

# producebusiness

MARKETING • MERCHANDISING • MANAGEMENT • PROCUREMENT

THE 27<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL  
MYSTERY SHOPPER REPORT

## Inside The Store: What Retailers Need To Know



EXCLUSIVE



MASTERS OF  
MERCHANDISING

INSERT



FLORAL BUSINESS

INSIDE:

THE PUNDIT LOOKS AT THE FIRST LADY'S PRODUCE INITIATIVE  
POTENTIAL IN CONGRESS FOR IMMIGRATION REFORM • BULK NUTS  
BLUEBERRY MERCHANDISING • ORGANIC SALAD BLENDS • BREAUX MART PROFILE  
GREENHOUSE OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES • WHOLESALE CUSTOMER SERVICE  
SOUTHERN-STATE AG OFFICIALS TALK ABOUT FSMA • AVOCADO MERCHANDISING  
CELEBRATING SOUTHERN RETAILERS • RAIL TRANSPORTATION  
CPMA BOOTH REVIEW



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**THIS MONTH'S WINNER**



**Bill Wall**  
**Produce Merchandiser**  
**Fry's Food Stores**  
**Tolleson, AZ**

Bill Wall has been working in the produce industry since his sixteenth birthday. Today Wall is Produce Merchandiser for Fry's Food Stores in Tolleson, AZ, which is part of the Kroger Company.

"I started as a bagger for a local chain grocery in Danville, VA," Wall says.

While in college, Wall continued to work in the industry with Food Lion.

"After graduation I interviewed with

the Kroger Company, and that started my full-time career," Wall says.

For almost 28 years, Wall has run the day-to-day operations of the produce, floral and natural food department for 119 stores in the state of Arizona.

All this time he has had **PRODUCE BUSINESS** by his side.

"It's been a normal item for me," Wall says. "I read to make sure I'm up-to-date. It's always fun to look through and see what others are doing and how they are doing it."

**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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**QUESTIONS FOR THE MARCH ISSUE**

- 1) What is the booth number at CPMA for Florida Tomatoes? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) What is the 800 phone number for Turbana Tropicals? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) What is the brand name for Fresh Quest's melons? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) What brand touts, "We're Not Just Garlic"? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) What variety of papayas is Brooks Tropicals featuring with a color in its name? \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) What company is marketing Champagne mango? \_\_\_\_\_

This issue was:  Personally addressed to me  Addressed to someone else

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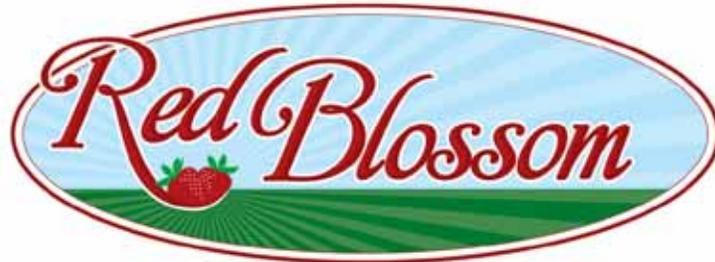
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**CPMA BOOTH REVIEW**

**Booth #113  
NATURIBE FARMS**

**Salinas, CA**  
Naturipe Farms is an industry leader in producing healthy and delicious fresh berries and value added berry products including: Ready To Eat, IQF, Dried Cold Infused, Juices, Concentrates, Purées and more. With our wide selection, commitment to quality and food safety, year around availability and a focus on innovation, Naturipe Farms is perfectly suited to be your total berry solution.



**Booth #218  
LITEHOUSE, INC.**

**Sandpoint, ID**  
New! OPA! by Litehouse Greek Style Yogurt Salad Dressing in four delicious flavors, as well as new Sage & Thyme in our Instantly Fresh Herbs line-up.



**Booth #223  
CHURCH BROTHERS, LLC**

**Salinas, CA**  
Church Brothers, LLC is a family owned and operated farming company in Salinas, CA. Tom & Steve Church grew up in the Salinas Valley and became involved in farming during the sixties. Today the company farms more than 30,000 acres annually.



**Booth #228  
THOMAS FRESH INC.**

**Calgary, Alberta**  
Thomas Fresh is Western Canada's premium fresh packer: Produce Made Easy. Every season we bring new choices to your table. Please visit our booth to discuss the latest products.



**Booth #243  
BLANC INDUSTRIES**

**Dover, NJ**  
Blanc Industries is a leader in high-quality, cost-effective, customized signage and displays in food retail. Stop by for a demo of our latest innovation: Fresh Food 411 Interactive Kiosk.



**Booth #318, 332  
PEAK OF THE MARKET**

**Winnipeg, Manitoba**  
Peak of the Market's strategically located distribution centers in Winnipeg and Calgary enables the company to effectively distribute fresh Manitoba grown vegetables to customers across Canada and the U.S. Peak of the Market has grown quality produce in Manitoba for 72 years and supplies more than 120 different varieties of Manitoba grown vegetables.



**Booth #324  
COLORFUL HARVEST**

**Salinas, CA**  
Colorful Harvest grows premium berries and colorful heirloom style vegetables including strawberries, blueberries, blackberries, Rainbow Crunch Carrots, orange, purple, & green cauliflower, Ruby Jewel Sweet Red Corn, and seasonal vegetables. ColorfulHarvest.com



**Booth #335  
CAVENDISH PRODUCE**

**Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island**  
Cavendish Produce, the fresh potato specialist, is offering an assortment of value-added and mainstream potato products. "We are your one-stop supplier of top quality potatoes."



