shippers include recipes designed to move additional produce items.

Out-of-the-Box Promotional Ideas

- **Build a display with larger basil clamshells (2- to 4-ounce) or our new extended shelf-life 2.5-ounce basil shippers with pine nuts and garlic for a pesto feature. A $10 to $15 ring! And it won't take away from other produce purchases, so it is all new money!!**

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Fax: 805-684-9363
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info@livegourmet.com

Since 1996, Live Gourmet brand hydroponically grown living butter lettuce has offered an improved category solution for innovative produce merchandisers across America. With its extended shelf-life and protective, interlocking, and easily merchandisable clamshell package, Live Gourmet butter lettuce has saved hours of labor, significantly reduced shrink and generated higher dollar rings, creating increased gross margins for the butter lettuce category.

Live Gourmet butter lettuce is "Absolutely Fresh because it is still Alive!"

By harvesting our butter lettuce with its roots intact, we provide each delectable leaf with a source of nutrition after harvest, helping the leaf remain fresher and more flavorful for days longer than butter lettuce harvested in the conventional manner. Fresher lettuce means higher flavor profiles and greater nutritional value, which generates higher levels of consumer satisfaction and helps drive increased purchase frequency.

Our lettuce is pest free naturally as we utilize integrated pest management (IPM) regimes — a natural, more ecologically sound pest control method. IPM incorporates naturally occurring pest regulators and beneficial predatory insects that reduce harmful insect populations in the growing environment. No organophosphates or carbamate pesticides are ever used.

The Live Gourmet clamshell packaging concept — we like to call it a mini-greenhouse — provides a micro-environment around the lettuce helping it stay fresher longer. The clamshell protects each delicate leaf from physical damage during handling and acts as a food-safety barrier between the product and the consumer, an area of increased interest for many consumers.

The clamshell's interlocking feature aids in ease of maintaining a presentable, attractive display on your produce section shelf. Just place and replenish the facings daily. Our clamshells are made from post-consumer recyclables and are Level-1 recyclable, a very important feature for most of today's shoppers.

Live Gourmet Advantages:

- Absolutely fresh because it's still alive!
- Consistent uniform product quality all year-round
- Pest free naturally
- Extended shelf-life and reduced shrink that helps you sell more units
- Attractive, see-through and easily merchandisable packaging

Recommended Display Ideas

Live Gourmet butter lettuce is truly a value-added offering and can be merchandised successfully in several locations within the produce section of your store. Refrigerated free-standing island displays, end-cap displays and second- and third-level shelving above the wet rack can prove to be excellent merchandising zones, depending upon your store's produce department configuration.

Our research suggests the prime location for our Live Gourmet butter lettuce is directly next to iceberg lettuce in the leafy green section of your produce display. This requires closing of the wet-rack mist system nozzle directly above our product display, thereby eliminating unattractive water spots on the container.

We find that merchandising the product in the bagged salad case is often the area of last resort, and it may lead to buyer confusion. The bagged salad shopper is looking for tear-and-pour convenience, and our product requires processing before use. In every instance, eye-level multiple facings that create attractive displays help generate increased sales velocity for our product.

Cross-Merchandising Opportunities

Combining offers with other salad ingredients — from croutons to gourmet cheeses and salad dressings — can help acquaint your shoppers with this uniquely fresh butter lettuce.

Promoting your private-label salad dressing in conjunction with our butter lettuce is a great way to generate increased velocity for both categories. Interdepartmental cross-promotional offers, such as a BLT promotion that offers the ingredients for a bacon, lettuce and tomato sandwich, can drive traffic to several areas throughout your store.

Use of cents-off coupons for ingredients located at displays of the corresponding items can be used to draw your meat department shopper into your produce section and bakery goods section of the store.

Quick Tips

1. **The prime location for our Live Gourmet butter lettuce is directly next to iceberg lettuce in the leafy green section of your produce display.**
2. **Place and reface frequently; with the clamshell package, daily trimming and product refreshing will be nominal.**

Receiving, Storage And Handling Tips

Maintain the cold chain at all times and observe suggested temperature ranges to extend the product's shelf-life.

Inspect all shipping cartons for the enjoy-by-date or best-if-used-by date and maintain proper product rotation in the storage cooler and on the store shelf.

Visually inspect each clamshell during placement on the shelf to insure your display is the very best it can be.

Backroom Receiving And Preparation Procedure

Observe the enjoy-by-date stamped on each package and maintain a proper rotation to insure maximum value for your customer.

Place and reface frequently; with the clamshell package, daily trimming and product refreshing will be nominal.

Out-of-the-Box Promotional Ideas

- **Be the first in your region to offer a greenhouse-grown section in your produce department. Merchandise greenhouse-grown lettuce, cucumbers, tomatoes, bell peppers and herbs in one central location. Stress the benefits of controlled environment growing, uniform quality and reduced pesticide use to generate cross-selling and up-selling of your produce department shoppers.**

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Recommended Display Ideas

More consumers are concerned with the health benefits of the food their families eat. Promoting the impressive nutritional benefits of kiwifruit will encourage first-time consumers to purchase and increase sales to already established consumers.

Displaying kiwifruit as a "SuperFood" that has one of the highest nutrient densities of the major fruits will push sales. Featuring the nutritional value of kiwifruit (vitamin C, folate, potassium, fiber, carotenoids, polyphenols, chlorophyll, glutathione, pectin and vitamin E) compared to its low-calorie content will place kiwifruit at the top of the shopping list. Allowing consumers to choose among bulk, clamshells and bagged kiwifruit is a great way to drive increased sales. One can also increase sales by merchandising ripe or near-ripe kiwifruit and by displaying two sizes of kiwifruit.

Kiwifruit sell best when positioned with mainstream seasonal fruits in a high traffic area. However, caution must be followed when placing kiwifruit next to bananas and apples as the ethylene emitted from these fruit causes kiwifruit to ripen quickly. Likewise, shelf life can be extended when placed next to tree fruit, grapes and citrus.

Point-Of-Purchase/Signage

Kiwifruit are best promoted when consumers see the inside of the fruit. Play up the eye appeal of the inside by cutting a few kiwifruit in half, sealing with plastic wrap and scattering the halves throughout the display.

Signage should promote the health and nutritional benefits of kiwifruit. In addition, make sure the consumers see placards showing the ease of cutting and scooping the fruit.

Since gold and organic kiwifruit are relatively new to the category, signage drawing attention to these varieties should also be displayed near the fruit.

Variety And Availability

Kiwifruit is available year-round. Cal-King green and organic kiwifruit produce the most volume from October through May, and Nature's Partner™ green, gold and organic kiwifruit are plentiful year-round.

Quick Tips

1. **Feature ripe kiwifruit to encourage purchase.**
2. **Build bigger displays in high traffic areas and feature multiple pricing.**
3. **Advertise: Sales of kiwifruit increase as much as three times when advertised.**
4. **Display kiwifruit with Dr. Steven Pratt's latest book, *SuperFoods Healthstyle*.**
5. **Promote specials throughout the year. Kiwifruit is plentiful all year, and is also available in gold and organic.**

Promotional/Advertising Ideas

Though kiwifruit have been readily available in North America for many years, there are still some consumers who have never tried one. Efforts should always be made to get consumers to try the fruit and experience its unique taste. Sampling and multiple pricing (three and four for $1) will encourage trial and purchase with consumers.

In addition, consumers need constant reminders of the convenience, versatility and nutrition/health benefits of kiwifruit.

Since kiwifruit are a year-round item, there are many opportunities to tie kiwifruit in to holidays by providing recipes and positioning the multiple varieties near fruit dips and seasonal fruit.

Ripeness Recommendations

Early season kiwifruit should be pre-ripened or "triggered" at shipping point or in the receiver's ripening room. Kiwifruit are ripe when they yield to gentle pressure. Use pre-ripened or "triggered" kiwifruit for early season sales.

Cal-King and Nature's Partner™ kiwifruit have been picked and packed based on California and New Zealand research and recommendations to fully assure consumer acceptance.

Gold kiwifruit arrive ready to eat and require gentle handling. For best results, rotate all kiwifruit often. Storage at 32˚F will give optimum storage life. Warmer temperatures will hasten ripening.

Display Care And Handling

When refilling displays, take care in assuring proper rotation of fruit (place new fruit on bottom). Remove shriveled fruit and maintain a neat and fresh display.

Backroom Receiving And Preparation Procedures

Store firm-to-ripe kiwifruit at 32˚F to maintain maximum storage life. Firm kiwifruit can be stored at room temperature to hasten ripening.

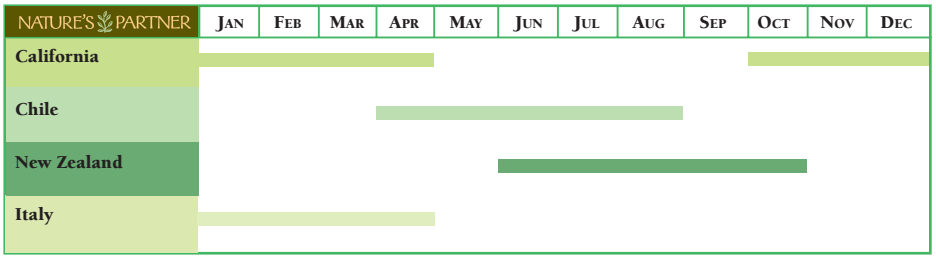
Do not mist on display. Spots of dry mold can be wiped off, but discard fruit with wet spots. Unripe kiwifruit are ethylene-sensitive and ripe fruit is an ethylene-producer.

Cross-Merchandising Opportunities

Cross-merchandise with other "SuperFoods" such as apples, blueberries, avocados, oranges or pomegranates. Locate secondary displays of kiwifruit near precut salads and fruit dips.

Other Suggestions

Nutrition: Kiwifruit are a nutrition powerhouse, packed with phytonutrients that contribute to a healthy heart and help in the fight against cancer.



A world of kiwifruit profits at your fingertips

The Giumarra Companies have assembled a select group of growers passionate about quality fresh produce and careful stewardship of the land. Outstanding growers from unique regions all over the world means you can offer your customers a year-round supply of the freshest, most wholesome kiwifruit available – grown, picked, packed and shipped with care. **Nature's Partner** care.

Cal Harvest Marketing, with it's **Cal-King** kiwifruit label represents the finest kiwifruit from California. Now available in Conventional, **USDA Organic**, and **Nutriclean** (certified pesticide residue free). And as your customers start asking about food safety and the environment, you can assure them that Cal-King kiwifruit is safe and has one of the lowest carbon footprints of any kiwifruit sold in North America.

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For Information Contact: **Donna Fagundes • 559-582-4000 • DonnaF@CalHarvest.com**
Tom Richardson or Jason Bushong • 509-663-4409 • TRichardson@Giumarra.com

Reader Service # 72

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Display Items Recommended

Boost the sales of leafy greens by sharing their nutritional value and their many usages with consumers. Since leafy greens are high in nutrition and low in calories, the potential in higher sales is great. Originally, leafy greens were a part of Southern cuisine; however, due to their fabulous taste and great versatility, they can be a part of any menu at any location.

Attract customers to the wide versatility of leafy greens by placing them with recipe cards and a wide range of cooking ingredients. Since color is an important part of purchasing, placing greens near different colored products such as yellow and red peppers making the greens more appealing to consumers.

We suggest rotating the arrangement of bunch and loose greens periodically to attract customers. Consumers will notice there is a difference, which is a great selling point.

Point-Of-Purchase/Signage

Leafy greens' great nutritional values and versatility certainly make customers better informed purchasers. Nutritional value is of great importance, so people purchasing leafy greens can be apprised of their wonderful nutritional benefits and the many tasty ways of preparing them.

Variety And Availability Guide

Rawl Brand® bulk greens and Nature's Greens™ value-added products are available every month of the year. Most leafy greens are grown in the southern part of the United States with the states of South Carolina, North Carolina, Georgia, and Florida being higher production states.

Promotional/Advertising Ideas

Promote leafy greens by creating interesting ways to use them with other vegetables to add great taste and nutritional value to side dishes, soups and salads. These ideas will increase consumers' interests.

Throughout the year, leafy greens can be spotlighted by showing their many usages, thus adding creative and interesting concepts to recipes. Normally in the South, greens are served with black-eyed peas as a part of the New Year's Day menu. This is a Southern tradition that is said to bring prosperity and good luck to those who enjoy this menu on New Year's Day.

Cooking displays are a natural boost to the produce section since consumers are looking for additional ways to prepare produce. New recipes are welcomed in many kitchens and if the consumer really likes the recipes prepared, this will create a win-win situation.

Quick Tips

1. **Bags of Nature's Greens offer a user-friendly, nutritional alternative for 21st -century consumers.**
2. **Leafy greens are nutritional bonuses since they are excellent sources of vitamins A and C as well as folic acid.**
3. **Greens are very versatile—they make tasty pasta recipes, delicious dips, entrées, soups, salads and hors d'oeuvres.**

Another good selling point is to have samplings of different greens during the year to up sales and interest. Customers will then know that greens are delicious and available all year long.

National, regional and local celebrations and special days/months are perfect opportunities to promote leafy greens. Some suggested times are during National Cholesterol Education Month (September), National Nutrition Month (March), New Year's Day and St. Patrick's Day. February would be another great time to promote leafy greens since it is Heart Month and leafy greens are definitely a heart-healthy Food — perfect for a heart-healthy Menu.

Obtain point-of-sales materials from the Leafy Greens Council (*www.leafygreens.org.*), local State Departments of Agriculture and Produce for Better Health (*www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org*) to educate customers and children about the fantastic nutritional benefits of leafy greens. For more information, consumers can visit the Web site: *www.aboutproduce.com.*

Display Care And Handling

Since moisture is vital to bulk greens, leafy greens are very sensitive to moisture loss. The best temperatures for keeping greens are from 34° to 36° F.

When culling displays, make sure the PLU tags are readable for the consumer and make sure stems showing yellow or brown spots are trimmed.

Misting is detrimental on packaged greens; therefore, do not mist.

Good air flow and temperatures from 34° to 36° are very important to increasing shelf life.

Backroom Receiving And Preparation Procedures

A temperature of 34° F needs to be maintained immediately after receiving. The close proximity of ethylene gas to greens should be avoided at all times since ethylene gas causes loss of color in greens. A good suggestion is the FIFO (first in, first out) method for restoring products. Backroom products should be checked often for proper rotation.

Cross-Merchandising Opportunities

Promote leafy greens with other products such as stir-fry items. These include garlic, onions, colored bell peppers, tomatoes,and mushrooms. Cross-merchandising is a great chance to market and promote leafy greens. Soup and entrée items, such as smoked sausage, pork chops, ham, bacon, fish, pasta, lentils, corn and bread, make perfect cross-merchandising opportunities.

Suggest using a mustard green leaf rather than a leaf of iceberg lettuce on a grilled meat sandwich or to garnish a vegetable tray

Place corn bread mix, olive oil, pasta and whipping cream next to leafy greens to peak consumer interest.

Suggested Promotional Ideas

- Since greens are great for children, encourage kids to enjoy greens.
- Serve sautéed greens on top of freshly baked garlic bread.
- Enjoy collards that have been precooked in chicken broth and water, then stir-fried with onions, garlic and red bell peppers.
- Use greens along with other vegetables and meats in soups and stews.

Getting Better All The Time

You have to admit, Mom was right. Greens really ARE good for you. Now there's plenty of science to back her up, and even the American Heart Association has certified our collard greens.

We've listened to the consumers. That's why we redesigned our packaging, and that's why we know your customers will reach for more greens the next time they see our displays. Nature's Greens—a new twist on an old favorite. See for yourself why all the fuss made so much sense.

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Reader Service # 36

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Address: P.O. BOX 1476
City: Tubac, AZ 85646
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www.cirulibrothers.com &
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While mangos are the most popular fruit in the world, only a third of the U.S. population has ever tried one. These exemplary fruit are gaining consumer interest due to their delicious flavor, culinary versatility and nutrient content. Mangos are high in vitamin C, beta-carotene (a pro-vitamin A carotenoid) and potassium. They are naturally fat free and an excellent source of fiber.

Mangos are an important produce category because of their sales potential. Per capita consumption of mangos has nearly doubled in the past 10 years. It is currently a little over 2 pounds per capita, per year (USDA Economic Research Survey). Mangos are primarily consumed by Asian and Hispanic populations, which are the fastest growing ethnic groups in the country. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, between 2000 and 2005, the Asian and Hispanic populations increased by 20 and 21 percent, respectively, making them the fastest growing groups in the country.

Point-Of-Purchase/Signage

Point-of-purchase signs can be very influential in boosting impulse mango purchases. They are particularly useful for consumers who are not too familiar with an item but are willing enough to try it. Given this, some useful information to present alongside mango displays include recipe ideas and cutting diagrams.

We recommend retailers set up ripeness charts and cutting instructions alongside sampling trays so customers can see and taste the mangos at the point of sale.

Variety And Availability Guide

Thanks to increased imports from off-shore deals, mangos are now available year round. Mexico is the United States' leading mango supplier and primarily exports the following five varieties:

— **Ataulfo (February thru August):** This smaller, kidney-shaped variety is a deep golden yellow when ripe and has an intensely sweet taste. Only the finest Ataulfo is marketed in the United States under the Champagne® mango label. It has a velvety texture due to minimal fiber and a small pit.

Quick Tips

1. **Familiarize produce staff with mangos, including their maturity process and handling instructions. They, in turn, will be better prepared to help answer customers' questions.**
2. **Point-of-purchase communications (ripeness charts, cutting diagrams, nutritional content) are useful for encouraging sales and educating consumers about the fruit.**
3. **Sampling is one of the most effective ways to encourage impulse purchases. Provide customers with ready-to-eat mango slices or cubes on toothpicks and have a demonstrator show them different ways to cut and eat the fruit.**

— **Haden (February thru June):** This larger fruit has an oval-round shape and a firm texture with slightly more fiber. Its skin develops a red blush with some yellow when ripe.

— **Tommy Atkins (March thru July):** This variety has a more oblong, oval shape and a moderately fibrous texture. The skin develops a deep red blush with some green areas.

— **Kent (June thru September):** Slightly larger, these mangos have green skin with a slight hint of a red blush. They have a sweet flavor with mild fiber.

— **Keitt (June thru October):** This oval-shaped fruit has green skin with a hint of a rosy blush. It has a flavorful aroma and smooth texture.

Promotional/Advertising Ideas

Mangos are an excellent promotional item year round. Their delicious and versatile flavor combines well with entrées and desserts. Mangos can be a healthful snack or add a sweet flavor to a salad or to sauces or chutneys that go well with fish and chicken. Mangos also complement refreshing drinks. Displaying recipe ideas such as these can entice purchasing.

Mangos can be promoted in multiples, although some retailers are adopting the concept of box promotions. Another innovative pricing technique is value-added packaging in plastic clamshells and smaller cartons.

Ripeness Recommendations

Mangos ripen naturally at room temperature. To accelerate their ripening process, display them with other ethylene producing items such as avocados, tomatoes and honeydew melons.

Retailers can also tell their customers they can speed up the mango's maturity process at home by placing them in a sealed paper bag and letting them sit at room temperature.

How do you know if it's ripe? A mango is ripe if the fruit feels soft when given a gentle squeeze and if a sweet, fragrant scent emanates from the stem end of the fruit. Color is not always a good indicator of ripeness. Some mango varieties stay green, even when fully mature. Among the varieties more prone to color change are Haden, which develops smooth yellow skin with a slight red blush, and Ataulfo, which turns from a light green to a deep golden yellow when fully mature.

Display Care And Handling

Mangos hold color well at temperatures between 50° to 55° F. Anything lower makes mangos susceptible to chilling injury. Retailers should also be familiar with the following:

Typical Shelf Life:	7 to14 days
Mist:	No
Relative Humidity:	85 to 90 percent
Primary Box Size:	5 Kg
Carton Counts:	8-14 ct *(Red and Green varieties), 12-20 ct (Ataulfo variety)*

Cross-Merchandising Opportunities

Retailers can capitalize on cultural holidays to promote mangos and increase sales. For instance, advertise mangos for use in a guacamole recipe during Cinco de Mayo celebrations (or even during Super Bowl week), where they can be cross-merchandised with complementary items such as tomatoes and avocados.

Other Suggestions

Please visit *www.champagnemango.com* for additional recipe ideas, or call our office at 520-281-9696.

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Reader Service # 81

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information@dulcinea.com

Recommended Display

- Variety, abundance, and seasonal consistency mean profits.
- We recommend watermelons remain indoors or be displayed in the shade when outside.
- Cantaloupes can thrive anywhere, but look best in their display-ready cases.
- Slice open a melon to show off their exceptional color.
- Build big promotions for major holidays such as Memorial Day weekend and the Fourth of July.

Promotion/Added-Value

- The special Dulcinea® products will add to any promotional piece and offer unparalleled value to your advertising and in-store displays.
- Don't forget to highlight the health benefits: watermelons are high in lycopene and cantaloupes are rich in beta-carotene and vitamin C.

Quick Tips

1. **Mini-watermelons, in particular, are an opportunity for incremental sales growth.**
2. **Offer an assortment of melons, attractive displays and provide consumer education.**
3. **Multiple-melon purchase incentives are also effective.**

- Effective point-of-purchase material should both emphasize the important attributes of available fruit (such as seedless) and provide consumer education on judging the ripeness of melons.

Availability

- Dulcinea® PureHeart™ Mini-Seedless Watermelons and Extra Sweet Tuscan-Style™ Cantaloupes are available year-round, creating opportunity for incremental sales.

Display Care And Handling

- Display melons at room temperature for up to five days and avoid any outdoor displays in extreme heat and cold.
- To ensure the best flavor, we advise a shelf life of 4 weeks on cantaloupes.
- The Tuscan-Style™ rind changes from green to gold to indicate ripeness.

Out-of-the-Box Promotional Ideas

- **Use Dulcinea's attractive shipping cases as attention-getting displays.**
- **Other melon-compatible products include yogurt, nuts and ice cream.**
- **Great display option — cut PureHeart™ in half, cover with clear wrap and display up to five days.**

Keep it fresh...

with irresistible flavors and delicious variety.

PureHeart™ Mini-Seedless Watermelons
Organic PureHeart™ Mini-Seedless Watermelons

Sweet 'n Crisp™ Asian-Style Cantaloupes

Extra Sweet Tuscan-Style™ Cantaloupes

Rosso Bruno™ Premium Vine-Fresh Tomatoes

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Variety is the spice of life. That's why at DULCINEA® we bring innovative produce to you every day and offer the flavorful variety that consumers want most. See why we're a leader in innovation and a customer favorite:

- We offer truly original varieties:
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  - ~ Organic PureHeart™ Mini-Seedless Watermelons
  - ~ Extra Sweet Tuscan-Style™ Cantaloupes
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  - ~ Sweet 'n Crisp™ Asian-Style Cantaloupes
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- We provide the best tasting produce in any season.
- We ensure 100% customer satisfaction.
- We believe in backing our brand with substantial promotion and advertising.

Dulcinea Farms

Insight, ideas and innovation at work for you.

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Reader Service # 84

MONTEREY MUSHROOMS
260 Westgate Drive
Watsonville, CA 95076
Phone: 831-763-5300
Fax: 831-763-0700
www.montereymushrooms.com

Recommended Display Ideas

Research shows sales can increase up to 40 percent by grouping all varieties together, providing proper space allocation and positioning mushrooms next to the salad section. Demographics play an important role in determining space allocation. Exceptional departments can allocate 8-plus linear feet for mushrooms in the multi-deck case, or 32 square feet; larger departments should allocate six to eight linear feet, or 24 to 28 square feet; smaller departments with lower income shoppers should allocate four to five linear feet, or 16 to 20 square feet; and stores with small departments and higher income shoppers should allocate five to six linear feet, or 20 to 24 square feet.

Secondary Displays

Because of the versatility of fresh mushrooms, secondary displays can bring meal solutions to the consumer's mind. On-going secondary displays in the salad and meat cases are recommended. Seasonal displays can feature eggs, potatoes, rice, pasta, tortillas, cheese, onions and other cooking vegetables. Organic, natural, and diet meal solutions are other ideas effective with mushrooms.

Point-Of-Purchase/Signage

Attention to the category through section signage, recipe cards, shelf talkers (on flavor, selection, care and handling, and usage) will drive sales. Mushroom consumption will grow only if consumers become more educated on usage and benefits, such as mushrooms' contribution to nutrition and weight management. Trial and usage will follow if the category is highlighted within the department. Most stores carry 15 to 25 varieties/package types; so consumer education about what to do with various types is important.

Cross-Merchandising Opportunities

Meal solutions can be achieved year-round by cross-promoting sliced mushrooms with bagged salads and capitalizing on grilling opportunities with steaks, stir-fries and shish kabobs. Steak Mate® thick sliced mushrooms are outstanding displayed in the meat section, as are portabellas during grilling season. Using portabellas as a meatless alternative is also popular. Mushrooms are ideal as a flavor enhancer and complementary ingredient in pastas, soups, eggs, rice, casseroles or pizza.

Variety And Availability Guide

Maintaining a full variety of white, portabella, specialty and dried mushrooms will help drive sales! Consumers can then decide if they want to purchase bulk or packaged product at the segment level. Practice maximum assortment, which includes a variety of whole, packaged, sliced, portabella, organic, value-added, specialty, dried and bulk mushrooms. Look for new varieties, such as Monterey's Heirloom Grill-A-Bella™, which add benefits for the consumer. Since mushrooms are available throughout the year, it is important they be well displayed and promoted, especially when you consider the average mushroom ring is over $2, and mushrooms generate over $50 in sales per square foot of display space.

Quick Tips

1. **Keep mushrooms refrigerated and dry.**
2. **Promote mushrooms consistently year-round and particularly throughout the summer. Vary promotions to include all varieties. Deep discounts are not necessary. In-store promos help, too.**
3. **Utilize multi-item advertising highlighting all category segments.**
4. **Merchandise based on department sales and consumer demographics. Use sampling, educational info and recipes to encourage trial, repeat purchase and to drive sales. Test adding a second display of sliced mushroom packages in the salad section. Cross-merchandise with complementary items.**
5. **Don't forget to promote larger pack sizes and exotics. Use promotions to build consumer awareness of specialty varieties and trade them up.**

Promotional/Advertising Ideas

Mushrooms are an impulse buy and need promotion activity to help bring new shoppers to the category. However, they are not price sensitive, so deep discounts are not necessary. On average, promotions should be utilized six to eight times per quarter to maximize overall sales. Discounts should generally be between 20 and 33 percent. Two-for-$X, or multiple pricing, tends to be the most effective method of promotion. Research shows multiple-item ads in the mushroom category generate the most volume and profit for the category. Feature advertising should be utilized once per quarter to highlight mushrooms. Mushrooms sell well during the holidays, and promotions would be more wisely spent during non-holiday weeks. In other words, do not discount mushrooms during the holidays.

Ripeness Recommendation

Mushrooms are highly susceptible to breakdown and should be refrigerated upon receipt. On average, mushrooms have a shelf life of six to eight days, so it is critical to keep backroom inventory at a minimum. Mushrooms gain more flavor as they age, so white mushrooms with a tinge of brown can still be sold as fresh. Brown and specialty varieties usually have an extra day or two in shelf life.

Display Care And Handling

Mushrooms must be displayed and stored between 32° and 36°, 85 to 90 percent humidity. For every 5°-increase in temperature, mushrooms lose a day of shelf life. Due to their high perishability, mushrooms should never be stacked more than two high. Rotate product properly. It is critical to circulate air ventilation for mushrooms.

Receiving, Storage And Handling Tips

To manage shrink effectively, holding coolers should carry minimal overstock. Avoid out-of-stocks. Plan accordingly for promotions and feature ads. Refrigerate mushrooms immediately. Store mushrooms up high and off moist floors, away from warm doorways, out of direct airflow and away from odorous perishable items.

Out-of-the-Box Promotional Ideas

- **Promote or merchandise Monterey's Steak Mate® Thick & Hearty mushrooms in the meat department.**
- **Sell portabellas by the unit versus pound — sales increase up to 300 percent.**
- **Merchandise Monterey's Clean N Ready® Sliced Mushrooms in the new "Resealable Bag" as complementary to bagged salads to increase sales and expand profits. These time-saving mushrooms can save 10 minutes of prep time!**

More Fresh Ideas

from the Category Leader

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Reader Service # 20

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P.O. Box 909
Parma, ID 83600
Phone: 208-722-7021
Fax: 208-722-6582
www.BIGONIONS.com

Recommended Display Ideas

Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onions are versatile onions that may be used at any meal or in any favorite onion recipe. The appeal of Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onions is their golden globe shape and their remarkably mild flavor. Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onions retain their texture when cooked, adding flavor and consistency to any dish.