**Booth #408  
SUNKIST GROWERS, INC.**

**Sherman Oaks, CA**  
Offering more than 40 fresh citrus varieties, Sunkist Growers has been a partner and source for premium quality citrus since 1893. Visit us at booth 408.



**Booth #445  
ATLAS PRODUCE & DISTRIBUTION, INC.**

**Bakersfield, CA**  
Atlas Produce & Distribution, Inc. is the shipper of the popular Caramel Naturel Medjool Dates, Date Coconut Rolls, Date Almond Rolls, and Jumbo Dried Grapes. Visit Booth # 445 to taste the amazing flavor of Caramel Nature.



**Booth #519  
CHIQUITA BRANDS NORTH AMERICA**

**Bedford, Nova Scotia**  
Please join Chiquita Brands at CPMA booth 519 to meet Miss Chiquita and taste the company's new, fresh products.



**Booth #525  
BLUE BOOK SERVICES**

**Carol Stream, IL**  
Whether your sales team needs leads or your credit team needs Ratings & Scores - Blue Book membership gives you the business information you need to grow and protect your business. Find out more and learn what's new at Blue Book Services.



**Booth #609  
DUDA FARM FRESH FOODS, INC.**

**Salinas, CA**  
Looking for healthy solutions to your everyday shopping challenges? Visit Duda Farm Fresh Foods to learn how our fresh product offerings address the ever-evolving needs of today's busy Canadian consumer.



**Booth #613  
DOMEX SUPERFRESH GROWERS**

**Yakima, WA**  
Domex Superfresh Growers is a leading grower and shipper of apples, pears and cherries from the Pacific Northwest. Learn how our difference makes all the difference.



**Booth #619  
MEXICAN PAVILION**

**Delegacion Benito Juarez, Mexico**  
A high-end producer of winter vegetables, which ship in season from mid-September through June with an emphasis on "Molina Quality" Spring Table grapes.



**Booth #624  
GIUMARRA COMPANIES**

**Los Angeles, CA**  
Giumarra offers a year-round supply of the world's best produce, including organic and Fair Trade Certified™. Together with our growers and customers, we're "Feeding the world in a healthy way."



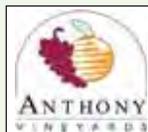
**Booth #639  
TURBANA CORPORATION**

**Coral Gables, FL**  
One of the leading premier importers of tropical produce — including bananas, plantains, pineapples and ethnic tropicals. Our mission is to provide healthy tropical foods that transform people's lives.



**Booth # 643  
ANTHONY VINEYARDS, INC.**

**Bakersfield, CA**  
Anthony Vineyards, Inc. is a grower/shipper of organic and conventional California table grapes. We also market Medjool and pitted dates under the SunDate label.



**Booth #713  
TANIMURA & ANTLE**

**Salinas, CA**  
Based in California's Salinas Valley, Tanimura & Antle is a family owned and operated business focused on quality, freshness and innovation. Tanimura & Antle produces a full line of fresh vegetables. Stop by our booth and see what's new!



**Booth #803  
DEL MONTE FRESH PRODUCE**

**Miami, FL**  
Fresh Del Monte Produce Canada, Inc. is a leading producer of premium quality fresh and fresh cut produce. Visit our booth to learn about our state of the art facility in Toronto, ON.



# Florida field-grown stacks up nice

Nearly seven in ten Canadian shoppers believe that there is a difference in taste between hothouse and field-grown tomatoes, and of that group, the majority believe that Florida field-grown are superior.

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Booth 929 to find  
out how your  
fresh tomato sales  
can stack up, too.*

Leger Marketing, Canadian Consumer Survey (Online) July 10th, 2012

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T O M A T O E S

[www.floridatomatoes.org](http://www.floridatomatoes.org)



**CPMA BOOTH REVIEW**

**Booth #809  
BARD VALLEY MEDJOOL  
DATE GROWERS  
ASSOCIATION**

**Bard, CA**

Bard Valley Medjool Date Growers' Natural Delights offers the highest quality fruit available year-round.

Available in conventional and organic, whole, pitted and dateroll varieties, Natural Delights are the best tasting, most luscious dates in the world.



**Booth #811  
CALIFORNIA BLUEBERRY  
COMMISSION**

**Fresno, CA**

The Commission assures the public of a continuous supply of this important commodity. The commission is authorized to carry out programs of pest management, advertising, promotion, food safety, maturity standards, education, marketing, and research relating to blueberries.



**Booth #852  
PECO PALLET**

**Irvington, NY**

PECO Pallet is a North American leader in pallet rental services with an outstanding reputation for quality, service, and sustainability. For more information, visit [pecopallet.com](http://pecopallet.com).



**Booth #927  
AMERICAN PEANUT  
COUNCIL**

**Mississauga, Ontario**

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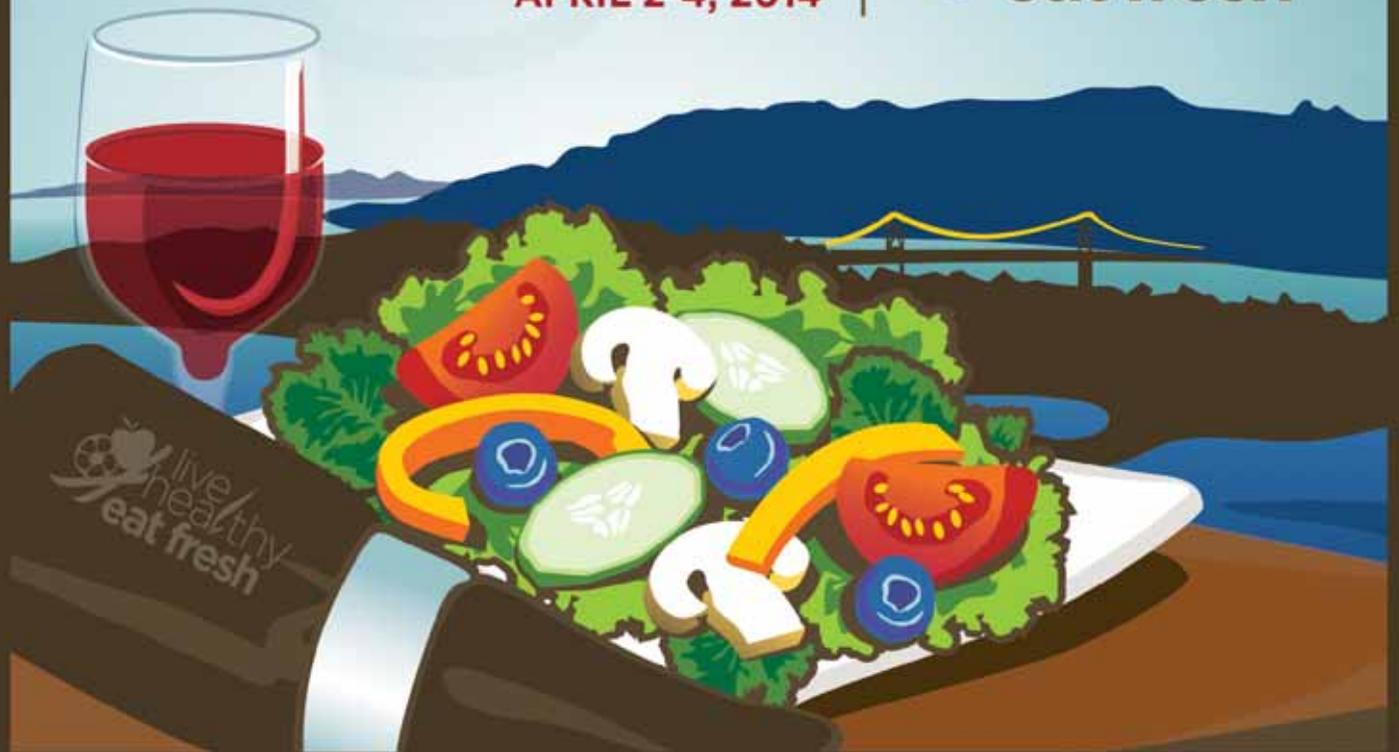
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The Canadian Produce Marketing Association invites you to **Live Healthy, Eat Fresh** at the 2014 Convention and Trade Show in **Vancouver**.

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+ TRADE SHOW  
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[cpma.ca](http://cpma.ca)

**CPMA BOOTH REVIEW**

**Booth #929  
CALIFORNIA TOMATO FARMERS**

**Sacramento, CA**  
California Tomato Farmers are multi-generational family farmers who are at the forefront of food safety, sustainability and quality. Learn what "The Fresh Standard" delivers to you and your customers.



**Booth #929  
FLORIDA TOMATO COMMITTEE**

**Maitland, FL**  
Nothing is more important than your continued trust and confidence! Florida tomato growers are committed to ensuring the best quality, wholesomeness and safety of every fresh Florida tomato they ship.



**Booth# 938  
COLUMBIA MARKETING INTERNATIONAL**

**Wenatchee, WA**  
As one of Washington State's largest apple, pear and cherry growers/shippers, CMI strives to deliver the finest products through improved growing, harvesting and shipping procedures. You can count on CMI for exceptional service and selection of conventional and organic apples, pears and cherries.



**Booth # 1035  
CABO FRESH**

**Los Angeles, CA**  
Cabo Fresh Guacamoles satisfy a growing appetite for high quality, healthy, all-natural guacamole. Available in a variety of sizes and flavors, from our flagship Authentic flavor, to our Spicy, Classic Mild, and Organic Guacamoles.



**Booth #1038  
THE IDAHO POTATO COMMISSION**

**Eagle, ID**  
The Idaho Potato Commission is the marketing arm for the entire Idaho potato industry. The organization created the well-known "Grown in Idaho®" seal, which symbolizes quality.



**Booth # 1039  
PRODUCE BUSINESS**

**Boca Raton, FL**  
Produce Business is the No. 1 publication reaching produce buyers around the world. Covering marketing, merchandising, management and procurement issues that affect sales of produce and floral items. Produce Business uniquely "initiates industry improvement."



**PRODUCE WATCH**

**TRANSITIONS**



**TOM LANGE COMPANY  
SPRINGFIELD, IL**

Tom Lange Company announces the addition of produce veteran **Mark Krauter** to its sales team. Krauter has worked successfully with fresh fruits and vegetables in both North and South America, most recently serving as director of international sales for Amerifresh headquartered in Scottsdale, AZ. He will be opening a sales office in Visalia, CA, operating under Lange's Seven Seas banner.