When it comes to displaying Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onions, we say, "The bigger, the better." The bigger and more dramatic you can make your displays, the better your sales will be.

Good signage that distinguishes the different varieties and versatility of onions will go a long way in increasing sales. Full-color Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onion price cards will make the display even stronger.

Point-Of-Purchase /Signage

Make quick-idea recipes available near the onion section to encourage impulse purchases.

To help consumers decide which onion to purchase, display an Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onion sizing chart and poster next to the onions. For example, large-size onions reduce preparation time while their firm flesh makes them ideal for blooms, ringing, slicing and dicing.

Variety And Availability Guide

Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onions are available in yellow, red and white varieties. Harvest begins in August with onion availability lasting from August through March.

During the growing season, the Idaho and Eastern Oregon Onion region provides from 35 to 40 percent of the bulb onions consumed in the United States.

Promotional/Advertising Ideas

Want to increase profits in your produce department? Just feature Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onions. Well-tested research shows an average volume gain of 221 percent when Idaho-Eastern Oregon Spanish Onions are featured in retail advertising. And further, Spanish Onions maintain an average gross profit of 31 percent even when featured at a special price. (Other produce items usually sacrifice one- to two-thirds of their gross profit when featured.) In fact, onions are one of the highest profit margin items in the store.

In-store sampling and co-op advertising drive retail sales and product awareness. The aroma of onion rings sampled in the produce department is sure to draw a crowd. Contact the Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onion Committee office to learn about the promotional opportunities for your store.

Quick Tips

1. **Promotional materials and recipe cards should tout Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onions as great raw, on burgers and for cooking.**
2. **In-store sampling and co-op advertising drive retail sales and product awareness.**
3. **Don't forget: "The bigger the better."**

Display Care And Handling

Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onions are known for their long shelf life. You can increase profitability by reducing shrink if you follow these simple steps:

- Onions should be kept dry and unrefrigerated at retail. Good air circulation is critical for onions.
- Keep product rotated and remove separated and loose skins from the display bin.

Backroom Receiving And Preparation Procedures

When onions are received, they should be placed one foot away from the wall for proper air circulation. Air circulation is crucial for long-term storage of onions.

Remember not to use plastic pallet wrap on onions in storage, as the plastic wrap limits air movement.

Onions should be kept cool and dry, ideally at 34° to 45° F with about 65 to 70 percent humidity.

Onions should not be stored with other produce that gives off moisture, such as potatoes.

Cross-Merchandising Opportunities

Precut onion blooms filled with a variety of cut produce could be offered in microwavable containers for take-and-bake onion blooms.

In addition, try cross-merchandising onions in the meat department. Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onions are the perfect size for topping hamburgers, and king-size onion rings will just naturally have your customers thinking steak for dinner. For summer, try merchandising onions along with barbeque sauces to suggest a perfect outdoor grilling accompaniment.

Salad tie-ins have proven successful, too. Display onions right next to other salad ingredients and see how they help sell more of your other produce items.

Out-of-the-Box Promotional Ideas

Onions are one of the most frequently used ingredients in recipes around the world. The onion-shaped cookbook titled *Onions Make the Meal* celebrates the worldwide popularity of onions with more than 100 recipes featuring Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onions. Copies of the book are available for $10, which includes shipping and handling. Try placing samples of the cookbook near the onion display to let your customers know about the many ways to use onions. Contact the Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onion Committee for more details.

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Fax: 941.358.6551
www.globalorganics.ws

Noah's Organic Garden™ USDA ORGANIC

Recommended Display Ideas

Organic fruit should be displayed near the front of the produce department. Dedicate a minimum of 16 linear feet for organic fruit within the organic produce set. The organic set should have a minimum of 40 linear feet of main display space allocated to ensure a successful program. Items such as bananas, tropicals, berries, citrus, avocados and tomatoes, should be integrated to maximize sales and product quality. Make sure proper display temperatures are maintained for these items. Each day should begin with culling and working this highly sought-after section. This section is a destination within your department so give it the time and attention it deserves, and you will be rewarded with exponential sales growth.

Point-Of-Purchase/Signage

Draw attention to the organic sets by using high graphic banners and price cards. Be sure to label organic product to ensure proper rings at the register. Bright colored identification stickers placed on the fruit can be an effective tool. Educate your team — they are on the front line and, armed with accurate information, they can help build organic fruit sales and customer loyalty.

Variety And Availability

Organic fruit has excellent year round availability. Merchandise to reflect seasonality, value and supply. Maintain a full selection within each category. Whether it's apples, berries, citrus or tropicals, variety will maximize sales and consumer satisfaction.

Promotional Ideas

Consumers are seeking out organics more than ever before. Promote organics in print and in store. Advertise organics as often as possible. Organic price points have become more competitive with their non-organic counterparts. Mix and match bag fruit or offer instant savings (i.e., buy organic apples and receive organic caramel dip free). Consider maintaining ad space for an organic fruit promotion every ad rotation. This will let your customers know you are dedicated to organics and they will have access to organics with each visit to your store.

Quick Tips

1. **Integrate organic fruit wherever possible.**
2. **Show it off! Build organic displays front and center.**
3. **Carry variety. Allow your customers to build their meals using organics.**

primuslabs.com

Display Care And Handling

Take care to adhere to the guidelines outlined in the NOP standards to avoid commingling. Keep organic fruit separated from non-organic. Keep displays clean and neat. Label all displays clearly to differentiate between organic fruit and non-organic. Use bins, baskets and trays that have been designated for organic product only. Allow your customers to easily identify the organics and buy with confidence.

Backroom Receiving And Preparation Procedures

Designate a specific part of the cooler and storage area for organic produce storage only. Take care to store only organics here to avoid confusion and accidental commingling. Maintain storage areas across all temperature zones. Identify and clearly label for organic storage only. Train your team to store organic product correctly to maximize sales potential.

Cross-Merchandising Opportunities

Enjoy incremental sales by cross-merchandising whenever possible like placing juicers with your organic bag citrus. Cross-merchandise with other departments by placing organic bananas with organic cereal or organic berries in the frozen aisle by the ice cream.

Out-of-the-Box Promotional Ideas

- **Provide the solution for your customers. Build displays including all the ingredients in one stop. Merchandise organic avocado, tomato, onion and garlic together for a homemade organic guacamole. Don't forget the organic blue corn chips.**

Reader Service # 12

25 YEARS Albert's ORGANICS
A United Natural Foods, Inc. Company

ALBERT'S ORGANICS
200 Eagle Court
Bridgeport, NJ 08014
Phone: 856-241-9090
Fax: 856-241-9676
www.albertsorganics.com

Recommended Display Ideas

The key to a successful organic vegetable display (as well as an effective organic category display in general) is to create an organic section within your produce department, a place where all of your organic produce items are displayed together. Typically this organic section is a 6-foot or larger upright cooler designated solely for organic produce sales. This section will be most effective when promoted by a large, prominent banner over the display case and declaring your organic section.

In displaying the organic vegetables within your organic section, the key factor is product selection. Rather than attempting to squeeze as many items as possible into a relatively small space, be selective in the vegetable items you choose. What's important is that your shoppers have an opportunity to create a nice organic salad, make a tasty casserole or put together their favorite organic stir-fry. The most popular-selling lettuces, salad greens and cooking vegetables are usually the best choices.

Despite having a limited space for display-making, it's important that your organic vegetable displays reflect the same abundance and creativity that go into merchandising the other items throughout your department. If you do not have a separate section for your organic vegetables (or organic produce in general), it is important to make sure you comply with the National Organic Standards in your display-making, particularly with regard to "product commingling" (mixing organic and conventional items).

Point-Of-Purchase/Signage

Because your organic produce (and therefore your organic vegetable items) are typically displayed within their own section, it is vital to have effective signage that designates the organic area of your produce department. Ideally there would be a large banner over the organic product case announcing this area as your organic section. In addition, the banner would have a brief explanation of organic agriculture. Information and education are crucial to enhancing organic sales.

The organic POS signage should be easy to distinguish from your regular-style POS signs with the word organic being very prominent. The organic signs work best when a different color scheme is used to differentiate them from your regular signage. All products labeled on your signs as "organic" must be certified by a USDA-accredited certifying agency.

Quick Tips

1. **Create an organic section within your produce department.**
2. **Secure a copy of the USDA's National Organic Standards for reference.**
3. **Have a visible organic banner hanging over your organic section.**

Variety And Availability Guide

Organic vegetables are available year-round. During the peak of their season, you can source excellent product from local and regional areas as well as from the primary growing regions.

Promotion/Advertising Ideas

The most effective promotional strategy for organic vegetables is to regularly advertise that you carry these items and that your store is a destination point for organic produce.

September is National Organic Harvest Month, and it is an excellent time to have promotional sales on organic items. An often-used strategy during this time is to discount all organic items for the entire month a certain percentage, such as 10 percent.

Earth Day in April is also an excellent opportunity for promoting organic produce. Your organic shoppers will look to this day as a time of celebration and feasting.

Display Care And Handling

Think of your organic produce section as a mini produce department, displaying all of your vegetables together and keeping your wet vegetables separate from your vegetables that need no regular hydration.

Backroom Receiving And Preparation Procedures

It is necessary to be in compliance with the National Organic Standards for both prepping and storing organic vegetables.

When prepping organic lettuces and greens, you must have a clean sink (using cleaners approved by the National Organic Standards) as well as fresh water that is used only for prepping organic product.

When storing organic vegetables, it is ideal to have a separate area for storage. Avoid situations where you have iced and hydrated conventional and organic items commingling.

Cross-Merchandising Opportunities

Non-produce items that complement organic vegetables can be very effective when cross-merchandised in your organic section. Such items as organic salad dressings for salads or organic sauces for vegetable stir-fries can work quite well.

Other Suggestions

Albert's Organics is proud to recommend the Organic Produce College. Founded on over 25 years of successful retail organic produce experience, our program focuses on the unique needs of organic produce operations and merchandising. We offer Produce College as a free service to the natural foods store community, as well as to our mass market customers.

With the organic market growing rapidly, our program focuses on the unique needs of organic produce operations and merchandising. It is our fond wish that this learning will contribute in some way to the profitable growth of organic produce sales and consumption.

Please visit *www.albertsorganics.com* to learn about Organic Produce College.

Learn how to successfully retail organic produce.
www.organicproducecollege.com

Grateful Harvest™
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At **Albert's Organics** we're celebrating 25 years of bringing organic growers and retailers together with our produce. In celebration of this milestone, Albert's Organics is donating half of the net profit of its **Grateful Harvest** brand sales (up to $25,000) to the **Organic Farming Research Foundation** during the month of February. As an organic distribution leader since 1982, we feel good about sharing our success with you!

Questions? Call Scott Dennis at
1-800-899-5944 Ext. 63327 or visit
www.albertsorganics.com or www.ofrf.org

ORGANIC FARMING RESEARCH FOUNDATION

25 YEARS Albert's ORGANICS
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Reader Service # 16

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Homestead, FL 33090
Toll free: 800-327-4833
Fax: 305-246-5827
www.brookstropicals.com
www.brookstropicals.com/chefscorner

Recommended Display Ideas

Display papayas as whole fruit as well as cut in half and shrink-wrapped. Use both methods simultaneously for increased sales.

Cutting a ripe papaya lengthwise shows customers that it might have green on the outside but inside the fruit is red, juicy and ready to eat. Demonstrate that the papaya can be eaten by the spoonful or cut up for salads, salsas or smoothies. Increase overall sales by selling it as an edible bowl filled with other fruits, yogurt or salads.

Whole papayas, when displayed with other tropical produce, make for a colorful, unique and interesting display, piquing the curiosity of new consumers. Generate excitement by displaying a large number of papayas — 15 or more pieces of Caribbean Red and 30 of Caribbean Sunrise.

Maximize your papaya sales by selling both. Your customers will appreciate having the choice and may factor in value or convenience when shopping.

Keep an eye on the display. Being quick to sort out any over ripe fruit will enhance the selling of the remaining fruit.

Point-Of-Purchase / Signage

Brooks Tropicals provides placards and tear-off pads for your produce department. The placards provide details on the papayas' origin, taste, color, availability, size and quality, as well as preparation and storage tips and nutritional information.

Variety And Availability Guide

Brooks Tropicals is the exclusive grower of Caribbean Red and Caribbean Sunrise papayas, which are available year-round.

Quick Tips

1. **Caribbean Red and Caribbean Sunrise papayas have an abundance of vitamins and contain papain, an enzyme that aids digestion. For more nutritional information go to *www.brookstropicals.com*.**
2. **Sprinkle fresh lime juice over cut papayas to preserve the fruit's naturally bright flesh.**
3. **Retail customers and culinary professionals can find great recipes and tips at Chef's Corner on the Brooks Tropicals Web site.**

Promotional/Advertising Ideas

Brooks Tropicals actively works to increase consumer awareness. We work with food editors, TV producers and celebrity chefs to promote the benefits of including papayas in healthful diets. Our Web site (the URL, *brookstropicals.com*, is on our label) is a favorite go-to spot for answers on papayas.

Ripeness Recommendations

Caribbean Red and Caribbean Sunrise papayas are ripe starting at 50 percent color break. If the fruit gives when gently squeezed, it's ready to eat

Backroom Receiving And Preparation Procedures

Caribbean Red and Caribbean Sunrise papayas can be stored at 42° to 58° F to minimize ripening. Storing them at higher temperatures will speed the ripening process. Storing at 40° or below for prolonged periods may cause injury to the fruit.

Display Care And Handling

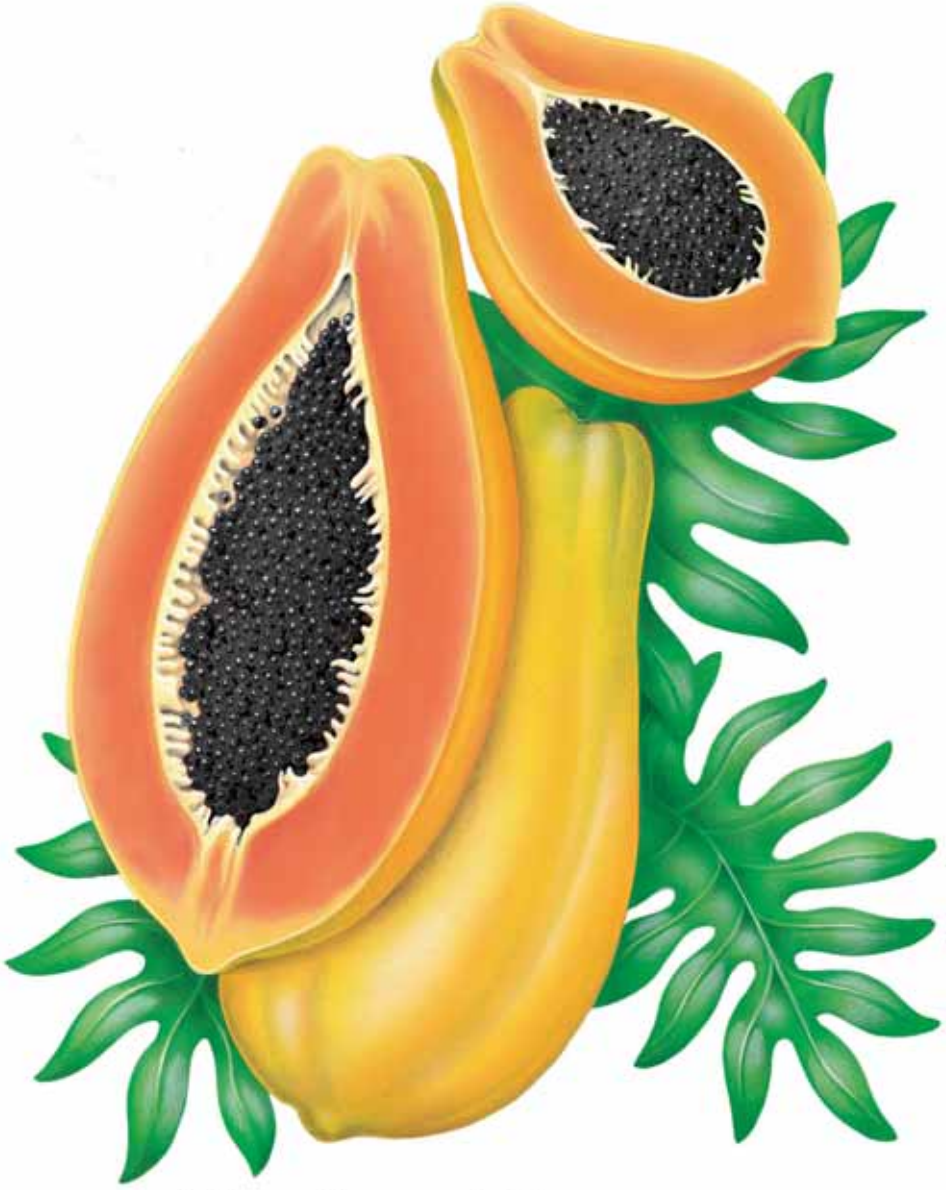
Papayas have soft skins, so they are delicate when ripe. Stack up to two or three deep. If using wicker baskets (uneven bottoms and sides), provide a layer of protection between the wicker and the fruit. Do not mist papayas. Keep at room temperature. Caribbean Red papayas have a shelf life of two to five days depending on ripeness; Caribbean Sunrise, three to seven days.

Cross-Merchandising Opportunities

Don't fence these papayas in. Occasionally display outside the tropical produce section by grouping with other popular recipe ingredients, such as salsas or fruit salads. Display a cut-in-half papaya with lime wedges and a plastic spoon in the meals-to-go section.

Out-of-the-Box Promotional Ideas

- **Add prominent signage to let customers know their Caribbean Red and Caribbean Sunrise papayas are back from Hurricane Dean.**
- **For a salad to go, cut a papaya in half and fill with mixed berries. Overwrap and display for a grab-and-go meal.**
- **Build a salsa ingredients display including the tasty papaya. Show how easily an exotic tropical salad can come together by grouping papayas and other tropical fruits. Suggest using a tropical-flavored yogurt instead of mayonnaise.**



The Sweet Papayas, Caribbean Red® and Caribbean Sunrise®

Ranging from 11 to 13 on the Brix scale, Caribbean Reds and Caribbean Sunrises are 'hard-to-beat' sweet. Brooks keeps them cool from the field to your store for the maximum in shelf life.

Call Brooks Tropicals today for more information.

BROOKS TROPICALS®

GROWER - PACKER - SHIPPER

800.327.4833 Fax 305.246.5827

www.brookstropicals.com

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Something for Everyone CALIFORNIA Pears

Category growth, California style.

California kick-starts the summer pear season with promotable volumes of Sunsprites, Red Pears, Boscs and category-leading Bartletts. Starting in July, fresh, new crop Bartletts drive category performance, contributing ***67.4 percent of total category sales!*** *Fresh, new crop Bartletts available in July should be the number one pear on your shelf for the big summer months of July and August. Make the most of this profitable opportunity by following a few simple, proven guidelines:*

Condition for color

Three out of four consumers prefer Bartletts with "more yellow, less green." So make sure your Bartletts receive proper conditioning and handling. Treated pears to "breaking" stage generate an average of ***18 percent greater sales than non- treated green Bartletts –*** the more golden the skin, the more golden your opportunity for optimum sales!

*Consumer research study conducted by CPAB 2004

Feature with the flavors of summer

Most consumers consider the Bartlett to be a "summer pear." Capitalize on that connection by displaying Bartletts alongside tree fruits during July and August. Retailers displaying Bartletts next to tree fruit instead of apples enjoyed an ***11 percent increase in sales during the summer!***

*Category Best Practice Test with three regional retailers September 2005

Profitable by association

When California's variety pears like Bosc, Comice, Seckel, Forelle and Red pears are available, let them ride on the popularity of the Bartlett. Retailers displaying other varieties with their Bartletts keep consumers interested in the pear category and enjoy a ***14 percent increase in sales!***

Start in California – stay in California – with resources from California Pears!

www.calpear.com

California Pear Advisory Board :
1521 "I" Street : Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 441-0432, fax (916) 446-1063
chris@calpear.com

Bartlett
Availability: July - November

Sunsprite
Availability: June - July

Bosc
Availability: August - November

Comice
Availability: August - November

Forelle
Availability: August - November

Red Pear
Availability: July- October

Seckel
Availability: August - November

Start in California, stay in California... for attractions beyond the Bartlett.

When it comes to California pears, Bartletts are just the beginning! In addition to summer pear varieties like the category-leading Bartlett, Sunsprite, Red and Bosc, the Golden State is also home to fall favorites like Comice, Seckel and Forelle, giving you more reasons than ever to turn your summer Bartlett visit into a season-long stay. The more you explore what California has to offer, the more you'll see we have something for everyone!

Something for Everyone
CALIFORNIA Pears

California Pear Advisory Board : 1521 "I" Street : Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 441-0432, fax (916) 446-1063 : www.calpear.com

Reader Service # 22

TURBANA BANANA CORP.
550 Biltmore Way, Suite 730
Coral Gables, FL 33134
Phone: 305-445-1542
Fax: 305-443-8908
www.turbana.com
info@turbana.com

Recommended Display Ideas

To sum it up briefly, fill it and it will sell. On the basis of sales per square foot as well as sales per labor hour, fresh pineapple is one of the leading performers in the produce department. Research has also shown that increasing the size of the pineapple display will not cannibalize sales of other fruits in the department — so selling more fresh pineapple enhances the overall performance of the entire produce department. Naturally, it's important to keep the display fresh. Stores with corers can accomplish that objective by removing any units that begin to show any external signs of age, coring them for fresh-cut sales and replacing them with fresh units on the retail display.

Pricing

Most fresh whole pineapple is sold on a per unit basis. Prices vary depending on the size fruit being offered and the pricing policies of the individual chain. In general, most retail prices are ranging between $3.99 and $5.99 per unit at the present time.

Quick Tips

1. **Keep pineapple display full and fresh.**
2. **Offer both whole and pre-cut pineapple for increased sales.**
3. **Use signage emphasizing health/nutrition information and preparation suggestions.**
4. **Promote pineapple frequently.**
5. **Demos have proven to be the best vehicle by which to gain both initial consumer trial and repeat purchases.**

Point-Of-Purchase/Signage

POS material and signage are integral parts of the overall display. Since fresh pineapple is not only delicious but also extremely healthful, it's always a good idea to provide nutritional information as well as recipe suggestions highlighting pineapples' versatility as both a healthful snack and either the feature item or an ingredient in various recipes. Turbana has also partnered with Imagination Farms and Disney Garden in a major effort geared towards increasing consumption of fresh produce among children. As part of this campaign, we offer our Fyffes Gold super sweet pineapples under the *Pirates of the Caribbean* label, with a full array of related signage and point of sale materials supporting this effort.

Variety

Turbana's pineapple program consists entirely of Fyffes Gold label super sweet pineapple. This variety has been lumped into an overall category referred to by the trade as "MD2." Although small amounts of other varieties are still being cultivated, MD2 has established itself as the industry standard.

Promotional Advertising Ideas

Fresh pineapple can be promoted across a wide spectrum of themes — nutrition, health and fitness,or as a tie-in with other tropical fruits, to name a few. You also see our *Pirates of the Caribbean* label promoted in a full-fledged campaign aimed at increasing consumption of fresh fruits among children. There is a myriad of Disney-related advertising and promotional opportunities available to tie in with this concept.

Ripeness Recommendations

Fyffes Gold super sweet pineapples are harvested at the optimum stage of flavor and ripeness. The shell color of the fruit may vary slightly throughout the year, but brix and acidity levels will remain constant and the consumer will have the same great taste experience every time. In other words, there's no need to worry about whether your Fyffes Gold pineapple is ripe or not.

Display Care And Handling

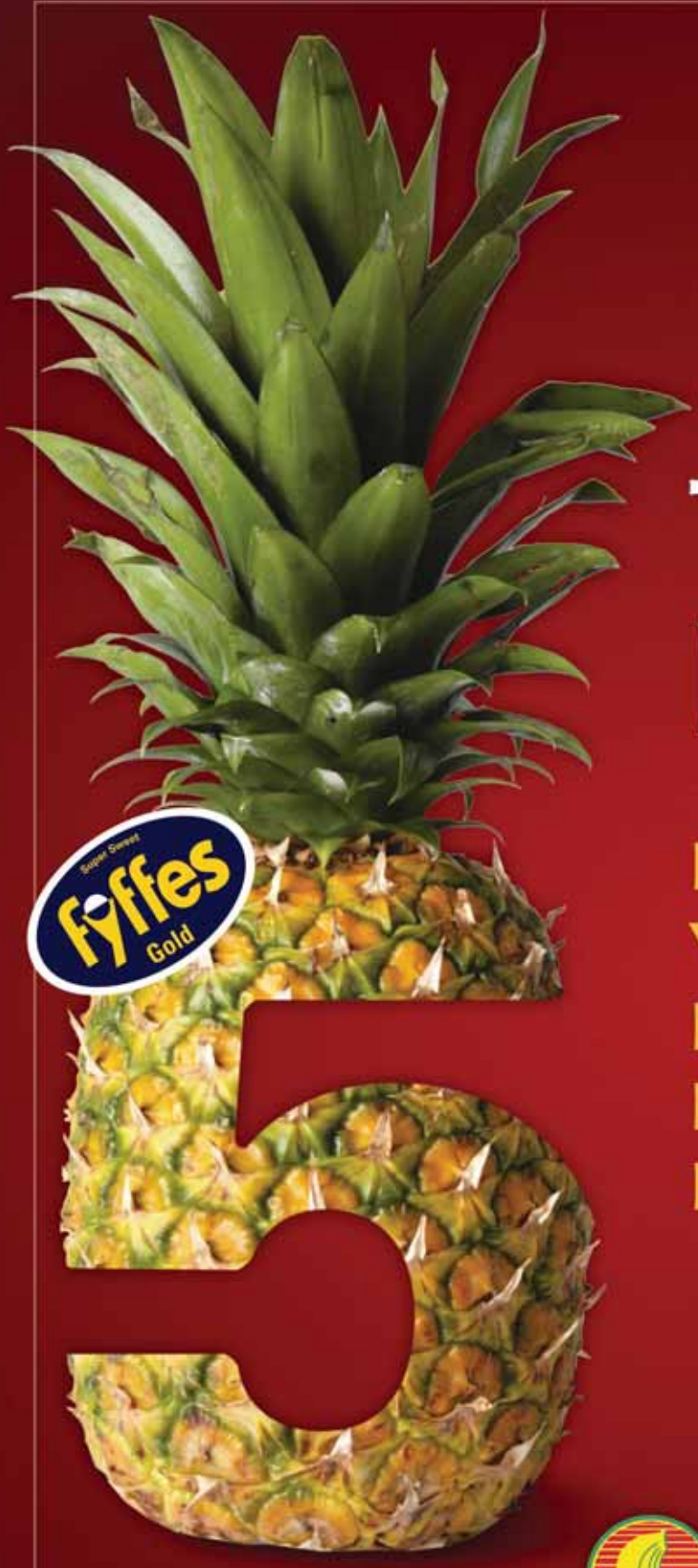
Pineapples are best stored at an ambient temperature between 48° and 55° F. The carton itself should be used to transport the fruit to the display area; this minimizes handling. Fresh pineapple makes its best visual impact when displayed upright or laid down with crowns facing upward. In order to avoid bruising, the fruit should not be displayed more than two layers deep.

Cross Merchandising Ideas

Fresh Pineapple can be cross-merchandised effectively with basically any other tropical fruit — mangos, papayas and especially bananas. Those retailers who are participating in our Imagination Farms/Disney Garden *Pirates of the Caribbean* pineapple program also have the opportunity to cross-promote with other items that fall under the collective Disney Garden category.

Out-of-the-Box Promotional Ideas

- **Pineapple has always had somewhat of an exotic persona that evokes images of tropical locales, blue sky and water, and adventure. For those retailers utilizing our *Pirates of the Caribbean* label, those images offer an excellent platform for contests, sweepstakes and tie-in advertising in their print circulars and/or newspaper ads.**



Fyffe Times Better

Fresh & Healthy
Year Round Availability
Fantastic Quality
Flexible Sourcing
Exceptional Service

Turbana®

1-800-TURBANA

Reader Service # 30

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550 Biltmore Way, Suite 730
Coral Gables, FL 33134
Phone: 305-445-1542
Fax: 305-443-8908
www.turbana.com
info@turbana.com

Recommended Display Ideas

To appeal to everyday shoppers, it is important to keep the display full, well maintained and in a visible area of the produce section. This is important for two reasons. First, many shoppers who consume plantains are of ethnic origin, and they look for good quality. If they see a plantain display that is unappealing, they may decide to purchase their plantains at an ethnic or other store. Secondly, mainstream American shoppers may be interested in trying new products for variety if they look appealing. A great display with adequate padding will definitely spark their interest.

Another key element, which can double sales, is to implement a two-color program by displaying both green and ripe plantains together. Many ethnic shoppers eat plantains when they are in the green stage, when the plantain has a starchy quality, and also in the dark stage, when the plantain is much sweeter.

Quick Tips

1. **Plantains should always be cooked, never eaten raw.**
2. **Keep plantain display full and well maintained.**
3. **For increased sales, display both green and ripe plantains.**
4. **Price plantains in unit pricing.**
5. **Use bilingual signage around display.**

Pricing

It has been proven that plantain sales increase when they are priced at a quantity sold by the dollar instead of by the pound (i.e., 4/$1). Since plantains are purchased largely by ethnic shoppers, such as Hispanics, many are not completely familiar with a per-pound pricing structure because they use the metric system.

Point-Of-Purchase / Signage

At the display, it is important to include signage and POS material. Turbana offers our customers leaflets with helpful information, which includes a description of the plantain in its various stages and how to store it. We also offer an array of recipes for mainstream Americans who are interested in sampling them. It is important to educate mainstream Americans on how to prepare the plantain because they have an overwhelmingly positive response once they realize how easy and delicious they are!

Turbana also offers bilingual signage, which includes a description of the plantain and its nutritional content in both English and Spanish. It is advantageous to offer bilingual signage at the display, because many shoppers who eat plantains are Hispanic and seeing their own language in your store will help them to feel welcome and create loyalty among this important growing population.

Variety

Turbana Corporation produces the Harton plantain variety exclusively because it provides the best market flexibility. It is the unique variety that can be merchandised in both its green and ripened stages.

Promotional/ Advertising Ideas

Since plantains are in demand among ethnic populations, there may be an untapped potential around stores, depending on the demographics. For stores with high numbers of Hispanic households, advertising in Spanish through local Hispanic media or targeted flyers would have a tremendous impact. Another important way to advertise is through the local Spanish radio stations and cable TV. Turbana can help you with your advertising needs in Spanish.

Ripeness Recommendations

Different from the banana, the plantain can be prepared and enjoyed at many stages in the ripening process. This versatility is why most consumers would like to see them offered in both the green and ripened stages. By presenting the consumer plantains in their different stages of ripeness, not only will your shelf life of this product increase dramatically but your sales will also double.

Unlike the banana, plantains are grown with the intention of being cooked in every stage of ripeness, from green to yellow to black. The riper it is, the sweeter the taste. The reason for the change in taste is that the plantain goes through a series of biochemical reactions as it ripens, which is an ongoing process of converting starches to sugars. For example, the green plantain can be enjoyed as a substitute to the potato and may be prepared in the same ways. The riper plantain can be prepared as a sweeter side dish or a delightful dessert.

Display Care And Handling

Store plantains at an ambient temperature between 47° and 50° F, away from freezer and loading dock doors.

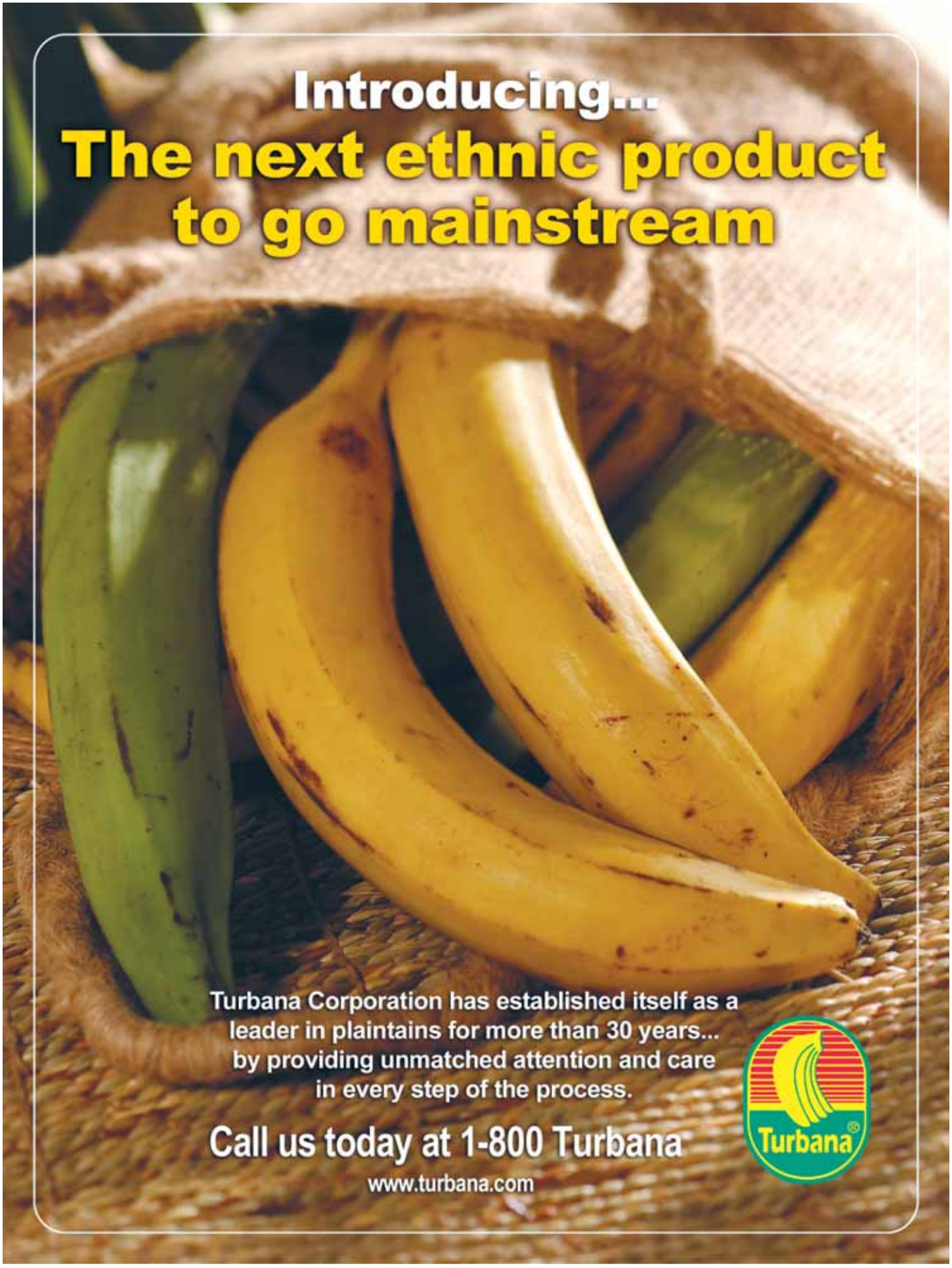
Use original cardboard cartons to transport fruit to display area to minimize handling.

Plantains should be displayed on padded shelves to avoid scarring and/or bruising. Display both green and ripened plantains; studies have shown large increases in sales when both green and ripe plantains are available to consumers.

Cross-Merchandising Opportunities

Plantains are most commonly consumed with black beans and rice among Hispanic populations that consume plantains, so putting black beans and rice around the display would make good business sense.

To appeal to mainstream Americans, place honey, whipped cream, chocolate or other fruit with the display to encourage sweet dessert ideas.



Reader Service # 31

LITEHOUSE FOODS INC.
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Sandpoint, ID 83864
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www.litehousefoods.com

Focus On Pourables

The refrigerated salad dressing (RSD) category has experienced growth of more than 2 percent in the past year. For industry and consumer purposes, this category can be broken down into three distinct sub-categories: 1) spoonable dressings (what our focus groups refer to as "the wall of white"); 2) value-size dressings (over 16 ounces); and 3) pourable dressings, which are typically the long neck bottles with a large variety of unique flavors.

The Approach To Grow The Category

Focusing on the pourable dressings can have a major impact in increased sales because it directly targets the shelf-stable dressing aisle – not the competing brands of refrigerated products. Pourable dressings are now 22 percent of all RSD sales, with value size at 7 percent and spoonable at 71 percent. This is an increase in pourables of more than 4 percent, while both spoonable and value size have declined (2 percent and eleven percent respectively).

The shelf-stable dressing aisle is a whopping 587 percent larger as a category than its refrigerated counterpart. The RSD category is $211 million or 15 percent the size of shelf-stable. This adds up to a lot of consumers to entice to the refrigerated produce section for their salad dressing purchase.

Quick Tips

1. **Identify and maintain optimum merchandising/shelf space.**
2. **Regularly promote the pourables category to introduce products to new consumers. Double the impact by offering TPR with ad activity for up to a 58 percent increase in sales.**
3. **Co-promote with complementary items to increase awareness and trial,**
4. **Use colorful and informative POS to educate consumers on product fresh attributes and value.**

Peak Dressing Sales Month

January is the No. 1 month for pourable dressings — in both the shelf-stable and the refrigerated categories. The shelf-stable index for this month is 118, and the refrigerated pourable and creamy are both at 104. This index remains high from February through July, with peaks in May and June.

More healthful consumer eating goals are the primary driver of this index. These goals often include more salads, where variety is a key factor. This trend continues through the spring and summer months, tapering off in the fall and then BOOM! January hits strong and the cycle repeats.

Specialty Products

Each micro category — or individual product within the refrigerated salad dressing category — can be a hidden gold mine. Single product promotions timed at their highest seasonal index will bring huge dollars to the produce department. The following items have enjoyed successful single item promotions:

- Coleslaw: March, June, July, August, September
- Asian: March, June
- Ranch: April, May
- Bleu Cheese: November, December

Promotional/Avertising Ideas

- Tie in with bagged salads and joint-feature ads.
- Use promotions as purchase incentives to bring new users to the category.
- Create category excitement with occasional "hot" pricing or events.
- Leverage the seasonal indexes to promote the pourables as a "line" of dressings separate from the creamy dressing

Other Suggestions

Over the past five years, Litehouse has invested in research to better understand consumers and how they shop the refrigerated salad dressing category. Please contact Paul Kusche to learn more about this exciting information and how it can increase sales. 208.263.7569 *pkusche@litehouseinc.com.*

DRIVING CATEGORY SALES

WWW.LITEHOUSEFOODS.COM

Reader Service # 56

Z&S FRESH
P.O. Box 27467
Fresno, CA 93729
Phone: 800-467-0788
Fax: 559-432-2888
www.zsfresh.com

Fresh Salsa At Home?

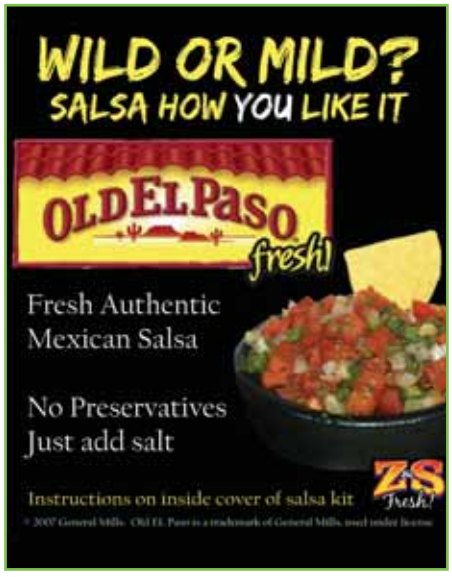
Old El Paso Fresh has done just that. A long-time provider of jarred and deli style salsas, Old El Paso now offers a fresh version for the consumer to make at home. What better way to capitalize on the "fresh" trend than to allow them to make fresh salsa at home?

With the Latino population's buying power now at over $45 billion, we see stores looking for ways to increase their Hispanic specialty item section (currently the No. 1 specialty section in the produce department). Traditional items such as tomatoes, chili peppers, onions and avocados are natural fits for enhancing the Hispanic item section but have lacked a truly unique item to grab the customer's attention — until now! With our fresh salsa kit, we give consumers everything they need to make fresh salsa at home, and we give stores a unique, cross-merchandisable item to enhance your related profits.

Variety And Availability

The Old El Paso Fresh salsa kits contains four Roma tomatoes, three chili peppers, one onion, one lime and one special seasoning packet. The kits are packed regionally by one of our four regional packing facilities to ensure freshness.

Because of all the components needed to make up our fresh salsa kits, we offer the salsa kit only during certain times during the year. You can expect to find our Old El Paso Fresh salsa kits from October through February (football games, holidays, New Year's, Super Bowl) and from May through July (Cinco de Mayo, Fourth of July).



Quick Tips

1. **Target events and holidays, such as Super Bowl, Cinco de Mayo, Fourth of July, etc.**
2. **Cross promote with other Old El Paso Fresh (or Hispanic) items**

Promotional/Advertising

We recommend big, event-driven promotional pushes of our salsa kits. Try targeting at least two to four yearly events in which impulse buying will be at its highest. Starting the year off with an Old El Paso Fresh salsa kit Super Bowl push, followed up by a Cinco de Mayo promotion, would be a great start. Get a bang out of your Fourth of July sales with a big display right next to your tomato display. We then like to suggest finishing off the year strong with a big football push in the fall.

We suggest putting the kits next to tomatoes. However, if you really want to play this up, do a large display with Old El Paso fresh avocados, onions and tomatoes to show your customers a few of the endless possibilities. Drive home the sale by having a TV nearby playing our DVD showing how easy it is to make the fresh salsa at home.

Recommended Display Ideas

The Old El Paso Fresh salsa kits do extremely well in high-traffic areas next to other Old El Paso Fresh (or Hispanic) items. This allows you to reap the direct profits not only of the Old El Paso Fresh kit but also of the related profits!

Point-of-Purchase/Signage

Z&S Fresh can provide Old El Paso Fresh POS material for your stores. Our "Wild or Mild" signage is a 6x9.5" vertical allowing the price to be written directly on the signage.

For those customers who are a bit more technological, Z&S Fresh also has an informative DVD that walks you through the steps of making our fresh salsa at home. Running at less than three minutes and conveniently looping once finished, this DVD is an attractive way to showcase the fresh salsa kit.

Cross-Merchandising Opportunities

Cross-merchandising opportunities with the Old El Paso Fresh salsa kit are endless. Salsa is the No. 1 condiment today, so think about all of the items on which salsa is used. Now, think if you were able to give your customers a way to make their own, fresh salsa at home.

The Old El Paso Fresh product line caters to Hispanic items. We want to show you how to tap into the fastest growing category in the produce department. From onions to bell peppers to the fresh salsa kit, the possibilities for cross-promotion are endless.

Out-of-the-Box Promotional Ideas

- **Drive home the sale by having a TV nearby playing our DVD showing how easy it is to make the fresh salsa at home.**

Spice up your produce aisle with Old El Paso Fresh

Reader Service # 94

Old El Paso fresh!

Z&S Fresh!

www.zsfresh.com

learn how Old El Paso Fresh can spice up your sales

RIVER RANCH FRESH FOODS LLC
1156 Abbott Street
Salinas,CA 93901
Phone: 800-538-5868
Fax: 831-755-8281
www.RiverRanchFreshFoods.com
riverranch@rrff.com
www.PopeyeFreshFoods.com

The total retail packaged spinach category represents nearly $365 million in annual sales in the United States. This equates to 11.8 percent of the total salad category (ACNielsen 52-weeks ending 12/15/07). In fact, one of every nine packages of salad sold in the United States contains spinach.

The Popeye Fresh! product line offers a wide variety of healthful spinach-based items. From whole leaf spinach to complete salad kits and beyond, there is something for every lover of fresh and convenient salads and vegetables.

- Select Spinach, the top-seller, is perfect for cooking and for salads.
- Also available for cooking — Microwavable Spinach, in a specially designed microwave-ready bag.
- Baby Spinach, with its tender young leaves, is ready for any salad, by itself or as added zip to lettuce salads.
- Spinach Blends include Romaine with Baby Spinach and Spring Mix with Baby Spinach, perfect combinations of flavors and textures.
- Classic Tangy Bacon Salad Kits bring restaurant-quality salad to home tables.
- The Popeye Fresh! product line also includes other salad blends, kits and snacking vegetables for a complete merchandising set.

Popeye Fresh! salads come in several package types. Select Spinach and Baby Spinach are available in PLA and traditional laminated packaging. PLA is a renewable, sustainable plastic made from corn. Baby Spinach and five other salad items are also available in rigid, reclosable PLA tills.

Popeye Fresh! is the most familiar brand name in spinach — 99 percent of consumers recognize Popeye when they see him and 94 percent associate him with spinach.

Quick Tips

1. **Identify and maintain optimum merchandising/shelf space.**
2. **Regularly promote category to introduce products to new consumers.**
3. **Keep your display clean, fresh, full and conditioned for maximum sales.**
4. **Keep your River Ranch contact name and phone number handy to keep your inventory position strong.**

Merchandising

Carry the full line to take advantage of Popeye's popularity and association with healthful living. A Popeye section in your produce department will draw consumers. Popeye Fresh! packaging is designed to give consumers exactly what they want — a large product window for a clear view of the quality inside, bold descriptive product names, easy-to-read flavor descriptions with a distinctive logo situated on a green leaf that says fresh inside and out.

Recommended Display Ideas

Category sales grow significantly when the full Popeye Fresh! product line is merchandised together as a spinach destination category in the refrigerated value-added salad section next to packaged lettuce salads.

Maximum presentation is best achieved when products are merchandised in refrigerated upright, multi-deck cases or shelving units. These case types present the product well to the customer and maintain excellent refrigeration to maximize customer satisfaction.

Variety And Availability Guide

The entire Popeye Fresh! Spinach product line is available daily, year-round.

Promotional/Advertising Ideas

Like the value-added salad category, the spinach category responds exceptionally well to promotional activity. The key to sales growth is product awareness driven by an aggressive sales/promotion program. Price promotions, cross-category promotions, recipe utilization and menu planning activities can significantly drive sales.

Ripeness Recommendations

River Ranch manages the Freshness Factor for you. Careful seed selection and crop management are critical to the final experience of the Popeye Fresh! Spinach consumer.

River Ranch harvests at the peak of quality and quickly packs in carefully selected packaging to maximize shelf life and freshness for the best consumer experience.

Display Care And Handling

The Popeye Fresh! Spinach product line is washed and ready to eat with a 17-day shelf life. Proper temperature management and disciplined rotation procedures are critical to maintain consistent quality.

Cross-Merchandising Opportunities

The Popeye Fresh! Spinach line presents numerous cross-merchandising opportunities. Retailers can review regional recipes for local spinach favorites and tie in with local products. Popeye Fresh! Spinach can be cross-merchandised with other salad ingredients (mushrooms, tomatoes, croutons), other fresh-cut salads, fresh-cut fruit or cooking ingredients, when recipe-based.

Out-of-the-Box Promotional Ideas

- **Utilizing the Popeye costume for store grand openings, special events or store promotions is a creative way to generate excitement and promote the Popeye Fresh! Spinach line. The Popeye costume also personifies and promotes the healthful, nutritional benefits of fresh spinach and the overall spinach category.**
- **A speed-to-table themed promotion can emphasize ways to reduce dinner prep time by including Popeye Fresh! Microwavable Spinach or Complete Salad Bowl Kits in menu planning. Or, highlight the ease and simplicity of creating a unique spinach-based salad with one of Popeye's favorite salads — flat leaf, baby and blends.**

THE STRONGEST NAME IN SPINACH

CUSTOMERS TRUST A BRAND THEY KNOW—POPEYE

Your customers look for Popeye®. In fact, with his 99%* recognition among fellow Americans, there's nothing as magnetic in value-added produce as the indomitable Sailorman. He's helped create the fresh spinach category, and he can help introduce your customers to new and exciting fresh produce SKUs.

Put more **muskle** in your produce department.
Call River Ranch today.

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Reader Service # 73

RIVER RANCH

POPEYE Fresh!

RIVER RANCH FRESH FOODS, LLC
1156 Abbott Street Salinas, CA 93901
800/538-5868

www.RiverRanchFreshFoods.com
www.PopeyeFreshFoods.com

MANN PACKING CO., INC.
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Salinas, CA 93902-0690
Phone: 800-884-MANN (6266)
Fax: 831-422-5171
www.veggiesmadeeasy.com
info@veggiesmadeeasy.com

Recommended Display Ideas

These steaming items make an ideal break between the packaged salad section and refrigerated dip/dressing section of the value-added produce category.

Point-Of-Purchase/Signage

Utilize point-of-purchase signage to communicate to consumers these items are packaged in cooking vessels — No dishes or mess to clean up!

It is also important to communicate that sometimes a sauce component is included, thus the slightly higher price point. At first glance, the consumer may not recognize these added benefits.

Variety And Availability Guide

Mann's Ready, Set, Steam items target everyday home cooks who are asking themselves at 4:30, "What's for dinner?" Popular side dish offerings such as vegetable medley with a fresh garden herb sauce are family-friendly with broad appeal. All are available year-round.

Promotional/Advertising Ideas

These steam vegetable items are ideal for "build-a-meal" types of advertising vehicles. Partner them with your store's rotisserie chicken or other ready-to-eat protein products, a packaged salad and a loaf of bread. Dinner is served! Another idea is to incorporate them into any weekly meal planner tools you offer consumers.

Display Care And Handling

Merchandise steam vegetable items in the value added produce case next to packaged salads and refrigerated dips/dressings. Proper temperature control is paramount to the success of these items. Keep constantly refrigerated between 34° and 38° F.

Backroom Receiving And Preparation Procedures

Refrigerate immediately upon receipt. Even a few minutes at room temperature will greatly impact the shelf-life and quality of these items.

Cross-Merchandising Opportunities

Partner with a packaged salad and ready-to-eat, center of plate proteins, so consumers can quickly and easily build a meal.

Now That's Hot

New! One Step Steam® Exclusive to Mann!

Mann's new One Step Steam® technology allows consumers to steam our fresh-cut vegetables without piercing the bag or removing hard to find, hard to remove, unsightly patches. Ready in three minutes or less!

- **Packaging refresh provides translucency and larger product view space**
- **Nutrition deck on front of bag**
- **Available in 12 and 16 ounce SKUs**

Keep steam cooking sales in produce—not in the grocery or frozen food aisles. One Step Steam. It's more than microwave ready.

Another value added innovation from the category leader.

See Live Demo at
www.veggiesmadeeasy.com

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It's Fresh.
It's Easy.
It's Mann's!

Reader Service # 83

www.eatcalifornaifruit.com
Contact: Sheri Mierau, President
smierau@caltreefruit.com

The California PPN Network

The California PPN Network is a strategic marketing resource for the California peach, plum and nectarine industry, as well as for retail and foodservice trade. An integral part of CTFA, the California PPN Network delivers information, marketing expertise and consumer demand-building activity to its constituents, enabling them to more effectively and efficiently sell California peaches, plums and nectarines.

Fresh California PPN The New "Summer C"

The new Summer C program in now underway for the 2008 season, capitalizing on the fact that peaches, plums and nectarines are a good source of Vitamin C. Plums in particular are considered an excellent source of Vitamin C! The multi-faceted program includes a digital media campaign with leading websites such as foodnetwork.com and allrecipes.com, new creative POS available to industry and retailers, and an expansive public relations campaign including national outreaches directed to consumers and kids. With the new Summer C campaign, consumers will be making fresh California PPN their source for Vitamin C all summer long!

Retail Education

Cal State PPN

Visit *www.calstateppn.com* to prepare for the 2008 peach, plum and nectarine season.

From basic fruit facts to advanced marketing principles, Cal State PPN provides a free, convenient, all-in-one resource for a complete education on optimizing the stone fruit category and is a vailable in an adaptable PowerPoint presentation and quiz for conducting your own seminar-style training.

PPN Handbook

The newly-revamped *PPN Handbook* serves as a valuable tool to have on hand throughout the season. Inside, you'll find information on stone fruit varieties, size standards, pack styles, ripening protocols, handling tips, consumer insights and more. Best of all, it's free and available for download at *www.eatcaliforniafruit.com*.

PPN Network Download Center

Get the tools you need to help your department succeed from The Download Center at www.eatcaliforniafruit.com. The Center is used regularly by hundreds of retailers and industry members to achieve better advertising, clearer communication, more efficient merchandising programs, more effective training and greater consumer insight. This single, convenient online location, gives you access to point of sale and promotional materials, logos, a wide range of photography (including agricultural, recipe and stylized images), retail training materials, the latest market research, consumer and category insights, and valuable industry and international information. All available at no charge.

PPN Demand Builder

Make an ordinary ad extraordinary! As you plan your advertising calendar for the 2008 season, use the new PPN Demand Builder, the latest addition to the Download Center. This exciting free resource will help you create more attractive, impactful and effective ads. The PPN Demand Builder offers ready-made price point ads in a wide range of sizes, as well as advertorials and two radio spots. Like all art files from the Download Center, these materials not only arrive ready-to-print, but also "layered" to allow your art department to isolate and use individual elements, such as a photo or headline.

New Market Research

Cost-effective merchandising techniques can grow the stone fruit category. Last year, the California PPN Network conducted the 2007 Merchandising Best Practices Study to evaluate the impact of three common merchandising techniques – POS, complementary items and increased display size – on peach, plum and nectarine sales. The study found by utilizing any one of these merchandising techniques, the stone fruit category could benefit by a volume increase of over 50%! To read this study for yourself, visit the Download Center at *www.eatcaliforniafruit.com*.

Consumer Education

Point of Sale

The better your customers know their preferences, the greater the sales potential, and the idea behind two research-based POS consumer education programs offered by the California PPN Network. Each program is designed to help consumers understand their personal preferences, so they can select and purchase their perfect peach, plum or nectarine. All POS is free, so place your orders by April 25, 2008:

• *Summer C!* This program educates consumers on the health benefits of California PPN, specifically that they are a good source of Vitamin C all summer long. Available in two messages – "Summer C Fresh From the Tree" and "Summer C For a Healthy Me" – the program includes 22" x 28" aisle posters, 11" x 7" display cards and 11" x 3.5" educational channel cards.

• *Are You a Cruncher, Leaner or In-Betweener?* This program helps consumers indentify their preferences based on the firm-to-juicy stages of the fruit, while informing them about selection, flavor, ripeness, firmness, coloring and home ripening. Available in two styles for 2008 – one whimsical, the other sophisticated – the program includes 22" x 28" aisle posters, 11" x 7" selection tip cards and 11" x 3.5" educational channel cards.

• *Which Peach is Your Peach?* This program features preference-guiding information and selection tips for peaches, plums or nectarines, with a sophisticated design that's excellent for high-end lifestyle market formats. The program includes 22" x 28" aisle posters, 11" x 7" and 11" x 3.5" selection tip cards, and selection tip takeaways for peaches, plums or nectarines.

For more information about the California PPN Network, contact the California Tree Fruit Agreement at 559-638-8260

WECONNECTU

to free peach, plum and nectarine training

Cal State PPN at eatcaliforniafruit.com offers training for executive managers and store-level staff. It's created by experts and designed to save you time and money. And it's all yours, 24/7.

www.EatCaliforniaFruit.com > Research > Training > Artwork > Inspiration >

CALIFORNIA PPN NETWORK

California PEACHES · PLUMS · NECTARINES

California Tree Fruit Agreement
975 "I" Street : Reedley, California 93654-0968 : 559-638-8260

Reader Service # 86

Keystone

Life should be this sweet.

KEYSTONE FRUIT MARKETING
11 N. Carlisle St., Suite 102
Greencastle, PA 17225
Tel: 717-597-2112
Fax: 717-597-4096
www.keystonefruit.com

Onions are the most consumed produce item in the world.

Average annual onion per capita consumption in the United States is 21 pounds.

Flavor Matters…The ability to ensure a consistent sweet onion flavor profile is important. Retailers can now ensure their consumers an enjoyable eating experience every time! That equates to repeat sales and loyal customers.

Since Certified Sweet® onions are available year round it is easy to see why Sweet Onions are the recognized driver of the onion category.