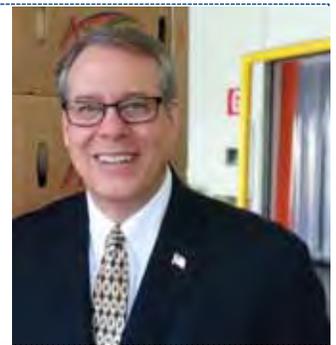
**CALIFORNIA GIANT  
BERRY FARMS  
WATSONVILLE, CA**

California Giant Berry Farms hires **Jazmin Lopez** as the food safety coordinator. The company created the new staff position to focus on field-level education and training. Lopez is well versed to assist California Giant farming partners with training and documentation for food safety, pesticide safety, regulatory compliance, supervisory skills, and water management.



**AYCO FARMS  
POMPANO BEACH, FL**

Ayco Farms announces the hiring of **Dale Chase** as executive vice president of sales and marketing with the objective of transforming Ayco's current retail dynamic, and diversifying retail sales and foodservice programs. Chase is tasked with leading and directing the sales department in an effort to enhance buyer relations, strengthen category management support, and expand business solutions.



**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**READY PAC ENERGIZES  
READY SNAX OFFERINGS**

Ready Pac Foods, Inc., Irwindale, CA, is optimizing its delicious Ready Snax line with a new flavor variety. The Ready Snax line also features improved packaging presentation and efficiency, aimed to further deliver on key consumer needs: freshness, healthfulness, convenience, portability, and great taste. These newly enhanced snacking items feature vertically-oriented packaging to improve shelf space efficiencies, and fresh new labels with expanded nutrient information.



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 info@producebusiness.com

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**HERITAGE RESERVE NAVEL ORANGES ARRIVING**

Heritage Reserve Navel Oranges (grown by LoBue Citrus, Lindsay, CA) are now returning for a limited time at select retailers in the United States. The naturally colored Heritage Reserve Navel Oranges were threatened this past December with more than 12 days of below freezing temperatures. After diligent evaluation, LoBue Citrus is looking forward to another year of quality navels.



**JOSÉ ANDRÉS FOODS BRINGS AJO MORADO GARLIC TO U.S.**

José Andrés Foods, Washington, DC, was launched in 2013 to bring a new line of products from Spain's most prestigious small producers, which were handpicked by Chef José Andrés, to the U.S. market. Today the chef's new non-GMO heirloom purple garlic product, Ajo Morado, is available for national distribution and purchase.



**MANGOVER CAMPAIGN INSPIRES CONSUMERS**

The National Mango Board (NMB), Orlando, FL, will drive mango awareness with new Mangover recipe ideas, concepts and partnerships. The NMB also expanded to include new initiatives within several of its existing programs for 2014 in an effort to reach more retailers, foodservice professionals and industry members.

**SETTON FARMS WELCOMES NEW AMBASSADORS**

Setton Pistachio of Terra Bella, Inc., Terra Bella, CA, is continuing to grow its ambassador team with the addition of two new arrivals. Yoga instructor, social media influencer and creator of the 365-Day Handstand Challenge, Lauren Rudick, along with yoga instructor, SUP (Stand Up Paddle Boarding) competitor, and an Oakley Woman's Fitness Apparel ambassador Lindsay Gonzalez of Denver, CO, are excited to join Setton's community of wellness-oriented ambassadors.



**OCEAN MIST FARMS RECEIVES LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**

Albert Pieri, a second-generation family owner at Ocean Mist Farms, Castroville, CA, recently received the Lifetime Achievement Award from UnitedAg, a nonprofit organization for agribusiness out of Irvine, CA. Pieri worked at Ocean Mist Farms starting in the 1940s, for nearly 50 years. The Pieri family devoted nine decades to agriculture in California with Albert Pieri playing a large part in the family's leadership efforts.



**LOVE BEETS LAUNCHES NEW ORGANIC MARINATED BABY BEETS**

Love Beets — a line of premium, all-natural, ready-to-eat beets out of Philadelphia, PA — announces the launch of its first organic marinated baby beets, along with a brand new line of natural beet juices with no added sugar. Both Love Beets products are beginning to roll into grocery stores across North America.



To get ahead in the produce business, you need to stay ahead of the produce business.

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## STOKING THE MOMENTUM ON CAPITOL HILL

By Julie Manes  
United Fresh Produce Association Director  
of Government Relations

**T**he past month has been an incredible flurry of activity on Capitol Hill after a long period of stalemate on issues of importance to the produce industry. First, after one of the strangest chapters in the history of Farm Bill reauthorizations, the 2014 Farm Bill was finally signed into law. While the unexpected twists and turns that occurred in getting this legislation across the finish line are many, the produce industry can take heart in one thing that was consistent throughout the whole process: strong, bipartisan, bicameral support for fruit and vegetable priorities.

It is safe to say policymakers recognize the produce industry as a vital sector with a very compelling and impactful presence on Capitol Hill and around the country. That ability to be effective is one of our greatest assets as we turn all of our focus to another key issue that has recently been given renewed congressional attention — immigration reform.

In 2013, Congress took key steps toward making immigration reform a reality. The Senate passed a comprehensive plan, which included a new agriculture guest worker program that was supported by the United Fresh Produce Association and other agriculture allies. Additionally, the House of Representatives held a number of important hearings on key aspects of immigration reform such as agriculture workers and border security.

Much of the initial work needed to get reform passed had been done, and then toward the end of last year, action seemed to stall. However, late in January, Republicans in the House of Representatives — who hold the majority in that body — released a set of principles for immigration reform. While this is not legislation, it does indicate that the leadership of the House is serious about trying to find a path forward.