Ross-Merchandising Opportunities

Sweet Onion usage is very diverse and cross-merchandising opportunities are virtually limitless. Their sweet mild flavors make them fantastic on a hamburger or in a fresh salad — simply slice and enjoy. As an ingredient they are guaranteed to enhance your favorite recipes; sweet onions will take any menu offering to a whole new level!

Emphasize Certified Sweet® onions' great taste and nutritional benefits with salad ingredients for a healthful New Year's "New You" resolution. Great with guacamole and fajita mixes for Super Bowl and Cinco de Mayo promotions. Perfect with steaks, burgers and kabobs — "grillin" promos are always a hit! And don't forget the fresh fruit baskets – sweet onions are terrific with fresh fruit.

Availability Guide

GREAT NEWS – Certified Sweet® onions are available 365 days a year. Feature year-round availability to consumers and use regional freshness as an educational vehicle to educate consumers on uniqueness of recognized sweet onion growing districts while maintaining the same great taste they expect. Creating brand awareness translates to consumer loyalty and repeat sales.

VIDALIA'S
CERTIFIED SWEET

Available: Spring and Summer

Walla Walla River
Sweet Onions

Available: Summer and Fall

MAYAN SWEETS

Available: Fall, Winter and Early Spring

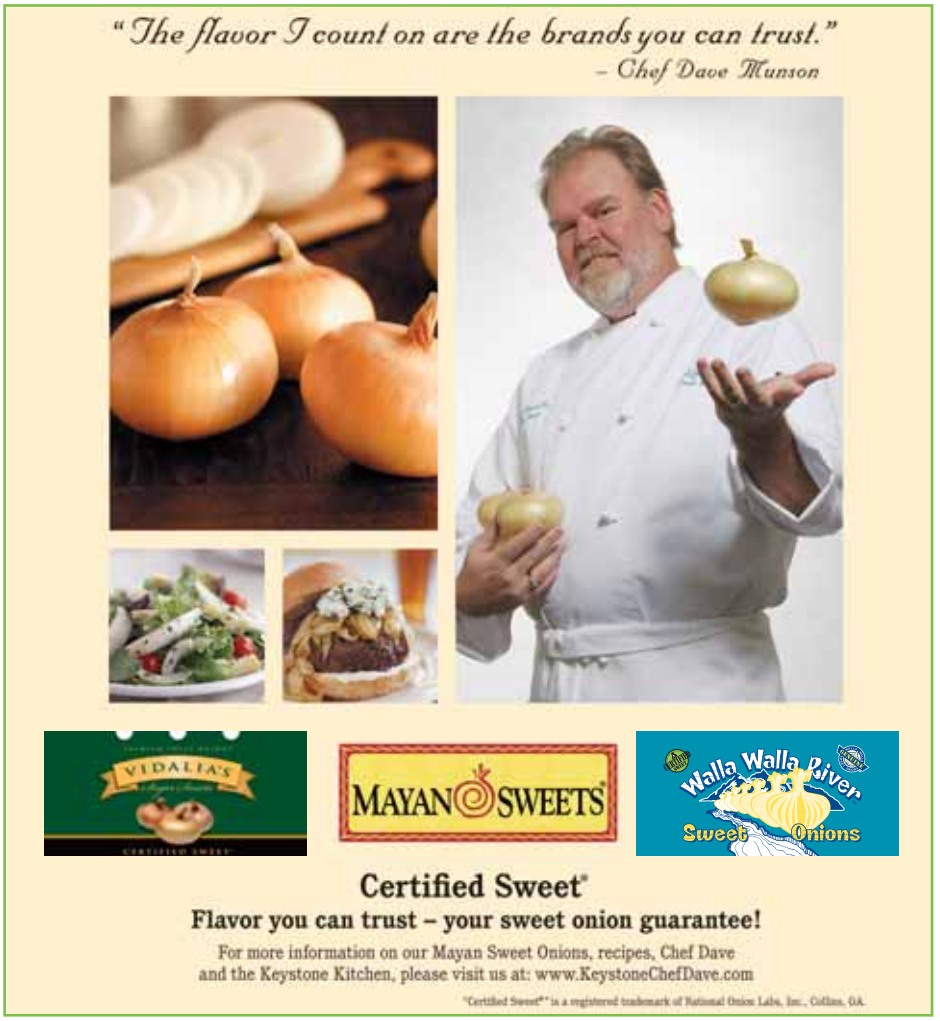
Recommended Display Ideas

GO BIG!!! Capitalize on one of today's hottest trends – fresh produce. It's healthful, colorful and bursting with freshness. Nothing says, "Buy Me," quite like big, prominent bulk and consumer bag displays. End caps, stand-alones, value-added product offerings, multi-size strategies and consumer bagged displays offer consumers multiple buying options and ensure incremental sales lift!

Establish secondary display areas, especially during promotional periods, to increase sales and consumer awareness. Effective point-of-purchase materials and signage also help to showcase the nutritional benefits and outstanding flavor of high-quality sweet onions to consumers. Thirty percent of consumers said they would buy and eat more fruits and vegetables if they knew how to use them – go ahead and help them…

Out-of-the-Box Promotional Ideas

- ***Back to our Roots*** **campaign: Feature pictures, biographies, history of growers (real people) who produce sweet onions.**
- **Education: *Sweet Onion University* featuring preparation tips, such as cooking and cutting; educational tips, including storage and handling; and usage ideas, such as recipes and how-to's. Issue certificates of course completion and use in advertising.**
- **Utilize Keystone Kitchen Web site, Vidalia Onion Association, Walla Walla Sweet Onion Committee Web sites, etc…**
- **Schedule a celebrity chef demo at new store openings.**
- **Feature customer testimonials and share real consumer's photos and stories regarding new recipes, first time users or special dinner party/favorite recipes using sweet onions.**



In-store demo with Chef Dave

Flavor And Nutrition Differentiation

Product differentiation gives consumers reasons to buy with confidence. Emphasizing the quality, flavor, nutrition and food safety differences of Certified Sweet® onions over regular cooking onions will promote higher rings at the cash register. The top two reasons people eat fruits and vegetables are taste and nutrition. Product education and tasting demos allow consumers to experience products and always generate sales lifts.

Profitable Partnerships

Consumers respond to brand recognition. Consistently purchasing the highest quality sweet onions brands from only reputable industry leaders is the easiest way for retailers to provide consumers with confidence that they are buying the highest quality, safest, freshest and most flavorful sweet onions all year long. Forming a win-win relationship between vendors and retailers provides long-term, sustainable and uninterrupted supply.

Keystone Vidalia® grower Jim Cowart

Keystone

Life should be this sweet.

KEYSTONE FRUIT MARKETING
11 N. Carlisle St., Suite 102
Greencastle, PA 17225
Tel: 717-597-2112
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ELI & ALI, LLC
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Studies show the most dynamic area of market growth in tomatoes is greenhouse and specialty varieties, both conventional and organic. According to the USDA, cherry and grape tomatoes account for 13 percent of total retail tomatoes sold and, from the late-1990s to the mid-2000s, greenhouse quantity sold increased 24 percent.

Selling and distributing the finest vine-ripened tomatoes available from leading growers around the world leads to success in increased sales. Today, Eli & Ali is considered a distinguished premium packer/distributor of a signature line of conventional, specialty and organic produce.

Recommended Display Ideas

Build a display with a wide assortment of tomato varieties and increase visual appeal and consumer enthusiasm.

Typically the best approach is to build a waterfall with Eli & Ali boxes and display the tomatoes from the table/end cap right to the floor. Our boxes are display-ready, which enhances the sale by decreasing labor.

Care and handling tips:

- Display in a dry location, away from refrigeration and light.
- Rotate repeatedly for both color and firmness.
- Avoid putting them into multiple layers.
- Do not spray.

Point-Of-Purchase/Signage

POS materials will help draw attention to unique products and also educate consumers on the wide variety of tomato products available. With all of our product line, conventional and organic, we include both the UPC and PLU on POS signage or shelf talkers. Every variety of each category has its own shelf talker.

Promote Eli & Ali's new organic packaging.

Variety And Availability Guide

Eli & Ali vine-ripe tomatoes are available year-round due to extensive sourcing.

We're a certified organic handler and carry a wide variety of organic as well as a fine selection of conventional products.

We've expanded our line to include specialty packages of organic and hydroponic tomato varieties. We are currently growing petite Romas on-the-vine (conventional and organic), conventional and organic heirlooms, and organic mini heirlooms.

Our tomato variety offering includes:

CONVENTIONAL

Red beefsteaks, yellow beefsteaks, red plums, red grapes, mixed heirlooms, tomatoes on-the-vine (red, yellow & orange), petite Romas on-the-vine, cherries/bag

ORGANIC

Red beefsteak, mixed heirlooms, mini heirlooms, red grapes, sweet cherries, yellow pears, red pears, mixed medley, tomatoes on-the-vine, Roma, Petite Romas on-the-vine, sugar plum tomatoes, honey bunch tomatoes

Promotional/Advertising Ideas

Use sampling and in-store demos.

Price during the course of the year for specialized events.

Use Eli & Ali giveaways for produce managers.

Use cross-promotional POS tools, not just in produce but in other departments.

Packaging

Earth-friendly packaging is a great bonus to promote to consumers, and retailers can create excitement with customers about new packaging advances. Everything is graphically illustrated on the earth-friendly packaging to help promote to consumers.

Ripeness Recommendations

A vine-ripe remains on the vine longer than gas green, and to ensure the best flavor, they're picked at stage 3, so we normally distribute a stage 4 and 5, guaranteeing the best quality beefsteak tomato in the market.

We tailor product to the retailers' inspection process. They can determine which stage they want the tomato and we can provide them with the stage and the sizing.

Backroom Receiving And Preparation Procedures

Cool and dry are the best conditions.

Receiving should be not below 45° and not above 65° — 55° is perfect.

Cross-Merchandising Opportunities

In the Produce Department:

Cross-merchandise with other tomato varieties.

Cross-merchandise with other vegetables including rainbow peppers, mini cukes, avocados.

In/With Other Departments:

Add cheese, particularly fresh mozzarella.

Promote with salad dressings and olive oils.

Provide an entire solution for your customer, for example, tomatoes, fresh mozzarella and basil.

Eli & Ali's

You haven't tasted a tomato until You've tasted an Eli & Ali's tomato.

Organic/Conventional Tomatoes & Specialty Produce

Eli & Ali's benchmark for excellence begins and ends with our continued commitment to quality and service.

We stand behind our product and reputation without compromise.

You haven't tasted a Tomato until you've tasted an Eli & Ali's Tomato!

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USDA ORGANIC

Reader Service # 8

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Phone: 800-884-MANN (6266)
Fax: 831-422-5171
www.veggiesmadeeasy.com
info@veggiesmadeeasy.com

Recommended Display Ideas

Merchandise vegetable snack packs next to baby carrot products. In larger stores, dual placement by refrigerated dips is successful. Build a snack section or a grab-and-go refrigerated display case near the store entrance or checkout stands for impulse sales. Snack packs sometimes come in smaller bags, so eye-level placement proves most effective.

Fresh-cut vegetable sections make an excellent break between packaged salad displays and refrigerated dressings and dips. Keep displays well stocked with product rotated by best-if-used-by date, first in, first out.

Point-Of-Purchase/Signage

SKU-specific channel strips and shelf talkers are available to draw attention to the vegetable snack area. These products tend to be in smaller packages, so point-of-sale support material can help draw the shopper's eye and spur trial.

Mann Packing offers a year-round promotion schedule including on-pack coupons and other cross-promotions with leading store brands.

Variety And Availability Guide

Mann's line of fresh-cut vegetable snacks is available at a stable price on a year-round basis. Also available are larger pack sizes suitable for entertaining bigger groups. Mann also offers Veggies on the Go party platters — the ultimate snacking convenience with a variety of fresh vegetables and a creamy ranch dip ready to be served.

Quick Tips

1. **Monitor inventories closely to avoid out-of-stocks.**
2. **Keep displays consistent so consumers know where to find their fresh-cut vegetables.**
3. **Use point-of-purchase signage to draw attention to the snack pack items.**
4. **Promote, promote, promote . . . leverage Mann's customer support programs to bring new users to the category and keep current customers coming back.**

Promotional/Advertising Ideas

Cross-promote fresh-cut vegetables with dips or place in a refrigerated case near the deli counter to capture lunch time sales from the sandwich crowd. Promote during back-to-school events and post *Holiday Healthy* eating themed programs.

Ripeness Recommendations

Keep all of Mann's vegetable snack products refrigerated at a constant 34° F. Rotate first in, first out, according to the best-if-used-by date.

All of Mann's fresh-cut vegetables are available year-round.

Display Care And Handling

Shingle the packages on the shelf like tiles on a roof top. Do not stack on top of each other. Keep constantly refrigerated, allowing adequate airflow in between packages. Avoid excess moisture by keeping the product away from misters. Try to keep SKU placement consistent on the shelf and utilize shelf channel strips so consumers have an easier time finding their favorite products. Consistency in displays and avoiding out-of-stock situations are key to building sales.

Backroom Receiving And Preparation Procedures

Refrigerate immediately upon receipt. Keep shelf well stocked, but do not overcrowd the display space. It is better to replenish frequently than to present a cluttered display that is harder for the consumer to navigate and for you to keep organized. Store Mann's fresh-cut vegetables away from excess moisture.

Cross-Merchandising Opportunities

Cross-promote with any type of "topper" product — dips, cheese spreads, other produce snack items such as baby carrots, sliced apples or fresh-cut fruit. Build dual displays in high traffic areas to capture grab-and-go sales. Merchandise near the sandwich production area of the deli to capture lunch time sales.

Out-of-the-Box Promotional Ideas

- **Cross-promote during back-to-school! Put a lunch box display case near the vegetable snacks to promote healthful snack ideas for families.**
- **Team with the deli and offer vegetable snacks instead of potato chips as part of lunch item sales.**

Stand and Deliver

Mann's Healthy Snacks on the Go! now have a stand up feature providing superior merchandising capabilities. This stand up tray, exclusive to Mann, also grows the opportunity for incremental displays in produce and throughout the store.

Consumers can't buy what they can't see—now Mann makes it easier! Depend On Mann.
We're ready to stand and deliver more snacking sales to your bottom line.

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MANN'S SUNNY SHORES

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It's Fresh.
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Reader Service # 80

Merchandising Art vs. Science

As the produce industry grows and becomes more competitive and more sophisticated, the question over the value of the "art" of merchandising as opposed to the "science" of merchandising will become more pronounced.

On one hand, we see a high value placed on individualism, creativity, aesthetic beauty and showmanship. On the other, we see a strong emphasis on the objective analysis of information, corresponding space allocation, the correct care and handling of products to maintain optimum quality, and profitability. It is obvious that strong arguments can be made for both points of view.

The old school of produce merchandising relied heavily on the art of merchandising. Thirty years ago there just wasn't the amount of information available to make "scientific" decisions, and what was available usually came long after the fact. A successful produce merchandiser was an individual who depended on a good gut feel for the business. Someone with a real talent could build a display that said, "Buy me," as soon as a customer walked in the aisle. The finest retailers today still operate with that same flair for beauty and persuasive selling skills.

During the 1980s, with many companies expanding rapidly and often drawing less-qualified employees from a lower labor pool, we saw a move toward the standardization of merchandising concepts. Every store in a chain ran the same ad and had basically the same layout and varieties. The produce manager as an individual was discouraged.

Standardization was pursued in the hope that training materials would be more effective, less supervision would be needed and a more scientific approach could be used to determine layout, variety and shelf allocation. The end result should have been higher profits and a better competitive position, and in many cases that did, in fact, happen.

Both merchandising positions have their strengths and weaknesses. Good retailers want their key people to be aggressive sellers, willing to try something new and willing to cut their losses when a new idea doesn't work. Talented, aggressive people need to be able to stretch their abilities and have a role in the decision-making process. The question is how to motivate those people and yet provide a safety net so that mistakes in judgment can be caught before disaster strikes.

The "science" of merchandising was designed to help mitigate risk as well as enable a quick response to customer needs. Information about how products are moving, inventory control and profitability by item are important tools in being able to compete in an increasingly complex world. Unfortunately, in some companies, the "science" became the final word. Little respect was given to ideas. Creativity and individuality took a back seat to management information. In today's world, there is a realization that some old-fashioned ideas, combined with the correct tools to evaluate and react quickly, may be the answer.

How do we give employees or managers the latitude to be creative for the right reasons and still use the scientific approach to mitigate risk and react quickly?

A lot of attention is given to innovative merchandising that results from a response to a contest. The thousand-case display of apples is sure to gain attention but rarely helps build overall sales. In fact, there will likely be a detrimental effect on the quality of the apples if the display is left up. However, what usually happens is that after the picture is taken, the display is dismantled.

Depending on the goals of the contest and/or the picture, the results may be beneficial. If the display is built for the publicity as a way to show community involvement with a local charity or as a way to motivate store employees, then its goal will be met. Unfortunately, in many cases, the real goal is a high-definition television or some other prize.

How do we give employees or managers the latitude to be creative for the right reasons and still use the scientific approach to mitigate risk and react quickly?

Contests and promotions are a great way to let creativity soar, build team spirit and instill pride. However, there must be guidelines set so that the thousand-case display of apples doesn't appear for the sake of a free television. Clear quantifiable goals and objectives that include sales, labor, shrink, gross profit, creativity and cross-merchandising skills need to be developed.

Tools that can be used and discussed are tonnage reports, scanning information, turnover reports, profit-and-loss statements and labor reports. Teaching all employees how to use these tools will make for more meaningful decisions as well as the ongoing sophistication of your employees.

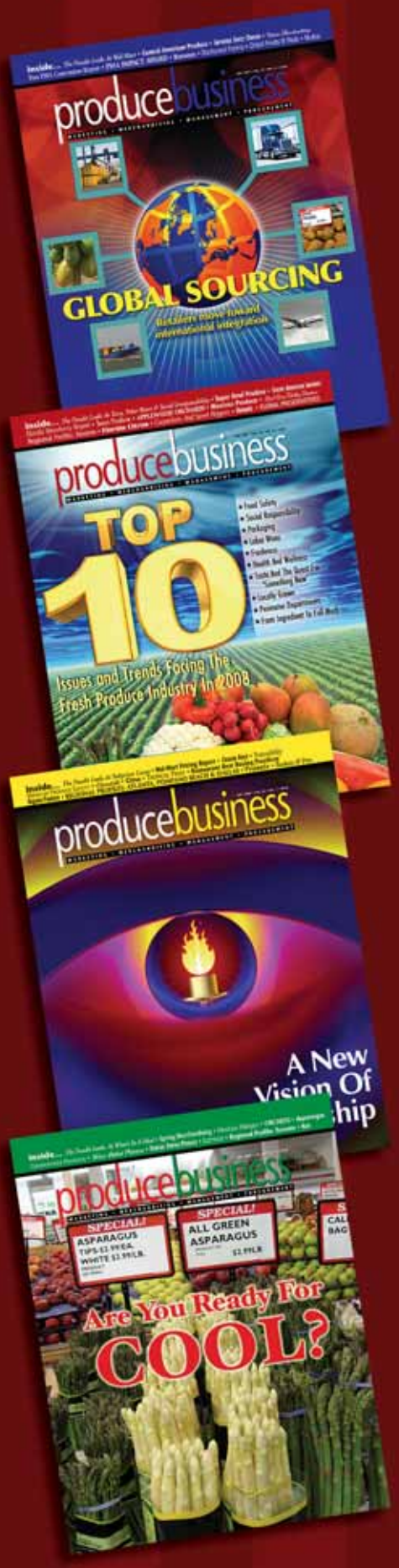
In the case of the apple contest, the following analysis and goal setting might take place:

- What are your current weekly sales, gross profit, labor and shrink percentage?
- How many boxes of apples do you now sell per week?
- How many boxes do you expect to sell due to the sale price?
- With an exciting display in a prime selling area, how many boxes do you think you can sell?
- What is the goal for turnover on the display?
- How many boxes should be on display to maximize sales but still allow for proper rotation?
- What items can be cross-merchandised with apples?
- What are your sales goals?
- What are your goals for sales, shrink, gross profit and labor during the promotion?
- How do you plan to promote apples using point of sale, window signs, pictures, publicity releases, etc.?
- What will be the effect of the apple sale/contest/display on sales in the days and weeks after the promotion?
- During the promotion what will be the effect of sales on other produce items?

The key is to get people thinking and setting goals before they begin. This is a process that should be done at all levels of management, but the benefits of teaching this type of thinking early on will go a long way to developing employees who are both creative and analytical. They will have a better understanding of business and the importance of making money as well as getting publicity. They will begin to see the inter-relationships between different aspects of the department. The added benefit is that entry-level supervisors will gain a level of technical skills and sophistication rarely seen at that level.

This kind of approach can also be used throughout the year to set specific goals and guidelines. Goals need to be set that are agreed upon at store level and at the corporate level with regard to areas such as variety count, ethnic items and the amount of linear feet given to fruit, vegetables, specialties, hardware, etc. The approach can be a combination of corporate-generated reports, individual store scanning information and the department manager's knowledge of his or her individual store.

The actual goals may be a combination of corporate standards, manager's recommendations and the local community requirements. Once the goals are set, creativity, individualism and art can help accomplish those goals. **pb**



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pbh
PRODUCE FOR BETTER HEALTH FOUNDATION

A new year for
Fruits & Veggies More Matters®
Some new friends for America's Kids!

As we celebrate the first anniversary of the Fruits & Veggies—More Matters national health initiative, PBH is proud to announce the launch of a new kids' website, www.FoodChamps.org, featuring our popular Fruits & Veggies Color Champions™.

Developed in large part through financial support from Imagination Farms and an in-kind donation from KidzSmart, this interactive site is filled with games, activities, and recipes, all especially designed for children. (OK, mom and dad can join in the fun, too). Throughout the website, the Fruits & Veggies Color Champions are there to guide kids, helping them learn about all forms of fruits and vegetables and encouraging kids to make fruits & veggies their choice of foods.

This new kids' website is just one of the many ways Produce for Better Health Foundation and our member growers, packers, shippers, and retailers, are working to further the Fruits & Veggies—More Matters brand and increase fruit and vegetable consumption to improve public health.

Over the past year our members have created promotions and advertised our new brand in fliers, on the radio, on websites and in packaging, as well as in their stores. They've written about Fruits & Veggies—More Matters in newsletters and magazine columns and promoted this important health message through community outreach activities like health fairs and store tours.

We'd like to say "Thank You" to all those who helped make the first year of Fruits & Veggies—More Matters a big success! Please keep up the good work!

If your company is not already involved, and you'd like to learn more about Fruits & Veggies—More Matters, give us a call or send us an email. We're always looking for some new friends, too!

For more information, contact Claudia Wenzing, Vice President of Development, at 302.235.2329 or cwenzing@pbhfoundation.org

www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org

Produce for Better Health Foundation • 5341 Limestone Road • Wilmington, DE 19808
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fruits & veggies more matters®

Reader Service # 109

Nine Ways To Sell More Berries

Offering a wide variety while focusing on popular varieties is key to merchandising this profitable category.

BY CAROL BAREUTHER, RD

According to FreshLook Marketing data for the 52-week period ending Sept. 30, 2007, as supplied by the California Strawberry Commission (CSC), Watsonville, CA, stawberries ranked third in overall produce department sales — just behind tomatoes and apples.

"Retailers believe there is still more opportunity before we begin to speculate a ceiling in this category," notes Vincent Lopes, vice president of berry sales for Dole Fresh Fruit Co., Westlake Village, CA. "Other items may have easily topped off after consecutive years of growth, but berries still have favorable momentum in retail purchasing and consumer consumption trends."

Large 'berry patch' displays draw consumers year-round.

1. BUILD ON STRAWBERRIES

Mike McGuire, director of produce at DeMoulas Market Basket, a 60-store chain based in Tewksbury, MA, explains, "Strawberries are still king of the berry category."

"Strawberries drastically outperform most fruit items in the produce department in terms of revenue generated per store per square foot of allocation," Lopes reports.

Gary Wishnatzki, president and CEO of Wishnatzki Farms, Plant City, FL, explains, "Many retailers automatically switch to California [from Florida] at the end of March, but we've got significant volume into April and need to promote it. This can be advantageous to our East Coast retailers in terms of freight charges and in keeping with the locally grown theme."

Chris Christian, CSC vice president for trade and nutrition, reports, "We expect excellent supplies from California strawberries this year."

2. STOCK BLUEBERRIES, BLACKBERRIES AND RASPBERRIES

Blueberries are second in berry sales to strawberries at DeMoulas, says McGuire. "All the press about their high antioxidant content has really caused them to increase in popularity over the past four to five years."

Mark Luchak, director of produce and floral for Rice Epicurean Markets, an 8-store chain based in Houston, TX, notes, "Blueberries and raspberries are key for us. They're almost as important as strawberries. We pretty much carry them year-round, although there are some peaks and valleys in supply."

John Shelford, former president of Naturipe Farms, LLC, Naples, FL, and current president of Shelford Consulting, Naples, FL, explains, "The supply growth of blueberries, raspberries and blackberries is significantly greater than strawberries, which are experiencing excellent growth. In fact, expect to see significantly increased supplies of blueberries in the next few years."

New blueberry acreage is being planted in the United States and British Columbia, says Mark Villata, executive director of the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council (USHBC), Folsom, CA, and executive director of the North American Blueberry Council (NABC), Folsom, CA. "We're seeing increased blueberry plantings in South American countries like Chile, Argentina and Uruguay. We're also seeing an increase in blueberry volume from the southern hemisphere over the past few years. This has been a very positive development for our industry."

Researchers at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Research Service (ARS) have developed three new varieties of blueberries. Dixiblu, Gupton and DeSoto, which offer better flavor, firmness and shelf life than current varieties, are specifically bred to withstand the hot, humid growing conditions in the southern states.

"This year, we will launch an electronic newsletter for blueberry distributors and wholesalers," Villata adds. "The quarterly e-mail newsletter will contain blueberry-related news, events and information about USHBC publicity activities."

Red raspberries are gaining in popularity, reports Jim Grabowski, merchandising

Expand The Category With Specialty Berries

Retailers are beginning to see the benefit to a full variety of berries as they promote the regular strawberries, raspberries, blueberries and blackberries, points out Karen Caplan, president of Frieda's Inc., Los Alamitos, CA. "For example, we've had success with cape gooseberries."

Mark Luchak, director of produce for Rice Epicurean Markets, based in Houston, TX, "We stock cape gooseberries and currants. They're mostly sidebar items. We sell a few, mostly to customers who know what to do with them."

Gooseberries, also called goldenberries, are cherry-sized, orange-colored berries. Currants are a tiny berry, related to the gooseberry, that comes in black, red and white varieties.

Stephen Bjorlin, sales manager for Hurst's Berry Farm, Inc., Sheridan, OR, explains, "Gooseberries are like rhubarb and used mainly for baking a pie. That's why we introduced an 18-ounce pack last year. It's enough to make a pie, rather than customers having to buy two or three of the 6-ounce packs."

Colombian gooseberries are available with or without the husks year-round, explains Melissa Hartmann de Barros, communications manager for HLB Tropical Food USA, Plantation, FL. "Consumers are interested in goldenberries because of their convenience, health aspect and fun appearance. They are a healthful snack and a fun addition to salads. Samplings are important in the United States because goldenberries are a relatively unknown fruit. Education is key, as always. The display should include a small poster or leaflets explaining the fruit and easy preparation."

Currants are a seasonal berry, explains Robert Schueller, director of public relations for Melissa's/World Variety Produce, Inc., Los Angeles, CA. "Ninety-five percent of the crop is red. Black and white currents are hard to come by. They are used in sauces with sweet and savory dishes, so they merchandise well with other ingredients.

"Loganberries are another specialty item," he adds. "They're available in gold and black. They're similar to a raspberry but have the look and feel of a red blackberry." **pb**

manager for Well-Pict, Inc., Watsonville, CA. "However, they're not likely to overtake strawberries and blueberries."

Red is the most popular variety at retail, remarks Robert Schueller, director of public relations for Melissa's/World Variety Produce, Inc., based in Los Angeles, CA. "The gold and black varieties are more seasonal and sporadic."

Blackberries take a backseat to the other berries, explains Grabowski. "They don't have the taste of the other berries and they don't hold up as well in shipping. There are, however, new varieties being tested that are sweeter and have a better shelf life."

3. OFFER ORGANICS

Organic berries sell, explains Rice Epicurean's Luchak, "but they're not necessarily booming. That's because organic berries can still be pricey at different times of the year. However, when they're in peak season, we've definitely seen sales grow."

Organic will continue to be part of the overall berry mix since there is a consumer base that prefers organic, explains Cindy Jewell, director of marketing for California Giant, Inc., Oxnard, CA. "However, organic is still a small part of the overall mix, similar to the overall produce department mix of organic versus conventional offerings."

According to Stephanie Hilton, director of marketing, Beach Street Farms, LLC, Watsonville, CA, "We've seen demand for organic strawberries increase during the last several years from current as well as new customers. More than 20 percent of our strawberry acreage is organic."

Organic strawberry acreage in California grew from 4.4 percent in 2007 to 4.6 percent in 2008, according to the CSC 2008 Acreage Survey.

Art Galleta, owner/sales manager at Atlantic Blueberry Company, Inc., Hammonton, NJ, reports his company plans to offer organic blueberries under the Naturipe label this year.

4. PAY ATTENTION TO SIZE

Big berries are big on eye appeal. "In Europe, extremely small strawberries — much smaller than our smallest — can sell quite well," notes Dole's Lopes. "In North America, there seems to be more favorable demand for larger berries. But, more importantly, I believe consumers are more focused on purchasing a good, clean package rather than exclusively shopping for size of berry, providing that the berries are not excessively small."

Be sure to note, however, berries that are too big "will be crammed in get squashed in the clamshell," stresses Well-Pict's Grabowski. Berries that are too small won't make container weight. What consumers want is a consistent-sized berry that is large, but not too large."

Last fall, Well-Pict introduced a strawberry clamshell pack that is wider and narrower than the traditional clamshell. "The redesign allows 10 to 15 more cases on a pallet and 200 to 300 more cases per truckload," continues Grabowski, who notes that this helps keep costs in check. "This translates into more product shipped for the same freight charges."

5. MAINTAIN THE COLD CHAIN

Keep berries at their best by maintaining the cold chain, recommends Brian Bocock, vice president of sales, Naturipe Farms. "Any fluctuation in temperature decreases shelf life, customer satisfaction and repeat sales. Therefore, display berries in a refrigerated case, out of the open air."

Shelford of Shelford Consulting suggests, "Display berries at less than 40°F, and at 34°F during all transportation from shipper to store. Purchase often — no less than every three days."

In terms of display, Jewell recommends, "Keep strawberries away from moisture. Moisture will cause a rapid breakdown of the berry. If displayed on unrefrigerated tables, berries need extra care and re-working since they will break down faster. Research shows that one hour out of refrigeration can reduce shelf life by one full day. Price berries on unrefrigerated displays accordingly to ensure rapid sales. Any containers that have damaged or bruised fruit should be removed immediately and reworked to ensure the best quality is offered to the consumer."

6. PRESENT A VARIETY OF PACKAGE SIZES

McGuire offers large-pack sizes of berries at DeMoulas, including 2- and 4-pound strawberries. "They are good movers, especially during the domestic California season. Out of Chile and Argentina, we're seeing more pints of blueberries rather than just the traditional 4.4-ounce clamshells."

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"The 1-pound clamshell for strawberries continues to dominate the packaging scene," reports Beach Street's Hilton, "However, we have seen an increased demand for both our 2-pound and 4-pound clamshells throughout the year and not just during the summer."

CSC's Christian recommends retailers make "the 1-pound package 60 percent of the display space and the 2- and 4-pound packages 20 percent each of the display space from March through August. Display space should be expanded during peak availability and holiday promotional periods. Our research shows that offering a choice in packaging sizes can increase sales by as much as 18 percent."

Valerie Sill, strawberry business manager, Driscoll Strawberry Associates, Watsonville, CA, agrees, adding, "The larger mix of package sizes allows for promotion of one size or type of berry and still maintains an acceptable gross margin for the total category. Varying strawberry package size to the season allows you to hit better price points in the off seasons and capture bigger dollar rings through the registers during the peak and summer seasons."

Virtually all berry varieties are now shipped in clamshells, according to California Giant's Jewell. "This makes retail merchandising and display that much easier when putting all berry types into one display," she notes. "Packaging helps in merchandising specific brands within the produce department. For example, we highlight various messaging on our clamshells to feature the healthful benefits of strawberries to adults, or we feature Sesame Street messaging focused on building healthy habits at a young age to reach moms with kids."

7. ALLOCATE ENOUGH DISPLAY SPACE

"Presentation, presentation, presentation is the key," stresses Greg Mixon, sales manager and vice president for SunnyRidge Farm, Inc., Winter Haven, FL. "Berries are an impulse buy. The better the location, the better [the sales]."

At Rice Epicurean Markets, all types of berries are displayed together using a berry patch theme. "Displays range from 6- by 8-feet to as much as 12-feet in peak season," Luchak notes.

At DeMoulas, McGuire merchandises all berries in one display within the produce department. "In season, we'll also move berries to a special display in the front of the department to prompt impulse sales."

"There's enough availability of all berries year-round to offer a dedicated berry section — or patch — year-round," reports Tom Tjerandsen, marketing manager, Chilean Fresh Fruit Association (CFFA), Sonoma, CA.

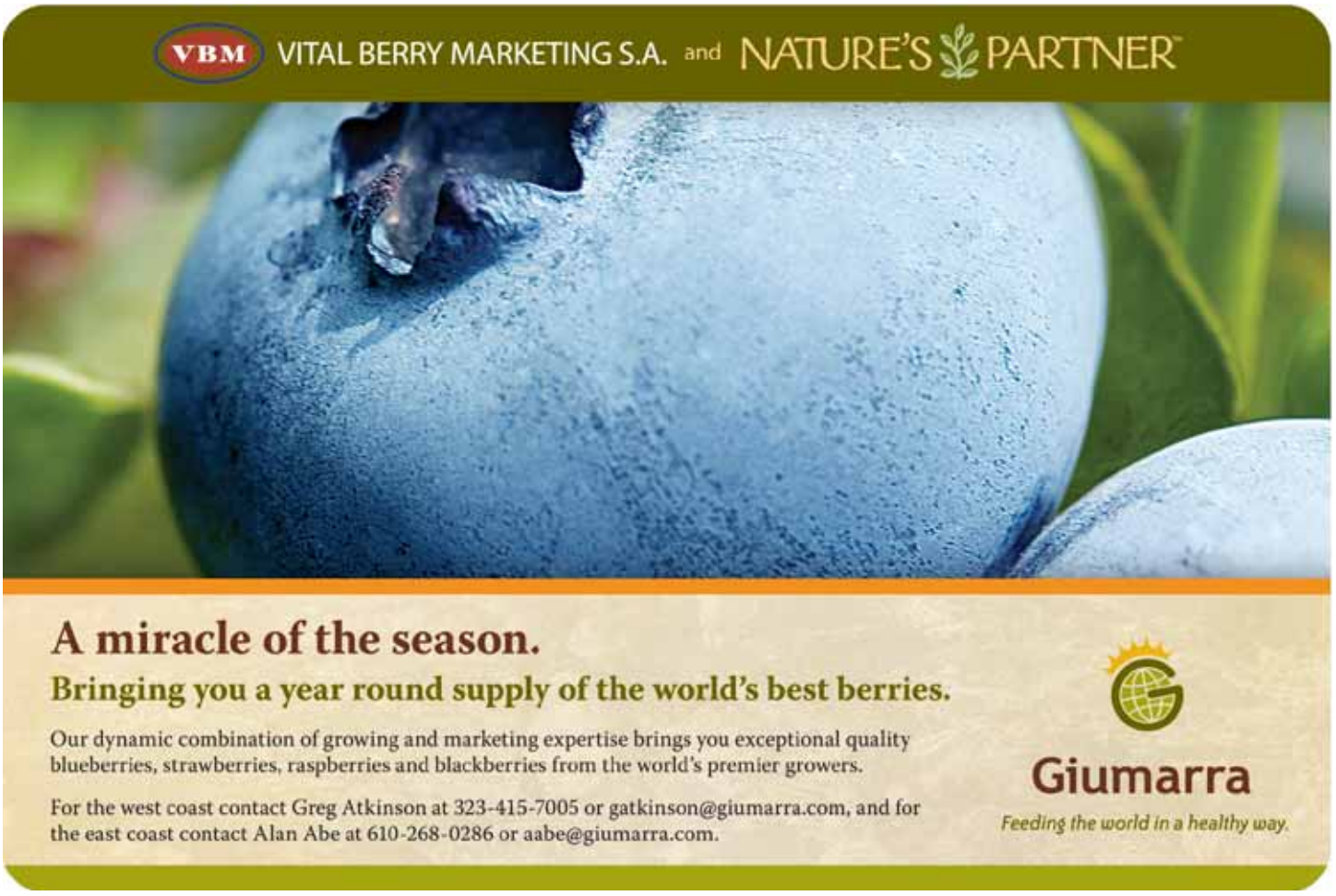
Strawberries typically enjoy more than 60 percent of display space followed by blueberries, then raspberries and blackberries, explains Jewell. "Be sure to provide adequate supplies of each berry and keep the display fully stocked," she recommends. "Integrate organics as part of the berry patch strategy, but keep them physically separate appropriately. Also, don't forget to include stem berries in the product mix. Since stem berries are sold in clamshells, shrink on this item has been significantly reduced compared to the days when they were sold bulk on an individual basis."

Christian adds, "Merchandise strawberries in consistent locations throughout the year. Establish multiple end-cap displays in primary positions during peak availability in the spring and summer."

8. CROSS-MERCHANDISE

Berries give all departments a boost, explains McGuire. "We cross-merchandise strawberries with angel food cake from the bakery, all berries with whipped cream from dairy and blueberries on a tray with bananas next to the cereal rack."

"We cross-merchandise berries in sec-



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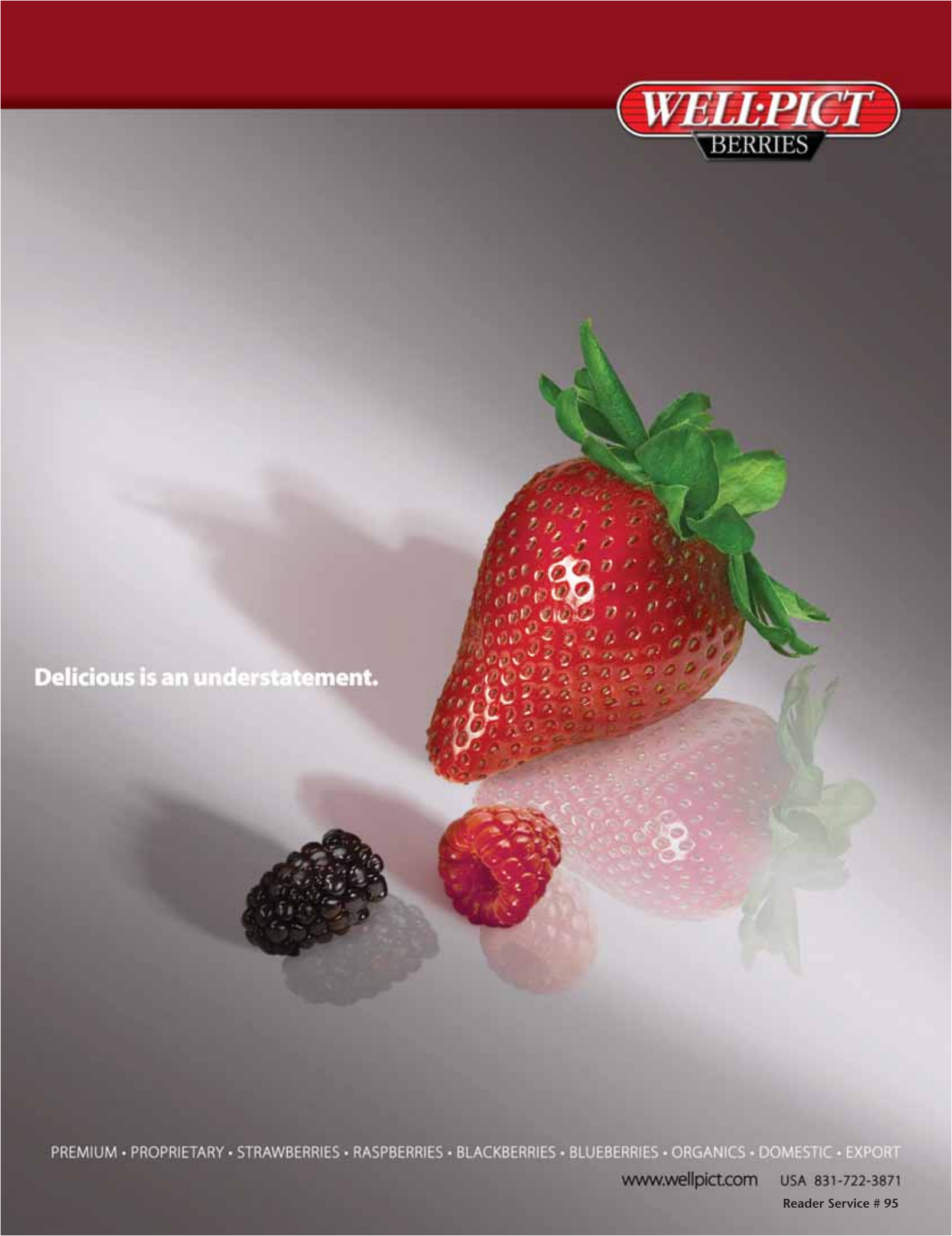

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ondary and tertiary positions, such as in the front lobby and in the bakery," notes Rice Epicurean's Luchak.

Providing consumers serving suggestions and recipes can also play a major role in boosting sales. If recipes aren't available, "Retailers should definitely provide tie-in items on their berry display to encourage add-on sales of other items," California Giant's Jewell suggests.

Recipes such as salads, salsas and smoothies show the versatility of strawberries, explains CSC's Christian. "More traditional [cross-merchandising] items include other berries, whipped cream, pound cake, tart shells, dips and glazes."

USHBC's Villata says, "We're encouraging blueberry use in salads, so retailers can merchandise them with the salad greens."

9. ADVERTISING AND YEAR-ROUND PROMOTIONS

When promotional supplies of berries are available, Jay Schneider, produce assistant sales manager for the eastern division of Acme Markets, Inc., a 134-store chain based in Malvern, PA, and owned by Supervalu, Inc., Eden Prairie, MN, makes sure they're advertised. "We will run BOGO [buy-one-get-one] ads on the cover of our weekly circular in some weeks and inside sub-features in other weeks," he reports. "These ad promotions are coupled with a prominent front table display near the entrance of the department to entice impulse purchases."

The key "is to price different sized packs accordingly, so they have the same perceived value for the consumer," according to Jewell. "If one size is featured in a BOGO but other packaging sizes are offered at a regular and much higher price, then most likely those other package sizes will not move and the retailer will have higher shrink as a result."

"Don't price berries too low," Dole's Lopes stresses. "Doing so will lead to consumer suspicion and customer distrust. Promote 40-plus weeks per year. By using a rotation of conventional promotional tools — front page, back page, line item, in store — this can easily be easily achieved."

"Berries are always part of spring and summer holiday promotions," Jewell adds. "Consumers know that this is the time of year when berries are at their peak and most available. During the peak season, strawberries set the tone for the department and create excitement. Retailers realize benefits from display contests, sampling programs, competitive ad programs and secondary displays for add-on sales."

Naturipe's Bocock notes, "There's a lot more opportunity for late summer strawberry ads due to newer varieties out of Oxnard and northern California. Also, there's opportunity for blueberry ads in August and September out of New Jersey, Michigan and British Columbia that weren't there four to five years ago. Labor Day is now a great promotional holiday for berries in addition to Memorial Day and Fourth of July. On the import side, blueberries and blackberries from the southern hemisphere can now be promoted from the second week of December through to the last week in February. Raspberries peak in February and March, while blackberries are promotable from December to the end of February."

Promotions for South American blueberries are poised to grow in the future. Last fall, grower/exporters in Chile voluntarily donated an additional $100,000 beyond their check-off agreement to the North American Blueberry Council for a winter-themed public relations campaign geared toward food editors and uses for blueberries during the winter months.

"Next year, the Chileans are hoping that Argentina matches this donation, and Uruguay, too, in the future," according to CFFA's Tjerandsen. **pb**

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Seven Suggestions To Boost Avocado Sales

Show customers the value and versatility of ripe avocados.

BY TRISHA WOOLDRIDGE

Guacamole is often the first — and only — thing consumers associate with avocados. While guacamole has become a virtual staple for major sporting events, barbeques, Cinco de Mayo and other informal gatherings, the avocado can be used for much more.

"Our feeling is traditional holiday promotions work well, but because avocados are available year-round, they should be promoted on a continuous basis throughout the year," explains Rankin McDaniel, president, McDaniel Fruit, Co., Fallbrook, CA. "They are a very good category for the produce department. Why not take advantage of their availability?"

1. OFFER RIPE

The most important thing retailers can do to sell more avocados is to offer them ripe. People today want instant gratification and convenience. They don't have time to wait for an avocado to ripen. Avocados are often impulse buys, so they need to be ready to eat upon purchase.

"Displaying ripe and ready-to-eat avocados tops the list of things retailers can do to boost demand," states Jan DeLyser, vice president of marketing for the California Avocado Commission (CAC), Irvine, CA.

Avi Crane, president and CEO of Prime Produce International, LLC, Orange, CA, agrees, adding, "The best tip I can give is to continue to merchandise ripe avocados."

McDaniel believes it's important to keep a good supply of ripe avocados available to capture the attention of impulse and last minute-shoppers. "They're looking for something that could be used tonight."

For stores that implement a ripe program, "Sales don't just go up — they go up dramatically," according to David Austin, director of marketing for Mission Produce, Inc., Oxnard, CA. "And they continue to grow four to five years later."

A store looking to start a ripe program or evaluate an existing program should consider several points. "Most of the ripening is now handled by the supplier in regional proximity to the retail customer," explains DeLyser. "There are a few retailers who manage their own ripening programs by utilizing existing banana rooms."

Variety and ripeness are the keys to implementing a successful avocado program.

Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., based in Bentonville, AR, conducts its own ripening, notes Gary Campisi, director of quality control. At the distribution centers, "We use thermal technology and pressure ripening rooms. We don't want checkerboard ripening; we want consistent conditioning and ripeness."

The checkerboard effect happens when a bin of avocados displays different levels of ripeness. When consumers want avocados that can be eaten today or tomorrow, they will return to a store that always offers ripe fruit. If the avocados are inconsistent and consumers are unsure they will find ripe avocados, they are less likely to return.

Retailers must know the differences between avocados and how to identify their ripeness. The most common avocado, the Hass, turns a purple-black when ripe and gives to gentle pressure. On the other hand, Florida avocados, marketed as SlimCados by Brooks Tropicals, LLC, Homestead, FL, remain green when ripe but still give to gentle pressure. SlimCados do not need to be conditioned or ripened, explains Mary Ostlund, director of marketing. "They ripen when they are picked," she adds.

Mark Miselnicky, marketing director, Ultimate Avocado, McAllen, TX, notes retailers should offer more than just ripe avocados. "Ripe is great if you want to eat it right now, but be careful. Some people want to buy an avocado to keep in their house that will last more than a day or two. Creating a program around your consumers' needs is key."

2. EDUCATE CONSUMERS

The good news is many people associate avocados with guacamole or dips; the bad news is many consumers make only that connection and purchase avocados only for

Continued on page 154

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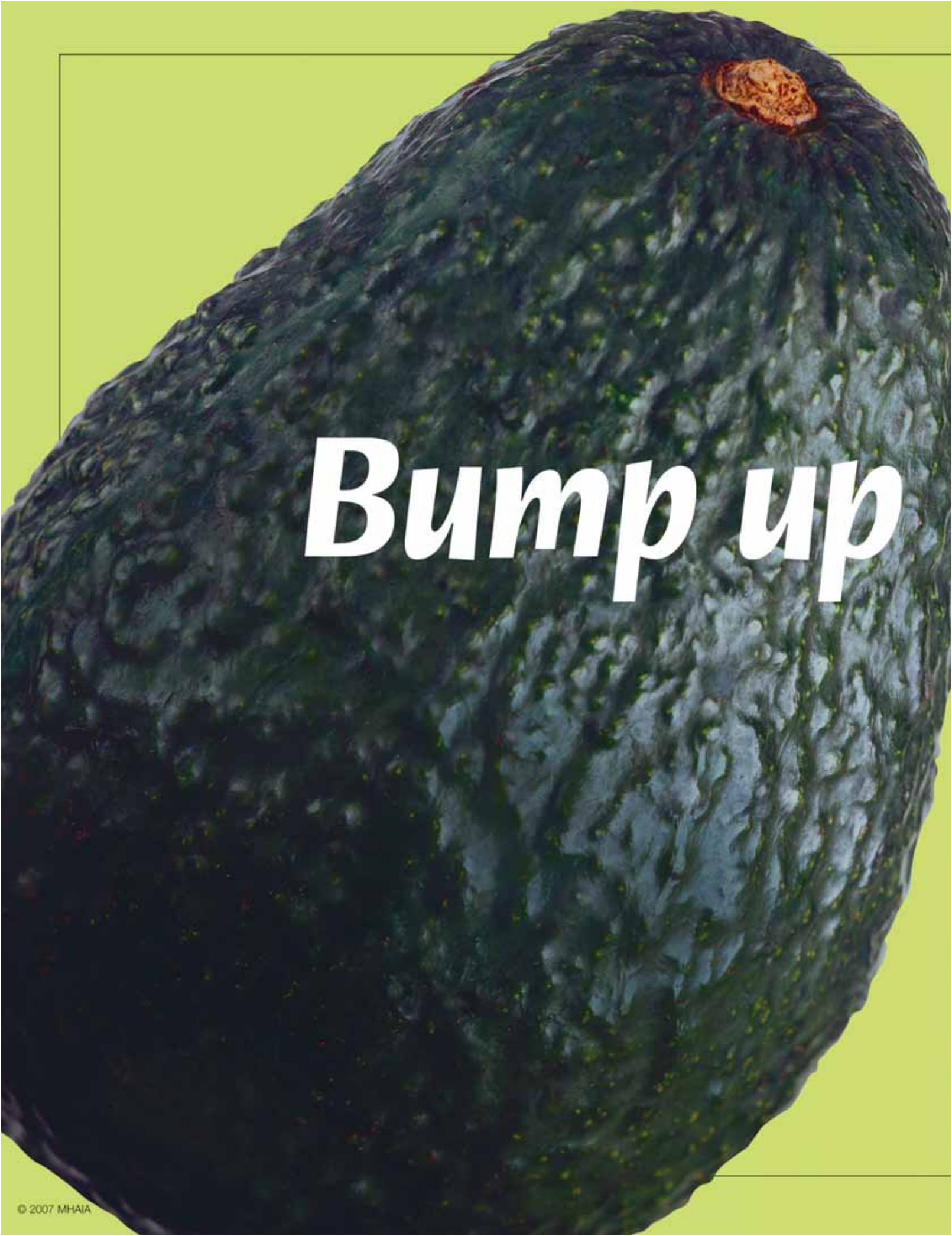

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HASS AVOCADOS FROM MEXICO

It has to be Hass.

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Continued from page 150

parties. Unfortunately, this limited perception prevents consumers from fully enjoying avocados. "It's nature's mayonnaise," describes Mission's Austin. "It has healthful oils and the creaminess of mayonnaise. You can use it to replace butter or cream cheese."

Avocados are also making more appearances in the foodservice sector. Specialty sandwich shops often offer wraps or sandwiches with avocado as a prominent ingredient or as a spread. Hearty salads often sport avocado slices or chunks. There are even gourmet pizzas with avocado slices. Ostlund sings the praises of avocado in sushi and sliced over creamy soups.

Stores can educate customers about the different kinds of avocados. While the Hass has 90 to 95 percent saturation, other avocados provide different textures, flavors and even health benefits. "The American palate for avocado is strengthening and widening," reports Brooks' Ostlund.

For example, the SlimCado is bigger than the Hass and has a much lower fat and oil content. Used in salads and soups, it offers a different flavor and texture. "For those who love the taste of avocados, but need to think of calories and fat, the Slimcado lets them enjoy it more frequently," she explains.

It is also important to educate consumers on avocado basics. Include signs that state the fruit is ripe. Stickers on individual fruits communicating ripeness to the customer make a big difference not only in sales but also in shrink. If customers are unsure of fruit ripeness, they will squeeze the fruit, which bruises the flesh and shortens the shelf life.

Chris Tully, president of the Garden City, NY-based Preston/Tully Group, Inc., which represents the Association of Packers and Exporters of Michoacán (APEAM), in Michoacán, Mexico, and the Mexican Hass Avocado Importers Association (MHAIA), in Fallston, MD, describes an Avocado 101 marketing program directed toward new consumers. The effort is aimed at educating consumers about the basic facts, such as what a ripe avocado looks, tastes and feels like. Signage should offer ripeness information, recipes and food pairings. He suggests demonstrations to give consumers a little taste and illustrate how to cut an avocado.

3. DON'T FORGET GUAC

While broadening consumers' perception of avocado usage is important, capitalizing on the fruit as the most popular party dip ingredient can also increase sales. "Most people who buy avocados only know guacamole," explains Mission's Austin.

While the limited association can shortchange avocado potential, it doesn't mean the connection should be ignored. Austin shares a cross-merchandising example that Mission shared with guacamole mixes from Concord Foods, Inc., Brockton, MA. Retailers placed the guacamole mixes next to Mission's avocados to promote one-stop sales.

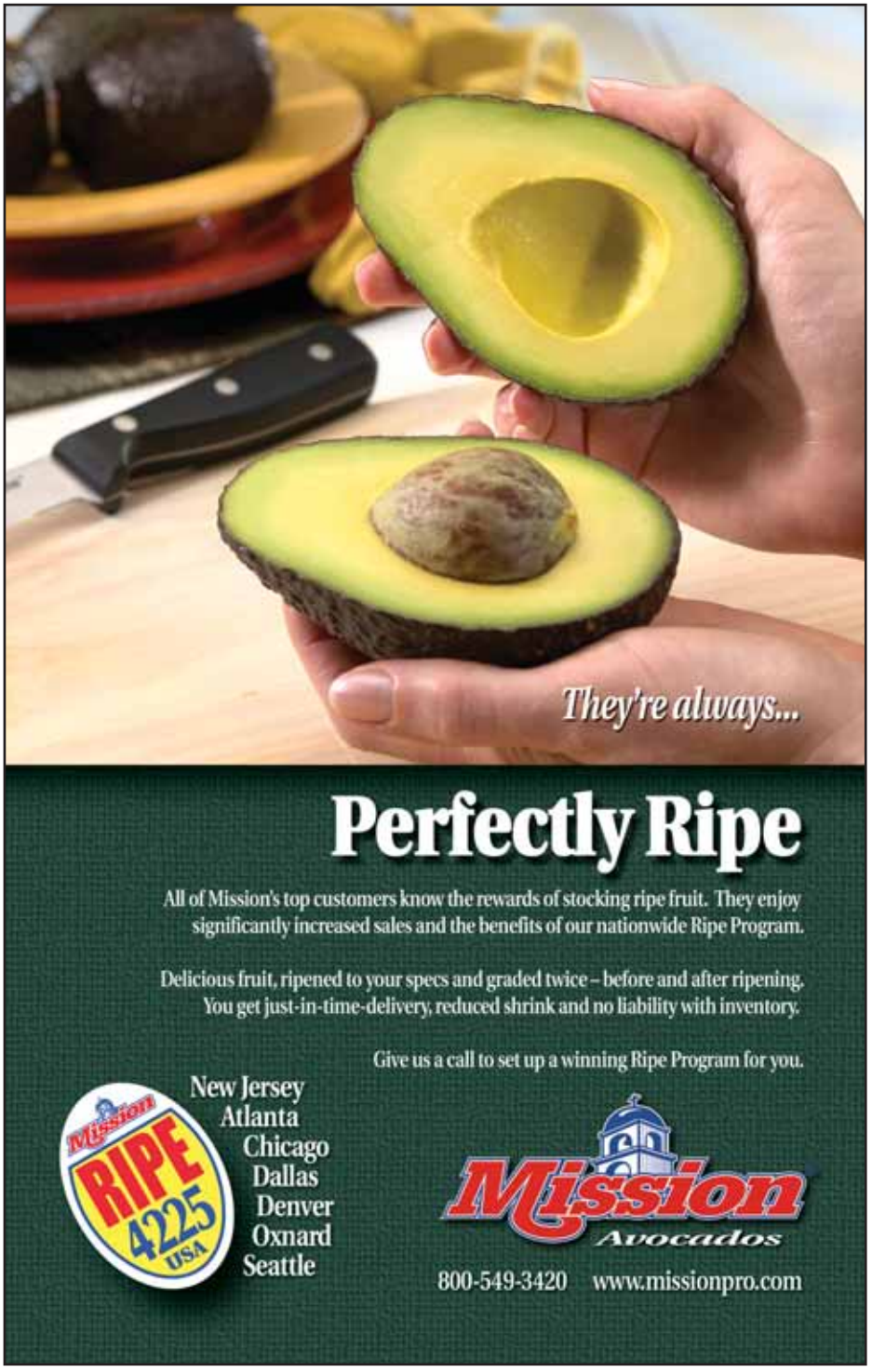
Ed Figueroa, category manager for LGS Specialty Sales, Ltd., Bronx, NY, and secretary for the Hass Avocado Board (HAB), Irvine, CA, suggests merchandising "avocados next to tomatoes, onions, limes and other guacamole ingredients. That makes it much easier to shop."