**WHILE THE PRODUCE INDUSTRY HAS SCORED A GREAT VICTORY IN THE PASSING OF THE FARM BILL, AND WILL WORK TO CAPITALIZE ON THE POTENTIAL FOR IMMIGRATION REFORM, THERE ARE MANY OTHER ISSUES WE ALSO HAVE TO FOCUS ON.**

From these principles, the leadership of the House can “take the temperature” of the rank and file to determine the next best steps. You can be sure that United Fresh has made this issue a top legislative priority; after all, without an adequate, skilled workforce, produce providers cannot get product to the marketplace — the foundation of our industry. We will continue to keep you informed about what is happening on this essential issue and let you know what you can do to keep the pressure on policymakers to get reform passed in this session of Congress.

While the produce industry has scored a great victory in the passing of the Farm Bill, and will work to capitalize on the potential for immigration reform, there are many other issues we also have to focus on.

During United Fresh’s recent winter leadership meetings, the board approved a set of policy priorities that span a wide range of topics. Among them will be efforts to ensure that the ongoing implementation of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) is based on sound science, consistent with Congressional intent, and appropriate for all segments of the produce chain. We also want to ensure that all mandated federal implementation efforts are fully funded by Congress. When it comes to nutrition (another crucial policy area), United Fresh will continue to shape the USDA’s school nutrition regulations to

increase access to fruits and vegetables. We will work to prevent any roll-back on the provisions of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010; as well as protect and enhance the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program to supply schoolchildren with a fresh fruit or vegetable snack every day.

Another set of goals includes: shaping the expansion of fruit and vegetable incentives for SNAP families, impacting the 2015 Dietary Guidelines, and working with the USDA to improve federal fruit and vegetable procurement for schools. Among other issues, United Fresh will strive to ensure that environmental policies allow business operators and environmental leaders to work on policies that encourage business growth and protect the environment. We’ll also aim to ensure that inspection and exam activities at America’s ports of entry are as efficient and streamlined as possible to address the growing level of activities at these key facilities.

While these are not all of the issues that command the attention of the produce industry and the United Fresh Produce Association, it is certainly an indication that our industry has to be vigilant on a diverse array of issues. We see that our industry can have tremendous success in shaping our most important issues. Together, we can reach our goals and make 2014 a great year for produce policy.

# Southern-State Ag Officials Provide Perspective on FSMA

By Jodean Robbins

PRODUCE BUSINESS caught up with three southern-state Ag Commissioners at the PMA Convention in New Orleans: Mike Strain, Commissioner of Department of Ag for Louisiana; Adam H. Putnam, Florida's Commissioner of Agriculture; and Gary W. Black, Georgia Commissioner of Agriculture. The conversation quickly turned to the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA).

A follow-up conference call with the Florida and Georgia Commissioners, along with Carrie Castille, PhD, Associate Commissioner, Governmental Affairs and Senior Advisor representing the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, resulted in the subsequent exchange:

**PB: Where are the opportunities for improvement for the FSMA?**

**Black:** The early days of the FSMA have potentially damaged trust between producers and regulators. Penalties issued for inaccurate and frivolous issues haven't improved food safety or furthered a cooperative attitude. Another glaring weakness is the sole focus on domestic product. Though the FSMA applies to both imported and domestic product, the federal government decided to first focus on domestic producers for implementation. It's a travesty for everyone if imports are not held to the same standard as domestic.

**Castille:** The pro's of the FSMA are that producers should be able to share best practices with each other, reducing the potential for produce as a source of foodborne illness. The con's are if the rules are so onerous that American farmers are reluctant to continue growing fruits and vegetables, then we will not be able to continue to grow the "local foods" movements in each state. FDA simply has to get these rules right – balancing the need for food safety and the need for nutritious, readily available foods in our local market places.

**Putnam:** It is critical that rules within

*Three southern-state Ag Commissioners talked about food safety at PMA's Fresh Summit in New Orleans: (L-R) Mike Strain, Commissioner of Department of Ag for Louisiana; Adam H. Putnam, Florida's Commissioner of Department of Ag; and Gary W. Black, Georgia Commissioner of Ag.*

FSMA are crafted carefully, implemented properly and enforced equitably. If FDA does not apply the necessary changes proposed during the comment period and does not ensure equitable enforcement on foreign and domestic supplies, FSMA will not achieve its intended objective — to ensure a safe, abundant supply of food for our nation's consumers.

**PB: What are your principal concerns about the FSMA?**

**Black:** The FSMA was crafted with the best intentions in mind, but it has some shortcomings. Our team reported several specific areas during the comment period. First, holding irrigation standards to a recreational standard is almost amusing — that must be changed. Second, standards must be enforced unilaterally. We cannot impose additional burdens on domestic producers until we have a final rule holding imports to the same standards. Third, we need drastic improvements in the definition of a farm. We have operations that don't know if they're a packinghouse or a farm. Do they fit under the produce rule or the preventative rule? We need clear definitions so people know what rules they need to follow.

**Castille:** We all support food safety and the part it plays in public health. However, some of the provisions of the draft rule concern us.



# “Cooperation between industry and government is the only way to further our nation’s important food safety goals.”

— Adam Putnam, Florida Ag Commissioner

Specifically, we’re concerned about how FDA will implement these rules, and how these new programs are going to be funded. We are also concerned that water-testing requirements may be onerous. We also think the provision regarding compost and animal exclusion are impractical.