Tully suggests offering a fresh alternative to conventional dips by including guacamole recipes in snack sections and near tortilla chips.

4. CONSIDER REAL ESTATE

Location considerations can help boost avocado sales. Rob Wedin, vice president of sales and fresh marketing for Calavo Growers, Inc., Santa Paula, CA, suggests, "Avocados do best when merchandised with lemons or tomatoes to make a color break."

Austin agrees, adding, "Merchandise avocados alongside tomatoes. The color break is beautiful, and many times avocado recipes



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call for tomatoes. Also, the ethylene given off by tomatoes helps ripen the fruit."

"Cross-merchandising can be a very effective tool if you use the appropriate products," says McDaniel of McDaniel Fruit. "Avocados can be cross-merchandised with tomatoes and other salad items." When California avocados are in season, he suggests cross-merchandising them with California wine.

"Prominent and permanent end-cap displays of ripe avocados with secondary displays featuring another size or bags have been shown to increase sales," according to CAC's DeLyser.

Merchandising outside of the produce department is also important to sell more avocados, Tully notes. "Create multiple display locations, multiple touch-points, where the customer can see avocados. It creates more chances to be noticed." For example, include large displays in store lobbies when avocados are on promotion, he adds.

5. PRESENT OPTIONS

Avocado displays tend toward bulk presentations of Hass avocados at about a 48-count size. By offering a few types of avocados in different sizes and packaging, retailers can satisfy customers and boost sales while catering to different tastes and needs.

"What does it mean to add another avocado?" asks Brooks' Ostlund. The SlimCado is "a good alternative, but it's not going to replace the Hass avocado. Consumers use it when they want to forgo calories and fat."

It's important to provide alternatives in size and packaging. "Instead of one huge display, have two different displays in two different sizes," Mission's Austin suggests. "In bagged fruit, use the 60- or 70-count size. The avocado is a smaller fruit, so it provides value to the consumer. The price is lower because of size."

LGS' Figueroa adds, "In developing your product line, more successful outlets use multiple SKUs — larger and smaller avocados, as well as loose and bagged avocados with recipes. The smaller avocados in the bags give more flexibility with meals."

6. GET CREATIVE

Outstanding displays catch consumers' eyes. People are programmed to be selective, so consumers will not pay attention to static displays or products. This can be particularly detrimental to impulse buys, such as avocados. Retailers should create displays that are unique, different and eye-catching.

"One of the things we do is execute a variety of joint promotions between synergistic products," says Tully of Preston/Tully. For example, a beer promotion, Celebrate the Season, focused on the party atmosphere associated with guacamole and offered consumers a discount when they purchased beer and avocados together.

HASScar, a cooperative effort between Hass avocados and NASCAR, is another example. "This year, celebrity drivers Kyle Busch and Denny Hamlin will be driving the NASCAR HASScar in eight national NASCAR series races as part of the 2008 Hass Avocados from Mexico NASCAR sponsorship," Tully reports. "NASCAR-themed display contests help generate retailer excitement, consumer awareness and executive national promotion on a local level."

7. PROMOTE OFTEN

Creative displays and merchandising choices can be implemented for just about any holiday, but it's not difficult to promote avocado sales throughout the year. "Avocados are promotable at least once a month," explains Wedin. "And they are available year-round because of the combination of crops from California, Mexico and Chile."

Celebrations such as the Super Bowl, summer barbeques and Cinco de Mayo are natural matches with avocado promotion, but it's important to note that these may not be the best time for price-related promotions, since supply is not going to go up with the demand, warns Wedin. "It's difficult to step up production in California for Cinco de Mayo," he explains. Moreover, the demand for avocados will be strong for these events, so there is no need to lower prices. Instead, Wedin suggests, "Promote avocados before and after these events."

Ultimate's Miselnicky agrees, adding, "Don't forget to promote in the valleys following the Super Bowl season. It really doesn't take much to get people to try an avocado in a new and unusual way."

Retailers can take advantage of the growing demand for avocados with a dependable supply of ripe fruit, consumer education, creativity and a little planning. **pb**

Avocado Ripening 101

Consumers are looking for ripe avocados that can be eaten on the day of purchase. The result has been a rise in preconditioning or ripening programs. What happens to avocados in a ripening program?

The most common way to ripen fruit is through temperature control and the use of ethylene gas. According to Mary Lu Arpaia, extension specialist for subtropical horticulture, University of California, Riverside, CA, "Some sort of forced air system should be used to pull the ethylene through the pallet for uniform gas distribution."

Ethylene gas stimulates ripening in fruit and "enhances fruit-to-fruit ripening," she continues. "The key is to insure proper temperature management, good air flow to distribute ethylene in the ripening room and proper temperature through all containers in a pallet."

Temperature is important because avocados are a high respiring fruit, notes Gary Campisi, quality control director for Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., Bentonville, AR. He says a balance must be struck between temperature maintenance and ethylene absorption. The higher the temperature, the faster the avocado breathes and the faster it ripens.

However, if the temperature is too high, it "can inhibit the fruit ripening in avocado, so it is advisable to maintain the pulp temperature no higher than 70° F," Arpaia recommends.

Once the avocados reach their desired ripeness, they must be cooled to between 41° and 45° F very rapidly to prevent over-ripening. Keeping avocados at this temperature increases their shelf life.

Steps to maintain uniformity must be taken to prevent a checkerboard bin, consisting of avocados with varying levels of ripeness. Throughout the year, avocados ripen at different rates. David Austin, director of marketing for Mission Produce, Inc., Oxnard, CA, explains, "Certain times of the year, avocados need less ripening. If there's more oil or if they've spent more time on the tree, the quicker and easier they will ripen."

To ensure uniformity, some retailers, shippers and distributors separate the avocados to check the level of ripeness before putting an entire pallet into a ripening room. Rob Wedin, vice president of sales and fresh marketing for Calavo Growers, Inc., Santa Paula, CA, uses sound waves to detect the ripeness level to the seed of the fruit. Distribution centers in California, Texas and New Jersey make sure the ripeness is tested and the fruit conditioned as close to the destination markets as possible.

With the proper handling, attention to temperature, airflow, distribution of ethylene and buildup of carbon monoxide, retailers can provide consumers with profitable displays full of avocados that are perfectly ripe and ready for purchase. **pb**

Six Ways To Sell More Carrots

Any way you dice it, this hearty vegetable provides plenty of merchandising opportunities.

BY CAROL BAREUTHER, RD

The number of carrot products and pack styles has multiplied during the last decade, keeping this category booming with sales.

"Both the nutrition factor and the number of SKUs has really grown carrot sales. Overall, the category is strong," notes Mike McGuire, director of produce for DeMoulas Market Basket, a 60-store chain based in Tewksbury, MA.

According to informal data from Information Resources, Inc. (IRI), Chicago, IL, as supplied by Grimmway Farms, Bakersfield, CA, the carrot category contributed 6.75 percent of total produce sales for the 52-week period ending Nov. 25, 2007 — up 2 percent over the same time period a year ago.

Merchandise organic carrots alongside conventional carrots.

1. FOCUS ON CELLOS AND BABIES

Mark Luchak, director of produce and floral for Rice Epicurean Markets, an upscale 8-store chain based in Houston, TX, reports, "We always stock the basics, which are the 1-, 2- and 5-pound cello carrots — but the real category leader is the peeled baby carrot."

McGuire agrees, adding, "Peeled baby carrots have been a big shot in the arm for the category."

In 2007, cello carrots represented 20.06 percent of sales in the category and baby carrots represented 58.4 percent of sales, according to IRI's data.

"Cello-packed carrots are steady sellers for us," notes Andrew Bianchi, sales manager for Kern Ridge Growers, LLC, Arvin, CA. "They have their demand."

Harry Sheaffer, sales manager for Marker 29 Produce, Inc., Lake Park, GA, agrees, offering, "The majority of cello orders for us comes from retailers in the meat-and-potato regions of the country. Canada uses a lot, too. The 2-pound is the biggest cello mover for us, but the 3-pounders aren't so big. The 5-pounders sell well in markets where customers do a lot of juicing."

Still, 75 percent of Marker 29's carrot business is in babies, he adds. "Babies are our fastest mover. In fact, we've recently expanded into two 24-hour shifts to keep up with demand in our East Coast markets."

Baby carrots have found their following due to convenience, according to Bianchi. "Open the bag, and they're ready to go. Use them for snacking or add them to a roast. There's no washing or peeling involved.

The convenience factor only multiplies with packaging styles, Sheaffer points out. "We added a ziplock top to our 1-pound bagged babies. Also, the 2- and 3-ounce bags are good movers for lunch boxes. We're looking at moving into a 1-ounce bag for schools next year."

Peeled baby carrots in a microwavable bag are the No. 1 selling SKU for Bakersfield, CA-based Grimmway Farms, notes Phil Gruzka, vice president of marketing. "It was up 35 percent this year, up 86 to 90 percent last year and up more than 100 percent in sales the year before that."

2. STOCK VALUE-ADDED ITEMS

McGuire cites value-added products as playing a major role in helping DeMoulas' carrot SKUs more than quadruple during the past decade. "Carrot sticks and shreds, for example, are both big movers for us."

Rice Epicurean has observed similar results, reports Luchak. "Customers like carrot coins because they make great snacks. We cross-merchandise them with dips. Shreds also sell well for us."

According to IRI, sales of value-added carrots were up 8 percent last year. They represent slightly less than 10 percent of the category's total sales.

Gruzka explains, "We encourage retailers to carry an entire carrot line. Our research has shown that value-added SKUs are incremental to carrot sales, and these products have a higher per-pound ring that the conventional cellos."

3. OFFER ORGANICS

Organic carrots are a growing area, notes Luchak. "Organic carrots, specifically baby carrots, are among the Top 5 selling organic items in our produce departments."

For the biggest ring, retailers should consider stocking a range of organic carrots as well as conventional carrots. "Organic baby

Annual Carrot Sales Data For The 52-week Period Ending 11/25/2007

	Carrots	% Chg vs YAG	All Vegetables	% Chg vs YAG	Carrots Sales as % of Total Produce Sales
California	$129,227,025	2.0%	$2,112,130,42	3.4%	6.12%
Great Lakes	$155,556,858	0.3%	$1,948,728,14	5.1%	7.98%
Midsouth	$121,492,572	3.9%	$1,776,115,96	4.0%	6.84%
Northeast	$249,528,341	0.4%	$3,531,237,08	1.8%	7.07%
Plains	$80,406,011	0.5%	$942,007,453	3.5%	8.54%
South Central	$76,355,675	0.5%	$1,395,119,90	2.7%	5.47%
Southeast	$111,026,124	4.5%	$1,962,305,77	0.4%	5.66%
West	$112,795,621	4.9%	$1,693,146,51	8.3%	6.66%
Total U.S.	$1,036,388,2	1.9%	$15,360,791,2	3.4%	6.75%

Source: Information Resources, Inc., Chicago, IL, as supplied by Bakersfield, CA-based Grimmway Farms. Data represent annual sales for the 52-week period ending Nov. 25, 2007.

carrots are a big item for us," McGuire adds.

Organic carrot sales represented 12.48 percent of the category in 2007 — up 10 percent from 2006, according to IRI.

4. CREATE EYE-CATCHING DISPLAYS

Carrots tend to do well when merchandised and cross-merchandised throughout the department and store. Ed Laster, produce specialist at Metropolitan Market, a 5-store chain based in Seattle, WA, explains, "We use carrots for color breaks. They're not necessarily placed next to what they're typically cooked with but by what makes attractive color breaks. Customers are accustomed to seeing them this way and they pretty much know where to look for the type of carrots they purchase each week."

If displayed together, "It would look like one big orange mass and customers would have a difficult time distinguishing the individual items in the category," explains Rice's Luchak. "That's why we spread them around to intersperse among all the green products in the department. If we grouped everything together, the carrot category would take up a 4- to 5-square foot area."

At DeMoulas, McGuire groups products and displays them at various locales in the department. "We keep the value-added items together in a multideck with salad ingredients. The key to this grouping is temperature sensitivity and making sure these products keep cold. We'll spread the regular bagged carrots out around the department, next to the onions, cabbage and turnips during the winter."

Candice Blackmoore, director of marketing for Apio, Inc., Guadalupe, CA, recommends merchandising carrots as a stand-alone category or placing them alongside a dedicated fresh-cut section. "From a consumer perspective, locating fresh-cut carrots within or alongside a dedicated fresh-cut vegetable section reinforces the fresh-cut category destination in the store and creates

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a truly colorful display."

Merchandising fresh-cut carrot snacks can be challenging. "I've seen snacks located in the deli department of some stores and in the produce department in other stores," she adds. "What works best depends on store layout and customer shopping patterns. If a retailer offers a robust deli that sees a lot of weekday lunch and/or weekend traffic, place snacks in or near the deli, where they would likely be sold as grab-and-go complements to sandwiches, for example. If the produce department is the centerpiece, offer snacks alongside other fresh-cut options in the department."

> **"Carrot sticks, coins and babies sell well with dips around the Christmas and New Year's as well as for sporting events like the Super Bowl. The smaller baby packs really pick up for back-to-school."**
>
> **— Mark Luchak**
> **Rice Epicurian Markets**

5. CHILL OUT

The cold chain is most important to keeping carrots looking their best at retail, stresses Kern's Bianchi.

Marker 29's Sheaffer agrees and adds, "Carrots display best in a dry, cool, moist environment. Keep them cold with high humidity, however not under the misters because water will enter the bagged product and cause the carrots inside to sour."

And remember to rotate product, suggests Grimmway's Gruzka. "FIFO — first in, first out."

6. PROMOTE YEAR-ROUND

DeMoulas advertises carrots about 50 times a year, notes McGuire. "Each time, we'll feature a different type or package style and work through the 15 SKUs we carry.

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Reader Service #97

Colorful Carrots

Originally purple or red, carrots didn't become orange until the 1500s, when Dutch growers used a mutant yellow carrot seed from North Africa to develop a carrot in the color of the Dutch royal family, the House of Orange.

Today, consumers are once again finding purple and red carrots, along with yellow and white varieties, at retail. Smart merchandisers are using this diversity to tempt consumers' sense of adventure.

"We carry purple and white carrots in addition to the conventional orange," reports Mike McGuire, director of produce for DeMoulas Market Basket, based in Tewksbury, MA. "They're not a big seller, but they're a unique attention getter and they help to expand the category. The peeled baby yellow carrots and the rainbow carrots are slow-movers. We do sell a few, though, due to the variety effect."

Last year, Grimmway Farms, Bakersfield, CA, began marketing a baby yellow organic carrot product under its Cal-Organic label. "Organic and value-added are the two biggest growth areas in the carrot category and we tied into these with this new product," explains Phil Gruzka, vice president of marketing. "We plan next to expand into organic yellow carrot shreds."

Doug Ranno, COO and managing director of Colorful Harvest LLC, Salinas, CA, states, "Our Harvest Rainbow Crunch carrot business has grown each year we have been in production. Currently, we offer 2-pound Rainbow Crunch carrots [a medley of red, yellow and orange carrots] and 8-ounce chips. Later this year, we will offer whole peeled rainbow crunch carrots."

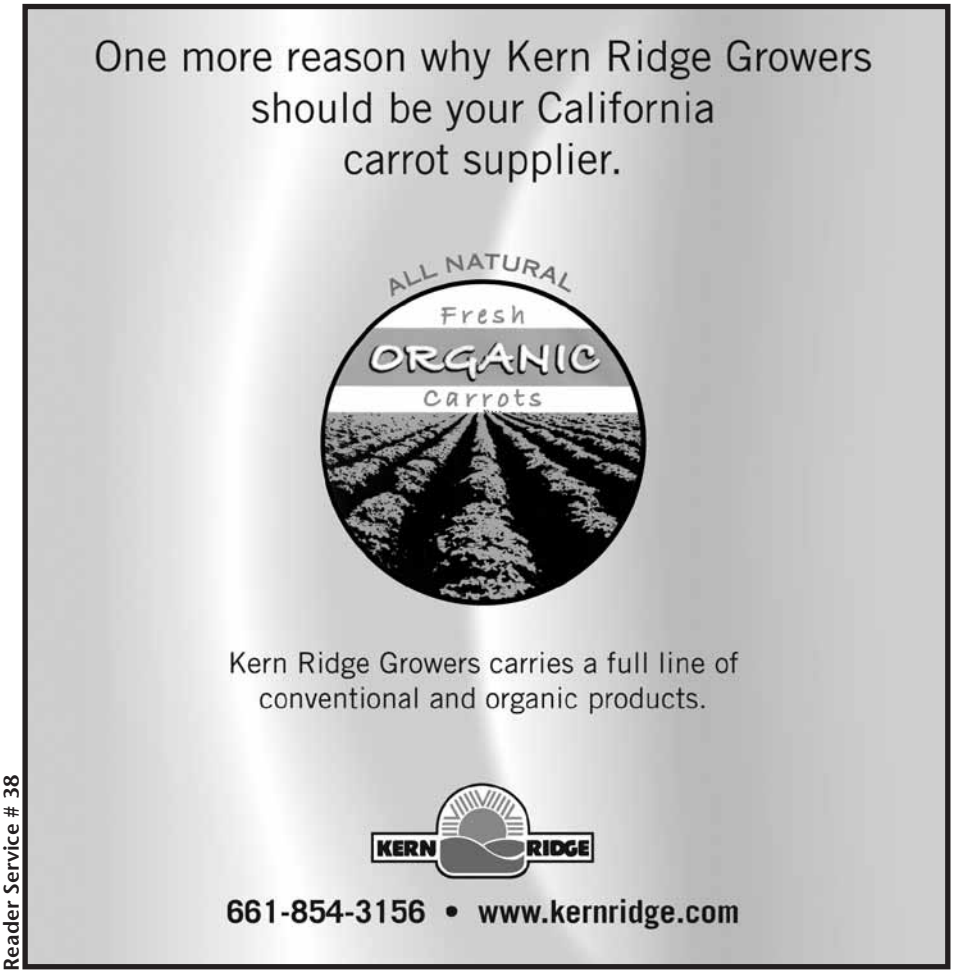
"Merchandise the Rainbow Crunch carrots next to other carrots on the wet rack or on refrigerated end caps next to orange cauliflower, sweet red corn or purple broccoli," he recommends. "Cross-display with raisins and walnuts to make a salad or dip." With color being so important to a complete nutrition strategy, he adds, "More colors in all produce will grow." **pb**

We'll move that SKU to a prime display location when it's on promotion. We don't see much fluctuation in demand during the year for peeled baby carrots, but cello carrots sell more in winter when people are making hearty soups and stews and less in summer when people are cooking less."

"We especially promote carrots around holidays," notes Rice's Luchak. "Carrot sticks, coins and babies sell well with dips around the Christmas and New Year's as well as for sporting events like the Super Bowl. The smaller baby packs really pick up for back-to-school and we'll advertise these more in August and September."

Carrots have year-round availability, with 100 percent domestic supply and little change in volume and price, making it easy for retailers to plan 52-week ad promotions in advance, notes Grimmway's Gruzka.

For promotional strategies, he suggests, "Promote the full line and gain incremental sales. For example, if you promote 1-pound babies, promote a value-added SKU at the same time. This offers the opportunity for the greatest lift and largest incremental gain. Also try promoting a larger, 3-pound bag of baby carrots for holidays in summer and winter when people tend to entertain more and have larger meals." **pb**



Reader Service # 38

Reader Service # 19

Considering Organic Imports?

Retailers should consider many factors — including price, labeling and the depth of consumer commitment — when importing organic produce.

BY TRISHA WOOLDRIDGE

It's impossible to provide domestically all of the produce consumers now demand on a year-round basis. Organic produce is still a niche market, so its domestic availability is even more limited. While the organic category shows amazing growth of more than 20 percent each year, the category accounts for only about 2 percent of produce overall.

On one hand, consumers of organic produce are fiercely loyal and willing to pay premium prices for a product they value. On the other hand, imported organic produce must meet stringent U.S. regulations, and that can raise prices and cut potential earnings. Moreover, many of the organic-purchasing demographic prefer local and domestic product.

Organic products have a reputation for being higher quality and more healthful — whether this is true or not is an open question — allowing them to be priced at a premium. However, a lot goes into getting that organic label. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Organic Program (NOP) sets specific guidelines for growers, shippers and distributors if they want to label their product organic. Importers who wish to label their product organic within the United States must also adhere to these regulations.

In a statement from the Organic Trade Association (OTA), Greenfield, MA, press secretary Barbara Haumann, notes imported produce must meet the same standards as domestic product. "In order to be sold as organic in the United States, imported products must be certified by an agency accredited by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as meeting U.S. national organic standards."

This can be easy for some countries, such as Canada, which has requirements that are as strict, if not stricter in some cases, than the U.S. NOP regulations. Other countries may have different regulations and requirements that can come into play when selling organic produce to United States.

"There are many different standards all over the world," reports Ivy Smith Kraidy of the Consolidated Growers International (CGI), Inc., Merritt Island, FL. "Many of the other governmental standards pass for the USDA standards here in the United States."

Imported organic is a small niche within a niche category.

According to Heather Holland, senior technical manager for food safety and government relations for the Canadian Produce Marketing Agency (CPMA), Ottawa, ON, Canada, "CFIA [Canadian Food Inspection Agency] estimates that in 2005, there were 42 countries — 25 of these in the European Union — with fully implemented organic regulations. Thirteen countries, including Canada, were in the process of implementing regulations — five in Europe and five in South America — and 16 countries were in the process of drafting regulations — six in Latin America."

"It really comes down to reciprocity from the country of origin," states Will Daniels, vice president of quality, food safety and organic integrity for Earthbound Farm, San Juan Bautista, CA. "If the exporting country has a reciprocity agreement with the United States on the organic standards, then their certified product complies with U.S. standards and can be sold as organic in the United States. If they do not have reciprocity, the auditing agency needs to be accredited by the U.S. NOP. If neither exists, an accredited auditor must be sent by an NOP-approved certifier. You can imagine that the cost for each increases dramatically from the first example to the last."

ORGANIC INTEGRITY

Each item that could be labeled organic needs to be evaluated based on the regulations from its specific country of origin.

Tom Tjerandsen, marketing director for Chilean Fresh Fruit Association, Sonoma, CA, cites two examples from Chile. Grapes need to be treated with methyl bromide before crossing the U.S. border, causing them to lose their organic status, while cherries don't require a treatment that would com-

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promise their organic integrity.

Mangos are treated with only a hot water bath, so it is easy for treated mangos to maintain an organic status, explains Wendy McManus, director of marketing for the National Mango Board, Orlando, FL. "Because most mangos are treated to eradicate fruit fly larvae via hot water immersion, there is an additional requirement that the water be changed before treating organic mangos. Some packing sheds use a separate treatment line for organics."

"Certain countries are restricted on lists of fruits and vegetables into the United States based on protection of pests entering U.S. territory," reports CGI's Kraidy. "For example, we cannot import organic asparagus from Peru because Peruvian asparagus is restricted to mandatory fumigation upon entrance to the United States, making its

The Price Of Importing

Most countries that export to the United States realize that no matter how dedicated the demographic is to organic produce, there is a ceiling to how high the price can go. "So far, nothing has gone crazy. If prices went too crazy, people wouldn't buy," according to Rob White, produce manager for The Living Earth, an organic grocery store in Worcester, MA. "If tomatoes from Mexico or Israeli peppers get too high, customers won't buy them."

Wholesalers have more flexibility in dealing with prices. Robert Schueller, director of public relations for Melissa's/World Variety Produce, Inc., Los Angeles, CA, explains, "We can look at the current exchange rate and buy from the country with the best rate." With New Zealand and parts of Europe, he points out, there is a currency issue based on the weakening U.S. dollar. On the other hand, the U.S. dollar is still strong compared to the Mexican peso.

Heather Holland, senior technical manager for food safety and government relations for the Canadian Produce Marketing Agency (CPMA), Ottawa, ON, Canada also comments on the effect of the weakening U.S. currency. "At this time, it has had little effect," he says. "There has been some benefit to Canadian retailers sourcing U.S. organic product." **pb**

organic certification process null and void." These treatments make maintaining organic status "very difficult to nearly impossible. If a pest is found and the import load has to be fumigated, it no longer qualifies as organic, and that is what makes policing organics more difficult. If an organic crop is harvested and imported into the United States, it already has the organic certification. If it is fumigated, it is no longer certified organic legally, but some brokers will still sell it as organic because it has the certification."

"If there is a concern about violations by a producer or handler, a complaint can be filed with NOP, and officials will follow up with an investigation, and, if needed, take enforcement action," says OTA's Haumann.

DEMOGRAPHIC DEMAND

With organic produce, there is a dichotomy of the demographic. Loyal organic buyers are willing to pay premium prices for the value they place on environmental impact, health benefits and flavor. However, much of this demographic prefers to buy locally or only from countries they know have fair trade practices. Retailers would do well to consider their demographics and the item's country of origin.

"Some don't mind, but some balk," explains Rob White, produce manager for The Living Earth, an organic grocery store in Worcester, MA, of his customers. "A lot of people don't want to buy [from certain countries] based on their practices. They believe if it's not grown by happy farmers in happy conditions, it is not good to eat. Fair trade is important." Produce grown in countries with fair trade practices "tends to cost more, but it is first to sell from our displays."

Those who doubt the quality of imported products, however, actually have less to worry about. According to Robert Schueller, director of public relations for Melissa's/World Variety Produce, Inc., Los Angeles, CA, the majority of imported produce is tested and audited more frequently than domestic produce. In fact, he points out, more problems occur with domestic product than imported. The spinach crisis of 2006 is an example of this, he adds. "It was a domestic company."

White agrees, adding, "The quality [of imported organics] is usually very good. Sometimes stuff from Israel is superior to stuff from the United States."

"You don't see a drop in organic sales when the items are imported," according to Schueller . "It's winter and people are not buying less organic." **pb**

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San Francisco
MARKET PROFILE

Coastal city boasts growing wholesale markets.

BY LISA LIEBERMAN

Some of the country's most savvy and progressive produce consumers live in the San Francisco Bay Area, one of the pivotal areas where organic produce got its start. Today, San Francisco consumers are in the forefront of the locally grown produce movement.

"We get a lot of walk-ins from high end restaurant people, and the first things they ask us are, 'What's new?' and 'How can I differentiate myself?'" explains Stanley Correa, Jr., a sales representative for Stanley Produce Co., Inc., on the San Francisco Wholesale Produce Market.

Produce items, such as endive, radicchio, Treviso, frisée and Spanish musica are just a few examples of specialty items chefs are buying more of, Correa reports. Different varieties of mushrooms are also becoming popular. "Ten years ago, no one knew what a portobello was," Correa points out. "Now, we're doing all kinds of mushrooms, including shiitakes and oyster mushrooms. We also do wild mushrooms picked in the forest, which are newer to the marketplace. People like them because they have very distinctive flavors and very nice textures."

Bill Wilkinson, owner of GreenLeaf on the San Francisco Wholesale Produce Market, notes variety has become an important aspect of produce. Wilkinson, who sells 3,000 to 7,000 produce items seasonally, was one of the first people to market mixed boxes of vegetables. "It all started when we spilled a box of cherry tomatoes in with some other tomatoes. The restaurant chefs liked that, so we started to do more of a variety of vegetable blends that we call toy boxes," Wilkinson explains. "We do more mixed boxes of things every year, like mixed boxes of eggplants, squashes and chicories."