**Putnam:** Working with Florida’s \$108 billion agriculture industry, we reviewed the proposed rules and have several concerns. One, the inconsistencies between rules, including definitions of “farm” and “harvest,” among others, make it difficult to determine which operations will be subject to which rules. Second, the lack of direction and necessary resources for FDA and state agencies responsible for

implementing and enforcing new requirements is challenging. Third, inequities exist between domestic suppliers and foreign importers that create an unfair advantage for foreign producers.

## PB: How should industry and government better work together to further food safety goals?

**Black:** The federal government should set the standards and audit but the implementation on the farms should be left to the states, and the states should be funded to carry out that role. The states are more effective in connecting information with producers. We have the relationships already and can do the job more cost effectively.

**Castille:** The part of FSMA requiring education and outreach may be one of the most significant provisions of FSMA. It is here that industry and government can have the most opportunity to share best practices and discuss means to achieve food safety. The state departments of agriculture must be directly involved in these programs. The FDA does not have experience working

with farms and farmers. And farmers do not have experience with the FDA coming on their farms. If producers don’t know or understand the requirements proposed by the FDA, then the program will end up being an enforcement program rather than a food safety program.

**Putnam:** Cooperation between industry and government is the only way to further our nation’s important food safety goals. One area in need of additional cooperation and collaboration is the lack of enforcement of the new standards on foreign imports. The U.S. cannot impose stricter regulations on domestic producers while turning a blind eye to foreign producers. Government and industry must work together to ensure an even playing field for domestic and foreign producers.

## PB: What are you doing to help promote food safety in produce?

**Black:** We advocate what we call a BASE Approach to improving food safety, which we believe to be the most appropriate structure. The B means the federal government should focus on the Borders. The A is for the federal government’s role in Auditing the states. S is for consistent Standards across the country, and E is for Education. The BASE approach to food safety would allow states to work directly with farmers while the federal government can focus on imports. We are continuing to work with the federal government on effective standards and continuing our role in outreach to producers as well as consumers.

**Castille:** We are involved with the other departments of agriculture across the nation in commenting on the rules. We are also working with the FDA to determine how an integrated food safety system can work and how we can work with the federal government to create a seamless program of food safety. We are talking about the requirements and the need for farmers to comment on these rules.

**Putnam:** Florida has been a leader in developing and implementing some of the most robust and stringent food safety practices in the country. We are developing a tool that allows the consumer unprecedented access to food safety inspections and results in an effort to increase transparency — and confidence — in our state’s food supply.

pb

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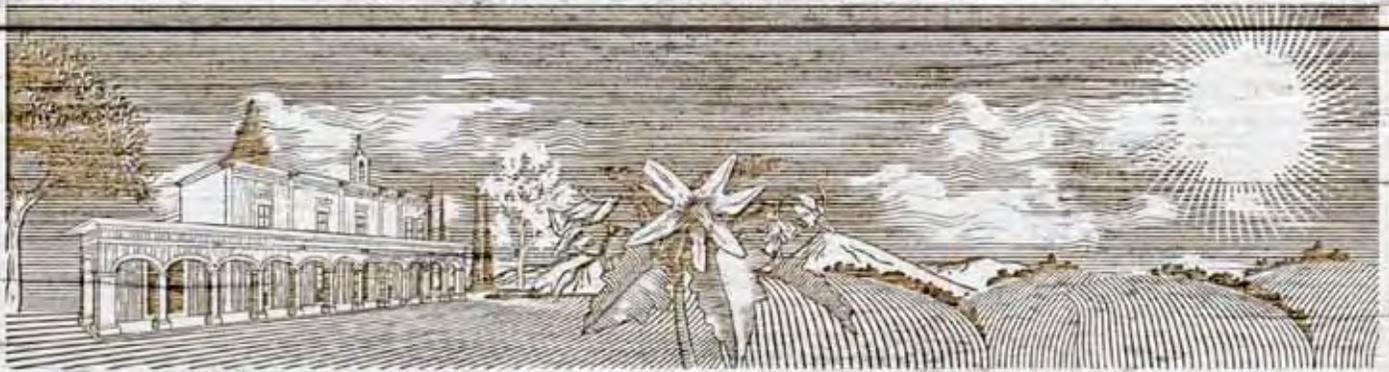
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Website: internationalrestaurantny.com

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Email: dfaris@wirerestaurant.org  
Website: wirerestaurant.org

## **MARCH 12 - 13, 2014** **AMERICA TRADES PRODUCE/BORDER POLICY CONFERENCE**

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Phone: (520) 287-2707 • Fax: (520) 287-2948  
Website: americatradesproduce.com

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Conference Venue: Hilton Scottsdale Resort & Villas, Scottsdale, AZ  
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Phone: (302) 235-2329 • Fax: (302) 235-5555  
Email: salston@pbhfoundation.org  
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## **MARCH 24 - 28, 2014** **INTERNATIONAL SPROUT GROWERS ASSOCIATION CONVENTION**

Conference Venue: Embassy Suites, Orlando, FL  
Conference Management: International Sprout Growers Association, Warwick, RI  
Phone: (508) 657-4742  
Email: office@isga-sprouts.org  
Website: isga-sprouts.org

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Conference Venue: Vancouver Convention Centre, Vancouver, British Columbia  
Conference Management: Canadian Produce Marketing Association, Ottawa, Ontario  
Phone: (613) 226-4187 • Fax: (613) 226-2984  
Email: cbrault@cpma.ca  
Website: cpma.ca

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Website: imexmgt.com

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Email: carissa@fpfc.org  
Website: fpfc.org

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# Effects of Hass Avocado Intake on Post-Ingestive Satiety, Glucose and Insulin Levels, and Subsequent Energy Intake in Overweight Adults

AUTHORS: MICHELLE WIEN; ELLA HADDAD; KEIJI ODA; JOAN SABATÉ, LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY

## Study Summary

A randomized crossover feeding study on 26 healthy, overweight adults, conducted at Loma Linda University, was published in the November 2013 *Nutrition Journal*. The study evaluated whether incorporating fresh Hass avocado in a lunch — either by replacing other foods or by simply adding it to the meal — would influence satiety, blood sugar and insulin response and subsequent food intake.

Participants ate the same standardized breakfast followed by three different lunch meals on three different days:

- Standard (control) lunch: without avocado (designed to meet individual meal-based calorie and macronutrient needs) that included a salad with Italian dressing, a baguette and cookies.
- Avocado replacing part of the Italian dressing and cookies lunch: the same standard lunch with approximately one-half of a fresh avocado in place of part of the Italian dressing and cookies (the same total energy and macronutrient content of the standard lunch).
- Avocado added to a standard lunch: the same standard lunch with approximately one-half of a fresh avocado added (total higher calories and macronutrients).

The study found that when approximately one-half of a fresh avocado was added to a standard lunch, participants felt more satisfied and had a reduced desire to eat following the meal, than when a standard lunch with no avocado was eaten. When the avocado was added to a standard lunch or replaced part of the Italian dressing and cookies in a standard lunch, the immediate post-meal rise in insulin levels was significantly lower than when a standard lunch with no avocado was eaten. No matter which lunch was eaten, the calories consumed throughout the remainder of the day were equivalent.

While the conclusions drawn from this study are too limited to apply to the general public — due to the study size and study limitations noted by the researchers

— the results do provide promising clues and a basis for future research to determine avocados' effects on satiety and glucose and insulin response.

## Standard Lunch Results

After 26 healthy, overweight people ate the avocado added to a standard lunch:

They had a reduced desire to eat after the meal compared to eating the standard lunch. The half avocado added to a standard lunch significantly decreased the desire to eat by 40 percent over a three-hour period compared to the standard lunch; and decreased the desire to eat by 28 percent over a five-hour period compared to the standard lunch.

Participants felt more satisfied after the meal compared to eating the standard lunch. The half avocado added increased self-reported subjective feelings of satisfaction by 26 percent over a three-hour period compared to the standard lunch.

The amount of calories and macronutrients consumed at subsequent meals were not statistically different compared to when they ate the standard and avocado-replacing part of the Italian dressing and cookies lunches.

At 30 minutes after the start of the test meal, the avocado added to a standard lunch helped mitigate rises in insulin compared to eating the standard lunch. However, there was no significant difference in insulin levels over a three-hour period. The rise in insulin levels was significantly weakened by 22 percent 30 minutes after the start of the meal, compared to eating the standard lunch. There was also no increase in blood sugar levels beyond what was observed after eating the standard lunch, despite the

extra calories and carbohydrates provided by the added avocado.

There was no increase in blood sugar levels beyond what was observed after eating the standard or avocado-replacing part of the Italian dressing and cookies lunches. Adding approximately one-half of a Hass avocado to a standard lunch did not affect blood sugar any more than the standard lunch or avocado replacing part of the Italian dressing and cookies lunch, despite the extra calories and carbohydrates provided by the added avocado.

## Results When Avocados Replaced Part of the Italian Dressing and Cookies from a Standard Lunch

After 26 healthy, overweight people ate the avocado-replacing part of the Italian dressing and cookies lunch: The amount of calories and macronutrients consumed at subsequent meals was not statistically different compared to when they ate the standard and avocado added to a standard lunch. It helped mitigate post-meal rise in insulin compared to eating the standard lunch. Thirty minutes after the start of the meal, the rise in insulin levels was significantly weakened by 37 percent, compared to eating the standard lunch. And, blood insulin remained significantly lower over a three-hour period compared to when the standard lunch was eaten.

Researchers concluded that the reduction in the rise in insulin levels observed with the avocado-replacing part of the Italian dressing and cookies lunch is worthy of future exploration in persons with insulin resistance (e.g. metabolic syndrome) and type 2 diabetes to determine if eating avocados can favorably influence glucose homeostasis.



The Hass Avocado Board (HAB) is an agriculture promotion group established in 2002 to promote the consumption of Hass avocados in the United States. A 12-member board representing domestic producers and importers of Hass Avocados directs HAB's promotion, research and information programs under supervision of the United States Department of Agriculture.

Loma Linda University is a Seventh-day Adventist educational health-sciences institution. More than 55 programs are offered by the schools of Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Public Health, Religion and Behavioral Health.

# Research Complexity Opens Door To More Study

BY JIM PREVOR, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, PRODUCE BUSINESS

**T**his is a very important study. Not because it impacts the whole industry, but because it reminds us how complex the whole area of dietary research is. This research is making an interesting point: that a calorie is not necessarily just a calorie. Or put another way, although seemingly it should be easy to gain or lose weight by consuming more or less calories over a person's stasis level, some calories consumed may be more important than others.