Several years ago, a few U.S. growers brought several old heirloom varieties of chicory, a curly, bitter green, back from Italy. "Sometimes, we'll get farmers with new seeds from somewhere who want to try something new. We usually say yes

Dave Alho
Lee Ray-Tarantino Co., Inc.

Peter Carcione
Carcione's Fresh Produce

Miguel Gonzalez
Coosemans

Leo Rolandelli
Jacobs, Malcolm & Burtt

Kathleen Martin
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Annette Lee
John DeMartini Co., Inc.

Greg Holzman
Pacific Organic Produce/Purity

Dennis Martin
O. Lippi & Co. Inc.

Steve Clemens
Vegiworks, Inc.

because these farmers are our life blood and we want to support them," Wilkinson adds.

Most of GreenLeaf 's customers are restaurants always looking for new things to try, Wilkinson reports. "We work with a lot of small restaurants that want to get the best quality produce, so they can compete with larger restaurants," he explains. "We'll work, for instance, with small, hole-in-the-wall restaurants that want to put the best quality tomato on top of the best hamburger they can make."

Since so much specialty produce has gone mainstream and is produced by large growers, there's pressure on small growers to come up with cutting edge items in produce, according to Wilkinson.

There's also the challenge that marketers face in supplying these specialty items to customers year-round, explains David Alho, senior specialty buyer for Lee Ray-Tarantino Co., Inc., on the Golden Gate Produce Terminal. "If our customers want pomegranates in July, our job is to go find them," he stresses. "We'll go further than anyone else to get what we need to satisfy our customers."

This is a challenge since many growers grow only certain items for four to six months of the year. "We have a lot of foodservice customers, and consistency is important. If you're a restaurant, you can't have something on the menu one day and not have it the next day — especially if you're charging $50 a plate," Alho explains.

STEADY SUPPLIES

While more marketers are supplying a wider variety of produce items, more marketers are also working with fewer items but doing more volume. "If you look at the market, a lot of houses are specializing in just a few things," explains Michael Gonzalez, sales at Coosemans San Francisco, Inc., on the Golden Gate Produce Terminal.

Coosemans, which has a total of 27 locations around the country, sources about 80 percent of its produce in the San Francisco market from a small handful of trusted growers in Mexico. These growers supply the company with large volumes of chili peppers and maradol papayas. They are also beginning to experiment with specialty beans, such as Spanish musica, a very sweet and tender bean that is about a foot long and an inch wide, Gonzalez adds.

The company also does a large volume in Mexican onions, cactus pears and ripened tomatoes on the vine, but no longer does a great deal of European peppers, which used to be a major item.

Jacobs, Malcolm and Burtt (JMB) in the San Francisco Wholesale Produce Market, is a good example of a house that does large volume with relatively few items. JMB is known for the asparagus it imports from all over the world as well as berries, melons and deciduous fruits. "We do some other things also, but our energy level is really in the melons, berries and fruit," explains Leo Rolandelli, president. His customers are gravitating toward a wider variety of melons, including Crenshaws, Casabas, Sharlyns, Canaries, Galias and orange-flesh honeydews. The melons come in a variety of colors, sizes and shapes with green, orange or white flesh. "These melons have really nice aromas and are quite tasty," he adds.

The white flesh melons are becoming increasingly popular. "We carry a full line of melons that many other people don't have. You have to do whatever you can to keep pace with industry demands," Rolandelli explains.

Overall, the two San Francisco markets do a good job of keeping pace with industry demand, in terms of variety, quality and volume, most marketers say.

IMPORTANCE OF WHOLESALE MARKETS

"The wholesale markets are always going to be important," Gonzalez reports. "We sell to a lot of independent retailers, and it's not like they can buy whole truckloads of celery from the growers. They have to buy smaller loads of a variety of things, and the San Francisco markets are just the place to do that."

The independent chain stores rely heavily on the wholesale markets, says Peter Carcione of Carcione's Fresh Produce Co., Inc., at the Golden Gate Produce Terminal. Large chain stores have had to endure the rising cost of workman's compensation as well as higher input costs overall, he notes. Small chain stores don't have the same overheads, so they now have a leg up, which means that the wholesale markets also have a leg up.

"The smaller chain stores are able to get the benefit of coming out to the market, seeing the produce for themselves and getting a good markup at the stores, but still being under the price of the chain stores," Carcione explains. "I've never seen this kind of separation between the chain stores and smaller stores in the 38 years I've been in produce. It's a nice gap for the little guy."

Glenn Yasuda, owner of the Berkeley Bowl, in Berkeley, CA, reports that operations like his have a definite advantage over the larger chain stores. Yasuda walks the San Francisco markets several times a week, often buying more than two semi-truck loads of produce a day. "I taste everything every day before it goes out on the shelves," he notes.

The San Francisco markets' close proximity to many of its customers as well as the diverse services and products it offers are two of the main selling points, reports Mike Janis, the general manager of the San Francisco Wholesale Produce Market. "We have a very varied customer base as well as a varied merchant base," Janis notes. "We're also very fortunate in terms of our location. We've got fabulous access to San Francisco, the North Bay, the South Bay and the

PRODUCE GAINING POPULARITY IN SCHOOLS

One of the major trends in produce is an increasing demand for locally grown fruits and vegetables.

This is particularly true for the Berkeley Unified School District in the San Francisco East Bay. Four years ago, when Ann Cooper, a food activist known as the "renegade lunch lady," first began looking into Berkeley's lunch program for children, she found a limited menu with fried foods, canned fruit cocktails and chocolate milk. So she began to create a low-fat menu with a salad bar full of fresh fruits and vegetables.

Cooper did this with the help of GreenLeaf. located on the San Francisco Wholesale Produce Market, which supplied many of the fresh fruits and vegetables used by the district. "Ann Cooper's goal was to turn the lunch program on its ear," explains Andy Powning, produce specialist for Greenleaf. "The goal was to get away from the commoditization of the school lunch program and get students delicious, in-season food."

Changing the foods used by the district involved obtaining the cooperation of numerous government agencies – something that is normally hard to do, Powning notes. "Surprisingly enough, we were able to get compliance in a very highly regulated area."

One of Cooper's goals was to use as much locally grown produce as possible. "We were excited about this because we want to help kids have a better relationship with food," Powning continues. "Obesity is endemic and we've got to start somewhere in addressing this problem. This is Greenleaf's way of helping."

Supplying the schools with seasonal produce educates children about where their food comes from, Powning explains. In addition to supplying the Berkeley schools with produce, GreenLeaf also offers tours of its facilities to any interested schools. "We do things like set up taste tests in schools where students may get to try four different kinds of apples," he notes. "They find out which apples are sweet or sour, which ones are soft or hard as well as different colors."

This is GreenLeaf's second year in the program, and so far, it appears to be a success. "In the old model, schools were offering items like corn dogs or frozen foods or pre-cooked foods," Powning says. "The staff didn't even have the knife skills to cut whole broccoli and cauliflower. Using the frozen stuff was just easier for them."

But all of this is changing. The district's cooks are using more fresh ingredients. Berkeley is at the epicenter of the school lunch program overhaul at the national level, according to Powning, and more school districts are becoming interested in the program's success. "We have about six other school districts getting involved with the program and even more coming," heads. **pb**

Ande Manos of Babé Farms (a Santa Maria, CA-based shipper of specialty vegetables), who was visiting the market, and Stanley A. Corriea, Jr. of Stanley Produce

East Bay. We're also physically very well positioned. We've got 300,000 square feet of warehouse space that provides the infrastructure for our merchants."

The San Francisco Wholesale Market's lease with the city will be coming up for renewal within the next few years, and Janis and other merchants are actively planning for the its future. "Many of our merchants are projecting the need for additional space," Janis notes. "We are very sensitive of the fact that as the market continues to evolve, food safety and ease of transportation are going to be very important."

Gib Papazian, president of Lucky Strike Farms, Inc., in South San Francisco, is optimistic about the future of the wholesale markets. Twenty years ago, when consolidation started becoming an issue in the industry, people worried smaller operators would fall by the wayside, Papazian explains. "The future in the world of produce are the independents and family companies like ours that do not treat their employees like cattle or chess pieces."

While Lucky Strike remains a close-knit family operation, it has managed to expand across the country as well as abroad, Papazian notes. "We're kind of a strange hybrid of a company. We're a consolidator and a marketing company. We do our own labels and we also market for other firms."

QUALITY DRIVES SALES

As is every other industry, costs for produce marketers are going up each year. That's why more marketers are trying to differentiate themselves with top-notch quality rather than undercutting their competitors with lower prices.

Vegiworks, Inc., on the San Francisco Wholesale Produce Market, which is a good example of this. "People don't ask us, 'Is it good quality produce?' They ask us, 'Is the produce good enough quality for us?'" reports Steve Clemens, buying manager. Vegiworks sells most of its produce to white-tablecloth restaurants. Since the original five partners who opened the company 15 years ago come from the catering business, they have a good idea of what their restaurant customers need, Clemens states.

In general, people know what they like to eat, and they're willing to pay higher prices when they have to, he says. Avocados are an example of this. Last year's fires in Southern California burned a large number of avocado trees. Supplies went down and prices went up, but there still seems to be the same demand for avocados, despite the higher prices. "People know what they like to eat, and they're willing to pay for it," Clemens adds. "As the rest of the people around the world improve their standards of living, they don't want to eat subsistence food. They want to eat foods that taste good."

ORGANICS

Organics remain a growing category in San Francisco and around the country, according to Earl Herrick, owner of Earl's Organic Produce on the San Francisco Wholesale Produce Market. Herrick started out in the San Francisco market in 1988, working a small stall. Over time, as his neighbors' leases came up, he began acquiring more space and eventually more than doubled his holding capacity.

With the Northern Pacific distributing center for Whole Foods, right next door to him, Herrick does a lot of business right on the market. "We have a good

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RETAIN YOUR BEST EMPLOYEES

In complex, fast-paced, competitive business environments, most employers know the importance of retaining good employees. Every company has its own way of doing this, whether it's through employee bonuses, profit sharing or perks, such as free produce, homemade meals or allowing employees to bring dogs to work.

Peter Carcione, owner of Carcione's Fresh Produce Co., Inc., on the San Francisco Wholesale Produce Market, has about 20 employees – some of whom have been have been with the company for 25 to 30 years. One of the company's employee benefits is its pension plan, which is entirely company-paid. Carcione's is also one of the last businesses on the market to retain its membership in the Teamsters Union. "A lot of companies opted out of the union, but I feel that if you have good employees, who come in at 1:30 or 2:00 AM, it's important to treat them well," Carcione notes.

The union assures employees get paid for overtime, holidays and vacations. The employees also get health-care benefits. Recently, Carcione implemented a new Employee Stock Ownership Program (ESOP) in which employees receive union wages as well as a bonus based on company profits at the end of the year. "Instead of giving all the profits to Uncle Sam, we give it to the employees," Carcione says with pride.

GreenLeaf on the San Francisco Wholesale Produce Market is also known for its good working conditions. In 2006, the company, which has about 145 employees, was voted as one of the Top 100 places to work in San Francisco.

"The people who voted for GreenLeaf were the employees themselves," reports Andy Powning, produce specialist, who joined the company 25 years ago. "I grew up with the company," he notes. "Back then, we had just a rag-tag collection of trucks, including a 1966 Dodge with a cracked window and really bad shocks."

The company grew because of its camaraderie and dedication to its employees as well as its customers. When Bill Wilkinson took over GreenLeaf in 1991, he maintained the core philosophy of the company, which was "valuing the integrity of relationships," Powning states. "We have people here who have a real passion for produce. In general, we work hard, but it's also a happy environment."

GreenLeaf pays for 75 percent of health and dental care insurance for its employees and participates in a matching 401K program. The company also offers employees funding or credit to enroll in education courses related to their jobs.

GreenLeaf has mandatory safety training for drivers and mandatory exercise programs. "This type of thing is very common in Japan. You do stretching and exercises, and you're less prone to hurt yourself or have accidents," Powning notes. The drivers also get fresh baskets of fruit to keep them going on their shifts.

At Pacific Organic Produce in San Francisco, employees have total access to organic juice and the kitchen in the sales office, which is a large, airy loft-like room. Greg Holzman, owner, says the caliber of his 12 employees is a large part of what makes the business successful. "We get some incredibly smart people here. It's not a real issue finding good people since there are so many educated and talented people in the area."

"It's real work here, but the reality is there's a good amount of entertainment that goes on every day," Holzman notes. "A lot of times, when I walk into the office, I look at the sales people, some of whom are young enough to be my kids, and they make me really proud." **pb**

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Miguel Gonzalez and Mario Gomez of Lee Ray-Tarantino

relationship with Whole Foods and a lot of common vendors," he adds. Earl's does a large percentage of its trade in retail and a small amount in foodservice. "We ship throughout the country, but we focus on the West Coast and deliver up to the Oregon border and down south to Monterey [CA]," Herrick says.

Dennis Martin, owner/operator of O. Lippi & Co., Inc., on the San Francisco Wholesale Produce Market has also noticed an upward trend in organics. About 60 percent of Martin's business is bananas — half of which are organic. "The organic bananas have really helped increase our market share," notes Martin, who sells about 25 percent of his bananas to Whole Foods on the market.

Greg Holzman, president of Pacific Organic Produce/Purity on the San Francisco Wholesale Produce Market, has also been expanding his organic business over the past few years. "Our goal is to be a 1-stop shop for both growers and buyers where they can buy and sell whatever they need."

Recently, Holzman came out with a new fully organic juice and organic vitamin water that contains a minimum of 20 percent juice. "The market wasn't receptive to the juices a few years ago when we first came out with them. But now we're starting to get penetration in the produce sections at stores," he notes. Safeway, Inc., based in Pleasanton, CA, has picked up its first loads of the new products, which will likely be distributed to its 160 lifestyle stores, Holzman explains.

BUYING LOCAL

Ever since former vice president Al Gore's movie, *An Inconvenient Truth*, detailed the effects of global warming, consumers have expressed increasing interest in buying locally grown produce. "People want to be more connected to their food and more environmentally conscious," Herrick explains. "That's why you hear all this talk about carbon miles." In San Francisco, many retailers are making it a practice to buy produce locally — no more than 100 to 150 miles away — whenever that produces is in season, he notes.

But the definition of local is changing, according to Ed Rebarchik, office manager for Franzella Produce, Inc., on the Golden Gate Produce Terminal. Although the company sources as much produce as it can locally, the largest part of its growth has been to out-of-state markets, such as Boston. "We are so close to so many growing regions here, I can see the stuff with my own eyes that comes in overnight from Salinas and goes to Boston the next day, he adds. "It's a lot better than if someone else, like a receiver who never sees the produce, put something on a truck for five days and hopes it makes a good arrival."

Franzella sources from both large and small growers. More complicated logistics are involved in dealing with smaller growers, but more restaurants and consumers want to support smaller farmers. For upscale restaurants, it's also a good marketing technique.

"Instead of saying Arugula salad on the menu, you can say Martin's wild arugula salad," Rebarchik recommends. "We encourage our customers to do this because it's a way to put a name and a story to the product. And everyone loves a good story. It's also a way to help justify the higher costs due to the higher costs of fertilizers and other inputs." **pb**

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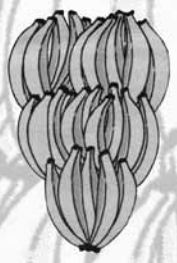

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San Francisco
RETAIL PROFILE

Berkeley Bowl Marketplace

Long-standing marketplace offers visitors everything under the San Francisco sun.

BY LISA LIEBERMAN

For the produce lover, Berkeley Bowl Marketplace, Berkeley, CA, is the Willy Wonka chocolate factory of the produce world. Any kind of fruit or vegetable you can imagine is there — more than two dozen types of mushrooms, more than 40 kinds of apples and potatoes of every size, flavor and color. There are even items you may have never seen before — such as the caltrop nut.

Owner Glenn Yasuda has operated the business, which has a produce department the size of a football field, for 31 years. Yasuda, who is 73 years old but looks as if he's in his early 60s, visits the San Francisco wholesale markets almost daily. He buys about two semi-truckloads of produce every day and even more on Fridays for the weekend rush.

"I taste everything myself," Yasuda reports. "This is something the large chains can't do. They have to have distribution centers, so their food has to be a little greener. Plus, they can't buy the real ripe stuff."

Yasuda's goal is to have the freshest, ripest produce for his customers. "We work hard for the people, so they can take the produce home and eat it right away. There's nothing worse than going to a store and then having to wait three or four days, wondering when the fruit is going to be ripe," he explains.

Berkeley Bowl, which opened in 1977, originally got its name from the bowling alley Yasuda turned into a supermarket. "We gutted it — it was amazing that the bowling lanes were still there," he adds.

Yasuda's only experience in the produce industry up to that point was working for his wife's father who was a wholesaler. Yasuda spent about $1,000 a week in advertising for the first six months he was in business. Business was slow back then, partially because Berkeley Bowl was located directly across the street from a retailer owned by Pleasanton, CA-based Safeway, Inc. "It really wasn't working out at first. It seemed like we usually had about three or four customers and about 12 workers," Yasuda notes.

Yasuda decided to try something different. He stopped spending the $4,000 a month on advertising. "I decided to give it to the customers," he explains. "I sold a lot of things under cost. It was hard to do, but I was losing money any way." He didn't make a profit during his first 4½ years. "If it weren't for my wife, I never would have made it," he says.

Yasuda's persistence and willingness to consistently do whatever it took to satisfy his customers eventually paid off. By 1999, Berkeley Bowl was getting so much business that Yasuda took over the building belonging to Safeway — his former competitor.

But even with a 42,800-square-foot store with a 12,000-square-foot produce department, Yasuda still needs more space. On a typical day, the parking lot is jammed with cars and customers looking for parking. His customers come from all over Berkeley and the San Francisco Bay area. Some people come from more than 100 miles away to shop at his store.

The next step, Yasuda says, is to open up an additional store with an underground parking garage about ¾ of a mile away from its current location. "Many stores wouldn't open up a store so close to them. But even if we just split the business between the two stores and had half of the business here and half of it over there, we'd still be able to survive."

Opening up another store so close will make it easier for the two stores to share inventory. But Yasuda's main reason for opening the new store is the same thing that's motivated him for the past 31 years — the desire to please the customers. "We want to open this new store because we'd like to see the customers have more parking and make shopping easier for them," Yasuda adds. **pb**

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Line Extensions For Nuts

Flavored nuts offer new twists on an old favorite.

BY KIMBERLY RINKER

As American consumers search for healthful alternatives in their diets, many have turned to an old favorite to satisfy their palates. In various forms and ever-expanding flavors, nuts have become the snack of choice for many consumers, as well as a staple for healthful lifestyles.

According to Information Resources Inc., (IRI), Chicago, IL, consumption of peanuts has increased by 77 percent in the last five years. The trend toward more healthful eating habits has spurred suppliers to provide retailers new variations on these traditional snacks, upping the popularity of flavored nuts as consumers increasingly demand bigger, bolder offerings to satisfy more sophisticated palates.

Nuts of all varieties are being showcased through solid positioning in produce aisles, grabbing consumers' attention through new flavor profiles. Upscale flavors — coupled with natural ingredients — make nuts the perfect addition to any healthful meal or snacking occasion.

Nuts offer more than 30 essential nutrients and phytonutrients, including vitamin E, and they are trans-fat free.

Restaurant chefs are incorporating more flavored-nut offerings on their plates, which translates to more nuts consumed at home as adventurous home cooks try to duplicate the flavors they've come to love. In fact, peanut offerings among the Top 200 U.S. restaurant chain menus increased by 142 percent from 2000 through the end of 2006, according to IRI.

Vince Mastramoro, produce director for Sunset Food Mart, Inc., a Highland Park, Ill.-based chain with four stores, says nuts have become a necessity in the produce department and are one of the most viable items in the department. "There are so many choices with nuts because of their versatility," he explains. "Nuts used to be sold just one way — in the shell. In the last 10 years, options for selling and packaging nuts have expanded tremendously. Retailers can sell them five different ways because they're produced and packaged five different ways. Nut flavorings and upscale packaging, such as tins for the holidays, add value to the produce department. There are now a lot of different ways to sell a product that used to have only a single way to sell it."

Flavored nuts provide retailers with an opportunity for increased sales.

Suppliers are always searching for new ways to expand current product lines, according to Betsy Owens, executive director of Virginia-Carolina Peanut Promotions, Nashville, NC. "The nut companies look at flavors found in other food arenas, and they look for flavors that are adaptable to peanuts. Given that peanuts are a very healthful food, it's more about incorporating flavors that accent the natural taste of peanuts."

Terry Williams, national sales manager of E.J. Cox Company/Sachs Peanuts, Clarkton, NC, says he developed an idea for a new line of flavored nuts during a shopping trip. "I was at the supermarket shopping with my wife when I spotted a line of products that were co-branded with McIlhenny [Company, Avery Island, LA, makers of Tabasco Sauce]," he explains. "I thought the same thing would work for our in-shell products."

A new Tabasco-infused in-shell peanut was born. "This developed into a wonderful line for us," he notes. "We have an agreement with Tabasco, where we buy the residue from the sauce, infuse it and dry and roast the peanut with it. This is similar to what we do with our salted in-shell products."

Sach's Tabasco salted in-shell peanuts come in 10-ounce packages in display-ready

shippers featuring bright colors and both brand names in traditional logos. "Peanuts are a very healthful alternative snack," adds Williams. "What we did was combine the strength of two nationally known companies — Tabasco and Sachs. This way, consumers can recognize both names in easy-to-grab packages. We may increase the size of these packages in the future. We're also working on several new ideas as far as flavors go. We're always looking to develop new flavor options on peanuts for consumers.

"This isn't rocket science," Williams stresses. "Some companies have a product development team that sits around and discusses new ideas. At Sachs, we tend to follow the growth patterns of consumers closely and use our findings to develop products to fit the needs of today's shoppers."

Marc Seguin, director of marketing for Paramount Farms, Inc., Lost Hills, CA, says his company studies consumer micro-trends that focus on various snack foods. "We layer these trends over our specific product," he notes. "Our company has focused on trying to grow the best pistachios for impact and quality. We then look at ways we can accent the product with a flavor."

In January, Paramount launched four flavor extensions under its Everybody's Nuts brand of pistachios, including Roasted & Salted, Salt & Pepper, European Roast and Roasted No Salt. Packaged in 7-ounce bags, the nuts have been supported by an extensive, nationwide marketing campaign. "When adding flavors, we've found that the bags do the best job of retaining the quality of the product," Seguin explains. "These lines have been well-received because they are fun products that taste great. The flavors accent the pistachios without removing the basic taste."

"Peanuts are great to go in kids' backpacks for school as well as any family outing, such as hiking or biking," Virginia-Carolina's Owens notes. "The size of the bags generally reflect the store's neighborhood, and it's up to the retailer to be cognizant of what his customers want."

DISPLAYS AND PROMOTIONS

According to a 2007 study by the Grocery Manufacturers Association (GMA), Washington, D.C., 63 percent of in-store purchases are impulse buys. Peanuts traditionally fall into this category. "Peanuts are an impulse buy, so they need to be positioned in a spot of high visibility and high traffic," explains Sach's Williams. "The produce department is the first place they should be displayed since they are a fresh and healthful product. They also go well in the beer, soda and snack areas. Retailers can also cross-merchandise various lines to accompany other produce items."

Owens agrees, noting retailers who know their consumers well are most likely to have high and repeat flavored-nuts sales. "The supplier will service an account with whatever the store wants. It's the store's responsibility to make the customer happy."

Sunset Foods will spotlight various nuts during baseball season, using tie-ins with the Chicago White Sox and Cubs. The chain also offers nuts that are kosher, especially during the Passover season, Mastramoro points out. "I'll have bagged roasted and salted in-shell peanuts prominently displayed during baseball season," he adds. "While we have almond accents, pistachios and kernels and other national-brands of nuts, we also utilize local producers that have a whole line of nuts and trail mixes."

Attention-grabbing displays and signage are key, Owens stresses. "You need to remind customers to buy peanuts. Sampling is another good way to promote sales. An open basket of peanuts is great or try cross-merchandising nuts with a drink." Soda products, followed by beer and water, are the top three drink choices for flavored nuts to be paired with when cross-merchandising, Owens adds.

"Another promotion is to put a large amount of peanuts in a jar and have customers try to guess the amount in that jar. That makes someone stop, pay attention to the display and gets them thinking about peanuts," Owens suggests. "Nutrition is another way. Peanuts are a healthful food and consumers need to be reminded that they offer nutritional attributes."

Seguin believes variety and a wide range of taste profiles are key techniques for promoting sales of flavored nuts. "Offer consumers variety and numerous taste profiles," he advises retailers. "Offer them multiple options of these products and use strong displays that stand out. Try to incorporate creative ideas in the marketing of these products, utilizing recipe ideas and the nutritional aspects of nuts."

Mastramoro says nuts have two prominent spots in Sunset's produce department. "We position specific nut offerings alongside produce they complement," he notes. "We then position the remaining nuts in the healthful, grab-and-go snack sections of our produce departments."

He cites a new line of flavored pistachios — from a small family-owned farm based in Santa Barbara, CA — as one of his produce department success stories. "We brought in the Santa Barbara Pistachio Company products just before Thanksgiving and they've been a big hit," Mastramoro explains. "They supply flavored pistachios that we offer in our produce aisle, including crushed garlic, onion-garlic roast, hickory smoked, lemon zing, hot onion garlic, chili lemon and chili hickory. The company also offers an extremely popular mix of roasted-salted pistachio kernels, dried cranberries, golden raisins and dried cherries." **pb**

Salts And Spices

Betsy Owens, executive director of Virginia-Carolina Peanut Promotions, Nashville, NC, says salt plays a major role in most of the flavored nut lines. "Primarily all of the flavors that companies use to flavor peanuts are natural, but salt plays the most vital role because it is an accent flavor and most seasonings that are used have a salt component in them. The most universal peanut product in the produce department is the in-shell peanut. Products with flavoring, such as salted, Cajun and jalapeño, are now showing up, too."

According to Marc Seguin, director of marketing for Paramount Farms, Inc., Lost Hills, CA, Everybody's Nuts European roasted pistachios combine traditional salt and spices with the added flavor of several vinegars. "We've combined both malt and apple cider vinegar into the European Roasted line," he notes. "These are very subtle additions that preserve the pistachio as the centerpiece — they don't overwhelm the basic pistachio flavor that appeals to the customer in the first place."

Paramount also markets its Sunkist brand almonds under three lines. Its Almonds and Almonds Munchies products are located in the snack food aisles while its Sunkist Almond Accents are found in the produce department. The latter line features seven varieties of flavored, sliced almonds that can added to salad as well as ethnic and traditional dishes. They are typically positioned near salad items in the produce department. **pb**

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FLORAL WATCH

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Christmas Tree Company Sold

G.R. Kirk Company, Tacoma, WA, was recently sold to two former employees, Ralph Nilssen of Maple Valley, WA, and Gary Snyder of Oregon City, OR. A third-generation family business established in 1918, Kirk grows and distributes Christmas trees along with a variety of related items such as balers, netting, supplies and tree-care products.

Reader Service No. 316

Eco-Friendly Alliance Formed

Kennicot Brothers Co., Chicago, IL and P&F Costa Rica, San Jose, Costa Rica, are forging a new partnership including the Rain Forest Alliance. This partnership will ensure the flowers and foliages from all P&F farms are grown using socially and environmentally responsible farm practices and meet stringent quality and labor standards. P&F farms produce lilies, irises, tulips, gerberas, tropical flowers and foliages.

Reader Service No. 317

NEW PRODUCTS

Ready For June Weddings

Razbuton Ferns, Inc., Winter Garden, FL, offers an 8-inch King Compacta Boston fern ideal for decorating and enhancing indoor and outdoor weddings. April and May fern baskets are pre-sold, but truckloads are available for June and July. Six of these ferns fit in the pictured box, which measures 5.75 cubic feet.

Reader Service No. 318

Easy To Carry

Palm Tree Packaging, Apopka, FL, introduces the Bloom Bag, a decorative sleeve with carrying handles. Bloom Bags can be used for seasonal or specific promotions or as a low-cost upgrade at the grower level. The carryout bags can be custom printed; photo quality graphics print well and look great. Custom sizing is available as are custom colors.

Reader Service No. 319

Show Off Floral Bouquets

AAA Imports, Apopka, FL, introduces the red sweetheart vase and a clear oval vase as extensions to its full glassware product line that features over 200 items. Designed exclusively for floral use, both vases are available in packs of 24.

Reader Service No. 320

Earth-Friendly Pot Covers

Highland Supply Corporation, Highland, IL, has added a designer line of colors and prints to its already popular Earth Cover line of pot covers. Made from paper, the Earth Cover is printed with environmentally friendly water-based inks. Available colors include purple, China glow, brick red, green and cream.

Reader Service No. 321

Fun To Grow And Eat

12 Baskets Farms, Inc., Miami, FL, now offers golden pineapple plants, with fruit growing on the plant, in 3-gallon pots. After two to four months of growing, consumers harvest their own fresh pineapple to eat. Very little water is required. The plant takes full sun to partial shade or it can be grown indoors in a bright window or atrium.

Reader Service No. 322

Going Green With Bio Film

Temkin International, Inc., Payson, UT, extends its eco-friendly offerings with the introduction of BioCPP, a new biodegradable film. Featuring many of the characteristics of traditional cast polypropylene (CPP) film, the new film is used to make a variety of floral department items including floral sheets, sleeves and bags.

Reader Service No. 323

Floral Watch is a regular feature of Produce Business. Please send information on new products, personnel changes, industry, corporate and personal milestones and available literature, along with a color photo, slide or transparency to: Managing Editor, Produce Business. , P.O. Box 810425, Boca Raton, FL 33481-0425, or e-mail us at ProduceBusiness@phoenixmedianet.com

Mother's Day Offers Floral Departments Big Opportunities

Use these three merchandising tips and watch sales blossom during this profitable holiday.

BY BOB JOHNSON

Mother's Day is an important occasion when the floral department can step up and experience strong sales, but if the retailer isn't prepared, the opportunity can be lost.

Mother's Day floral department sales can be very lucrative for retailers prepared for the boost in business.

1. BE PREPARED

Floral sales can reach extraordinary levels on Mother's Day — if plans are made to accommodate the potential demand.

"Floral departments should expect a minimum of triple the volume," reports Tom Lavagetto, president, Floral Consulting Group, Spokane, WA. "Anything less is underperforming."

The key to proper planning is insuring that enough space is devoted to handle the volume. "Each store is going to have to look at its space limitations," notes Bruce Brady, director of business development and marketing for Sun Valley Group, Inc., based in Arcata, CA.

Space alone, however, will not do the trick; an ample supply of the critical floral products is also essential. "Keep displays filled," explains Kami Castillo, marketing and design manager for Kendall Farms, LP, Fallbrook, CA. "Floral should be no different than the rest of the store. Remember no one wants to buy the last bouquet."

Suppliers agree this is one week retailers cannot afford to run out of key floral products. "Make sure you have enough product and always be replenishing," advises Curtis Jones, president of Botanical Interests Inc., Broomfield, CO. "If somebody walks in looking to get something for Mom and it's not there, he or she will just walk out and go to another store."

Botanical produces a line of flower and vegetable seed varieties. Jones observes a slight spike in flower seed sales around Mother's Day because there is more traffic by the floral display, which is where the seeds should be.

2. KEEP IT COLORFUL

Mother's Day is one of the few occasions during the year when the floral department should be given top display space allocation, however, "Displays for any holiday should be placed to achieve the most impact," Castillo advises. "The goal is to create an eye-catching display of floral product that will attract consumers and make them want to look more closely and buy."

The floral department deserves front-of-the-store treatment leading up to Mother's Day. "Valentine's Day, Easter and Mother's Day are the floral department's times to display at the front of the store," according to

Lavagetto. "Out-of-department displays are critical to boosting sales."

Signage and other POP materials are less important with floral than they are with other departments. "Let the displays do the talking for you," according to Floral Consulting's Lavagetto.

Sun Valley's Brady says the key to the biggest visual impact is stocking a sufficient number of each style bouquet. "You have fewer SKUs with more volume. Instead of having a sea of flowers, each grouping stands out."

> **"Find a balance between a good selection of flowers and confusion. Too many choices or a display that is too busy can lead to indecision and ultimately to no decision and a lost sale."**
>
> **— Kami Castillo**
> **Kendall Farms, LP**

Large bunches of flowers with a simple, clean look are a new trend — and they're also a way to achieve the goal of eye-catching color. "A key to holding the consumers' attention is to find a balance between a good selection of flowers and confusion," Kendall's Castillo comments. "Too many choices or a display that is too busy can lead to indecision and ultimately to no decision and a lost sale."

To meet Mother's Day standards, displays must be maintained vigilantly. "Always, always remove products that do not look their best," she urges. "One distressed flower makes the whole bouquet look bad. Every item should represent the very best quality that is available throughout the store."

Brady agrees, adding extra time must be devoted to keeping the floral products fresh and attractive for Mother's Day.

3. STOCK VARIETY WITH QUALITY

The traditional standard for Mother's Day is a bouquet of high-quality roses. "During the season, everything is rose bouquets," explains Juan Horna, marketing manager for Mayflower Farms, Inc., Doral, FL. "We work a lot with red and pink roses. We use gypsophila, greens and fillers like pompoms and daisies."

While high-quality roses remain the standard, an increasing number of consumers are looking for something different on Mother's Day. "It's the time of the year to have a good selection of premium products," Lavagetto advises.

To sell larger bouquets on Mother's Day, Lavagetto suggests considering a standard of two dozen roses rather than one dozen. This is realistic because producers tend to have more roses available for Mother's Day than they do for Valentine's Day.

Another premium product worth considering is higher-end European gardens. Decorative ceramic containers can also be merchandised for Mother's Day flowers. "If I were looking for upscale products, I'd be thinking at least $20 items, and I wouldn't be afraid to promote $30 bouquets," Lavagetto relates.

The point, however, is to make high-end products available for Mother's Day. "Mother's Day is a pretty forgiving holiday — there are a lot of flowers out there," Brady says.

Still, retailers still need to be cautious about what range of items they decide to offer. Brady says retailers can end up with too many high-end items or they "can go to the opposite extreme and not have low-end price points." As in all departments, knowing the store's demographics is crucial.

Year-round tulip and iris varieties are fairly new as Mother's Day items, according to Brady, but they are gaining popularity. Lily and gerbera daisy varieties have recently gained popularity, too.

"Don't be afraid to mix in a few non-traditional items with the more traditional," Castillo suggests. "Consumers are becoming more sophisticated and are looking for something different. Bouquets with protea and tropical flowers are experiencing high demand." **pb**

High-End Potted Flowers

"Any type of potted Asiatic or oriental lilies are good for Mother's Day," notes Joe Nevarez, sales manager for Aldershot of New Mexico, Inc., Mesilla Park, NM. He believes 6-inch potted roses, potted bouquet mums and potted orchids make special Mother's Day items. They also make a special display, he adds, because they showcase an array of colors and have fullness to them.

"I believe a potted plant lasts longer," he reports. "They have a better shelf life and can also be a keepsake. I think those are nice items for Mother's Day."

Flower seeds are another popular item, that can add a little something extra to a Mother's Day present. "People are looking for something nice, but they are also looking for little add-ons," advises Curtis Jones, president of Botanical Interests Inc., Broomfield, CO. "Seeds make a nice add-on. For less than $2, you can get a pretty package."

The key to selling flower seeds is to offer varieties that are easy to grow, Jones adds. Although many garden center customers are looking for the challenge of growing the more difficult flowers from seed, the same is rarely true of supermarket floral department consumers. "You want something that you can put in the ground and that will come up quickly, easily and be pretty dramatic," Jones explains. A packet of cosmos seeds, for example, can fill a bed with color for less than $2. **pb**

By Dave Diver

Retirement Transition Expands The Workforce

When Franklin Roosevelt was developing the Social Security Program in the mid-1930s, the average life expectancy was 67 years for working males and slightly higher for females. For decades, conventional wisdom has fixed the primary retirement age at 65 with many individuals leaving the workforce at an even younger age. But, by the end of 2003, life expectancies for men had increased to 77 years for men and approximately 80 for women; those reaching age 65 can expect their remaining life expectancy to average an additional 17 to 20 years.

In the meantime, workforce analysis still focuses on the former parameters. According to the Produce Marketing Association Educational Foundation (PMAEF), "The number of 35-to-44-year-olds will decline by 10 percent just as 52 percent of workers ages 55 to 64 are poised to retire. The shrinking pool of 20-to-44-year-olds represents the lowest projected growth trends of any age group. Companies will need to focus on employee retention by providing clear paths for advancement and strong professional training and development."

The challenge becomes changing the mindset about what constitutes working and what constitutes full retirement. For the past 80 years, retirement at age 65 has been the norm, but in today's world that concept might be as doomed to failure as the Edsel. The vision for the future workforce requires dramatic adjustments by definition and implementation in order to provide organizations with experienced expertise and effective leadership.

In the wonderful partial retirement community where I live, a high percentage of so-called retirees continues business involvement, either paid or volunteer work on a part-time basis. Those older than 75 can expect over 10 years to continue living an active, competitive lifestyle.

Will Wedge, director of produce for Hannaford Bros., had it right when he was quoted in a PRODUCE BUSINESS article on leadership [January 2008]: "We need to cultivate the next generation of leaders. We need to improve our skills because 10 years from now, it's going to be very different."

Hannaford, along with the Food Lion and SweetBay Supermarket divisions of Delhaize America, received the *Supermarket News* 2008 Champion of Diversity award. The honor recognizes much more than ethnic diversification. Hannaford's diversity approach includes a greater focus on building multiple career paths that will lead to promotions for women, workplace flexibility and efforts to move employees around within the company to broaden their perspective.

The vision for the future workforce requires dramatic adjustments by definition and implementation in order to provide organizations with experienced expertise and effective leadership.

This involves creating a culture in which diversity is embraced and looking at where a company wants to be and what steps are necessary to achieve the goal. At Food Lion, culture comes before demographics, emphasizing generational diversity. At Hannaford, diversity is defined as "mutual respect for all people." This includes allowing associates to work from home when necessary and permitting them to bring their young children to work. The latter is a major cultural change from two decades earlier when a suggestion to the vice president of human resources about creating an in-house day-care center received no consideration.

"Now, the culture has changed from the traditional supermarket career path, rewarding the fastest young store workers — generally males — to tapping the whole population for candidates in stores and the corporate offices with the acquisition of broad skill sets encouraged by promoting workers laterally between departments and store categories," according to Beth Newlands Campbell, senior vice president of retail operations at Hannaford.

By having group strategy sessions that include various age groups, ethnicities and lifestyles, Hannaford maintains its diversity focus. It's a matter of staying connected with varying employee groups and consumers in the marketplace.

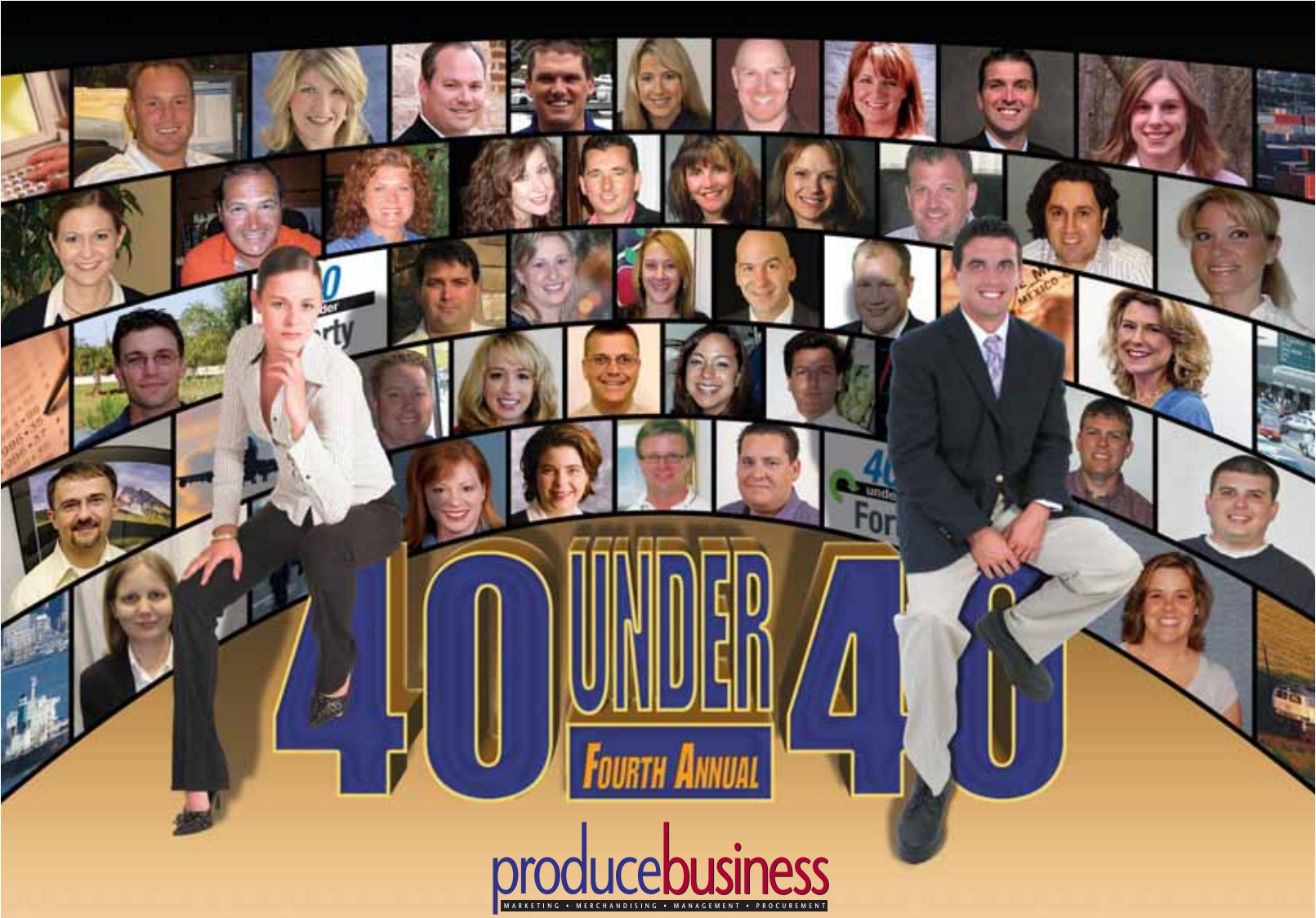
Given the changes in the population, where the new 65-to-75-year-olds are more youthful and capable than the 55-to-65-year-olds of yesterday, businesses and individuals need to maximize this potential.

The social implication of recognizing this group's potential is monumental not only for employers and employees but also for governmental social programs and the expansion of personal wealth available for the new retirement years.

As flexibility in the workplace grows, it will be necessary to develop programs that will lead to evolving job descriptions and responsibilities for a new Generation Z — encompassing a productive but more leisure-oriented 55-to-75-age bracket.

Who will take the lead of crossing over from today's worker age model? Will it be Hannaford, Food Lion or SweetBay? Or will it be Publix, Wegman's or some other progressive operator?

Which of the produce operators will be the first to utilize the entire workforce potential? Perhaps the Produce Marketing Association or United Fresh Produce Association will become leaders. Only a vision for the future that has blinders to the past will overcome the workforce gap. **pb**



Produce Business is accepting nominations for its third annual 40 Under Forty Project, which recognizes the produce industry's top young leaders.

Honorees will be selected based on their professional accomplishments, demonstrated leadership and industry/community contributions. To be eligible, nominees must be under the age of 40 as of April 1 (People born after April 1, 1968).

To nominate someone, please fill out this form by April 1, 2008, and fax back to 561-994-1610.

Once nominated, the candidate will receive forms from us to fill out asking for detailed information. A candidate only needs to be nominated one time. Multiple nominations will have no bearing on selection.

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In 100 words or less, describe why this person should be nominated:
(You can use a separate sheet for this)

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Nominator information is for our use only and will not be shared with candidate or have a bearing on selection.

For more information email: producebusiness@phoenixmedianet.com

Fruit Logistica Innovation Award

The Fruit Logistica Innovation Award (FLIA) is presented for outstanding innovation in the fresh produce sector and its service industries at Fruit Logistica. Fruit Logistica 2008 was held Feb. 7-9, in Berlin, Germany. FLIA is awarded to the product voted by visitors to Fruit Logistica as the best innovation of the year from the following short list of 10 products nominated by an expert jury. The winner was the Intense tomato from Nunhems Netherlands BV.

INTENSE, Nunhems Netherlands BV

Intense is a beefsteak tomato with full, firm, dense flesh that ensures no juice is lost when it is cut, making it especially appropriate for salads and fresh-cut. The fluid loss after 10 days corresponds to that of a normal tomato after one day. Consumers no longer need to worry about getting their clothes messy when eating the tomato as a snack, as part of a sandwich or in a salad. Market launch: March 2007

DEUX, Rougeline-Odelis, Marmande, France

Deux is a new marketing and packaging concept for strawberries. Two different varieties are offered in one box with two drawers. Both varieties have high-quality appearance and taste. The sweet Ciflorette appeals to children; the aromatic Gariguette appeals to adults and is considered the traditional French strawberry. Market launch: April 2007

ERIS FILTER, Miatech Inc., USA

The Eris Filter is an antimicrobial air filter used to eliminate airborne pathogens and ethylene gas and to prolong the life of food, increase food safety, remove odors and create a clean environment in refrigerated containers and trucks during storage and transportation. It is designed not to disrupt the intake airflow. Market launch: November 2006

FRESH TAPAS, The Greenery International, Netherlands

Fresh Tapas is a line of fresh, healthful fruit and vegetable products in resealable cups. It is targeted to the "out-of-home" market and available from food retailers and vending machines. The Fresh Tapas Vending Machine can be erected at non-traditional produce sales sites, such as gas stations, schools and theaters. Market launch: November 2006

FRUJIS — THE CRUNCHY FRUIT, Nameo GmbH, Italy

Frujis are crunchy organic fruit crisps made of South Tyrolean apples or Sri Lankan pineapples. They get their taste, aroma and

crunchy consistency from a gentle, quick drying procedure that retains vitamins, minerals and fiber. The patented resealable tin protects the aroma and maintains crispness. Market launch: February 2007

IODI, Pizzoli S.p.A.

Iodi is a fresh potato with a high iodine content. Iodine, an important component for the formation of thyroid hormone, is absorbed into the potatoes via the leaves during their growth. Just 200 g of Iodi provides 30 per cent of the daily iodine requirement. Iodine deficiency occurs widely in western industrial countries. Market launch: July 2007

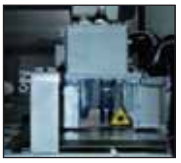
MTsens, Montalbano Technology S.p.A., Italy

MTsens is a low-cost device that monitors perishable industrial products or materials by recording and reporting the duration and intensity of exposure to heat. An RFID smart label the shape and the size of a credit card, the device can be applied to boxes, pallets and rounded surfaces. Market launch: September/October 2007

ORIGINAL CUCUMBER, Eosta BV/Enza Zaden Beheer BV, Netherlands

The Original Cucumber is organic. Grown in Holland, Bulgaria, Spain and Greece, it can be supplied year-round. In 2008 it will be offered with emphasis on the German, British and Scandinavian markets. There will also be initial tests in the United States. Market launch: June 2007

PERFOTEC LASERSYSTEM, Sealpac GmbH, Germany



The PerfoTec Lasersystem is a microperforation packaging system that extends the shelf life of packaged fruit and vegetable products by three to seven days, reducing losses throughout the entire supply chain. The quality of the product received by the consumer is significantly improved. Market launch: May 2007

TOMATOBERRY, Tokita Seed Co., Ltd., Japan

Tomatoberry is a new variety of tomato, with a shape reminiscent of a strawberry. It has very fine skin, extremely sweet taste, fine aroma and a Brix value between eight and 10. The Tomatoberry is a little larger than a normal cherry tomato. Market launch: November 2006

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Global Organic Specialty Source, Inc.	112-113	12	877-952-1198	941-358-6551
Gourmet Specialty Imports LLC	158	119	610-345-1113	610-345-1116
Greenleaf	168	46	415-647-2991	415-647-2993
Grimmway Farms	72-73	13	661-845-9435	661-393-6458
Grist Truck Brokers, Inc.	42	40	800-647-3698	229-386-5046
Herb Thyme Farms	96-97	68	831-476-9733	831-476-3710
High Street Logistics	42	54	866-548-1555	805-781-9255
Hollandia Produce	98-99	42	866-LETTUCE	805-684-9363
Idaho Potato Commission	21	18	208-334-2350	208-334-2274
Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onion Promotion Committee	110-111	7	208-722-7021	208-722-6582
International Herbs, Ltd.	158	117	604-576-2345	604-574-3689
Jacobs, Malcolm & Burtt, Inc.	167	47	415-285-0400	415-824-4844
J.R. Kelly Company	159	53	888-344-4392	618-344-2297
Kern Ridge Growers, LLC	160	38	661-854-3156	661-854-2832
Keystone Fruit Marketing, Inc.	134-135		717-597-2112	717-597-4096
Kingsburg Orchards	56-57	10	559-897-2986	559-897-4532
Kirkey Products Group, LLC	49	89	407-331-5151	407-331-5158
Lange Logistics	42	103	770-980-1101	770-980-1442
LGS Specialty Sales, Ltd.	151	74	800-796-2349	718-542-2354
Litehouse Foods, Inc.	124-125	56	208-263-7569	208-263-7821
Lucky Strike Farms, Inc.	167	62	650-877-8333	650-877-0727
Allen Lund Company, Inc.	40	52	800-508-5863	818-883-5863
Mann Packing Company, Inc.	130-131	83	800-884-6266	831-422-5171
Mann Packing Company, Inc.	9	79	800-884-6266	831-422-5171
Mann Packing Company, Inc.	138-139	80	800-884-6266	831-422-5171
T. Marzetti Company	82-83	104	614-846-2232	614-842-4186
Mediterranean Pleasures	17	70	800-491-VITA	856-467-2638
Melissa's/World Variety Produce, Inc.	159	105	800-468-7111	323-588-7841
Mexican Hass Avocado Importers' Association	152-153	106	410-877-3142	
Miatech	48	34	800-339-5234	503-659-2204
Mission Produce, Inc.	154	107	800-549-3420	805-981-3660
MIXTEC Group	50	63	626-440-7077	626-440-1557
Monterey Mushrooms	108-109	20	800-333-MUSH	831-763-0700
Mutual Produce Corporation	36	120	617-889-0035	617-884-2544
New England Produce Council	169	27	781-273-0444	781-273-4154
New York Apple Association, Inc.	54-55	92	585-924-2171	585-924-1629
NewStar Fresh Foods	94-95	15	888-STAR-220	831-758-7869
Ocean Mist Farms	58-59	64	831-770-6435	831-633-4363
Olivia's Organics	36	118	617-884-1816	617-884-4919
Peri & Sons Farms	22	44	775-463-4444	775-463-4028
Produce Exchange Co. of Atlanta, Inc.	34	78	800-480-4463	404-608-0401
Produce for Better Health Foundation	142	109	302-235-2329	302-235-5555
Produce for Better Health Foundation	181	108	302-235-2329	302-235-5555
The Produce Marketing Association	179	121	302-738-7100	302-731-2409
Produce Plus	46	39	800-323-3730	815-293-3701
Produce Pro Software	35	26	630-395-0535	630-572-0390
Walter P. Rawl & Sons, Inc.	102-103	36	803-894-1900	803-844-1945
R.C.F. Produce, Inc.	163	61	520-281-0230	520-281-9670
Red Blossom Farms, Inc.	23	110	805-981-1839	805-693-0032
River Ranch Fresh Foods, Inc.	128-129	73	800-538-5868	831-755-8281
Rosemont Farms Corporation	78-79	57	877-877-8017	561-999-0241
Rosemont Farms Corporation	66-67	58	877-877-8017	561-999-0241
Rosemont Farms Corporation	80-81	59	877-877-8017	561-999-0241
Ruma Fruit & Produce Co., Inc.	22	75	800-252-8282	617-387-7894
Sambrailo Packaging	148	111	831-724-7581	831-724-1403
Samra Produce & Farms Inc.	159	114	213-486-0086	213-486-0076
Shuman Produce, Inc.	7	112	912-557-4477	912-557-4478
Southern Specialties	159	113	954-784-6500	954-784-5800
Spice World, Inc.	160	19	800-433-4979	407-857-7171
State Garden, Inc.	36	118	617-884-1816	617-884-4919
Sunlight Int'l. Sales	92-93	87	661-792-6360	661-792-6529
Sunrise Logistics, Inc.	45	33	888-518-8502	717-721-2518
Sunsweet Growers Inc.	84-85	23	530-822-2845	530-822-2846
Sweet Onion Trading Company	24	24	800-699-3727	321-674-2003
Tanimura & Antle, Inc.	5	17	800-772-4542	831-455-3915
Target Interstate Systems, Inc.	44	126	800-338-2743	800-422-4329
Turbana Banana Corp	120-121	30	800-TURBANA	305-443-8908
Turbana Banana Corp	122-123	31	800-TURBANA	305-443-8908
United Fresh Produce Association	149	122	202-303-3400	202-303-3433
VegiWorks, Inc.	168	35	888-FOR-VEGI	415-643-5640
WaudWare, Inc.	49	127	905-846-9737	905-846-9738
Well-Pict Berries	147	95	831-722-3871	831-722-6340
West Coast Tomato, Inc.	28	55	941-722-4537	941-729-6778
Z & S Fresh	126-127	94	800-467-0788	559-432-2888

pbh
Produce for Better Health Foundation

Don t forget!

fruits & veggies more matters

Can you belive it has been a year since the Fruits & Veggies—More Matters® national health initiative was launched to replace the 5 A Day program?

Produce for Better Health Foundation commends the growers, packers, shippers, and retailers who have integrated the new logo into their marketing efforts.

From packaging to POS to advertising, the Fruits & Veggies — More Matters® logo is showing up to remind consumers to simply eat more fruits and vegetables!

Now, we're reminding you that use of the 5 A Day logos, in all their forms, should be discontinued and completely phased out by the end of this year.

If you have a Fruits & Veggies—More Matters® license, we'd ask you to double check all of your materials to be sure you've replaced the 5 A Day logo with the new logo – or have plans to do so before 2009.

If you're not yet licensed, why not contact us today? We can help you get the information and materials you need to join the hundreds of industry companies supporting the increased comsumption of fruits and vegetables.

Contact
Kathleen Ruf,
PBH Licensing and Partnership Manager
at
kruf@pbhfoundation.org,
or visit
http://www.pbhfoundation.org/members/graphics/licensing/

www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org
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979-0208_PB

fruits & veggies more matters

Reader Service # 108

Blast from the Past

In the early 1980s, when food packaging focused on functionality, Concord Foods, Inc., Brockton, MA, wanted to make sure consumers knew what its products were.

This top photo, which dates from that time, was the key panel for Concord Foods' booth at the Produce Marketing Association (PMA) Fresh Summit. The collage features candy and caramel apple kits, pie glazes and mixes, shelf-stable lemon juice, and seasoning and shake mixes.

Today, the 40-year-old specialty foods manufacturer uses its packaging to communicate a message that highlights the appeal of the final dish, as reflected in the bottom photo of a contemprary package. "One consistent element to this is to show plenty of produce in the image," explains Charles Olins, vice president of sales and marketing. "Our current packaging focuses on sending consumers a message of fresh and healthful food with real appetite appeal.

"In the 1980s, the produce industry probably lagged behind some of the major branded grocery categories in understanding consumer preferences," he continues. "With so much competition for food dollars, it is important to get close to consumers to understand their requirements in pack size, ease of use and what products appeal to them."

PRODUCE BUSINESS would like to thank Charles Olins, Cheryl Caruolo and Heather Simpson for their help in gathering information and photos.

Packaging, circa 1980s

Contemporary packaging

The *Blast from the Past* is a regular feature of PRODUCE BUSINESS. We welcome submissions of your old photos, labels or advertisements along with suggested captions. Please send materials to: Editor, PRODUCE BUSINESS, P.O. Box 810425, Boca Raton, FL 33481-0425, or e-mail ProduceBusiness@PhoenixMediaNet.com

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They shop in your store

We know who they are. Baby boomers. Live in suburban spreads. Own their homes. 2 + person households. Income $40,000 +. College graduates. Love gardening, reading, traveling, and eating healthy.

We have what it takes to reach and motivate them. The brand, the products, the programs, value added services, and category management tools that build sales.

Del Monte Quality

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Reader Service # 43

To find out how you can put our marketing tools to work for you, contact your Del Monte representative at **1.800.950.3683** or visit www.**freshdelmonte**.com