It is easy to dismiss as charlatans the various weight-loss "experts" who claim to have found that certain combinations of food, or avoiding certain foods, can alter the mathematical facts about weight gain and weight loss — and, indeed, many of these folks are charlatans. Yet, this study poses a more interesting question. In a sense, the study asks whether human beings eating real food can somehow alter their behaviors based on what they eat. So, in this case, a calorie of avocado has been found to increase satiety, which would be expected to lead to less snacking and thus lower calorie intake.

Obviously these tests always need to be repeated and conducted by many researchers under varying circumstances before they can be said to become part of settled wisdom. This study was done only on 26 healthy overweight adults. So we know nothing about children or people who are not overweight, and 26 people just raise questions; it can't provide definitive answers.

Still it wasn't all that long ago that the National Cancer Institute was resisting the use of avocados as part of the 5-A-Day program. Oddly enough, at the time, avocados and coconuts were seen as the evil high fat heavy produce items, whereas today avocados are filled with so-called "good fat," and coconut water is the health drink of choice.

The truth is that we know very little about nutrition. The United Fresh Produce Association recently issued a statement

praising the government's decision to increase fresh fruit and vegetable availability under the WIC (Women, Infants and Children) program. At the same time, it chastised the USDA for not including white potatoes in the program. Nutritionally, the government has taken the position that white potatoes are akin to rice or pasta — the starch component of a meal — and there is no reason to support white potatoes over rice or pasta.

Now the truth is there is a lot of politics in all this. Whatever the nutritional argument, the decision is made easier for the USDA by the fact that grain and rice interests would object to any policy that favors white potatoes over rice or pasta. It is also true that United's advocacy is not particularly based on any research that proves children fed white potatoes rather than, say, rice, have fewer illnesses or lived longer, happier lives, but rather on United's imperative to represent the whole produce industry. One for all, and all for one.

This avocado study throws another variable in the mix — one which may not always rebound to the benefit of the produce industry. This study ultimately asks the impact of consumption of particular items on the propensity to consume other items, an area almost totally devoid of research. So even if it is true that adding avocado to meals will increase satiety, and even if we can show this would reduce snacking, and (as a consequence) people will consume less calories — thus gaining less weight, be less likely to be obese and essentially living longer or healthier lives — it still wouldn't prove that avocado is the optimum or only way to achieve this effect.

Perhaps peanut butter could do this. Or an olive tapenade. Or smashed bananas. Or bacon. Line-caught salmon? Or thinly sliced USDA Prime Grade New York strip? We just don't know.

One wonders if the willingness by government and industry to promote 100 percent juice products as part of the *Fruits*

& *Veggies, More Matters* initiative makes sense when considered in light of this study. After all, 8 ounces of Tropicana Pure Premium Orange Juice has 110 calories. An 8.9-ounce orange has 89 calories. Which is likely to provide greater satiety?

**Let us all remember that when it comes to nutrition, what we don't know can definitely hurt us. So the primary industry initiative should be supporting research to get greater understanding.**

A hat tip goes to the Hass Avocado Board for supporting such research and to the researchers at Loma Linda University for exploring the matter. Let us all remember that when it comes to nutrition, what we don't know can definitely hurt us. So the primary industry initiative should be supporting research to get greater understanding.

# CONSOLIDATION NEED NOT LEAD TO MARGIN COMPRESSION

By James Prevor  
President & Editor-in-Chief



The news that the team controlling Albertsons would acquire Safeway is very meaningful for those vendors that sell to either one of the companies. If they lose the Safeway or Albertsons business, it is hard to see where they can pick up volume on such scale.

Yet as a sign of consolidation in the industry, it is not as dramatic as it once would

have been. Take a look at the chart on this page from *The Wall Street Journal*. The gap between Safeway and Kroger is sizable, and the gap between everyone and Wal-Mart is gigantic.

The shocking thing is not the consolidation, but that Safeway simply gave up. There was no *sturm und drang*; no fighting for independence; no proclamations that shareholder value could be enhanced by letting Safeway management build the company. They just gave up.

The roots of this lie in Wal-Mart's move into Safeway's territory. Whereas Kroger elected to fight, lowering prices and determining to be competitive, Safeway did not so much fight Wal-Mart as get out of its way. So it renovated every store with its upscale Lifestyle concept, rolled out the high end O brand organics and crusty bread, and

**In order for producers to deal with retail consolidation and come out victorious, they need a game-changing dynamic — the answer is genetics.**

closed stores in marginal neighborhoods, leaving the clientele for Wal-Mart.

The conventional supermarket business, though, isn't what it once was. Today, many a supermarket is under stress without any new conventional competition. Imagine a healthy supermarket, then a deep discount ALDI opens nearby, an epicurean Trader Joe's, a big warehouse club such as Costco, a supercenter from Wal-Mart, while the local Target adds a grocery concept. The local Walgreens adds a fresh food assortment as does the local Dollar General, and, oh,

the red.

For vendors, there are many directions to go: One is to focus on the special needs of various market sectors. In the past, the vendor might have sold identical product to many different chains that were similar but operated in different geographies. Now vendors may have to focus on the needs of individual retailers. So Whole Foods may want Fair Trade product, while ALDI is looking for an off size so it can get high-quality fruit at a bargain-basement price. Packaging may be the key to Costco and logistics the key to penetrating Walgreens.

Another option is looking for other buyers — export, foodservice, wholesale and independent retailers. Still another possibility is to enter the big chains but under a "local" program, where a vendor may only supply particular stores or divisions.

These are all good ideas, but they are somewhat stop-gaps. In order for producers to deal with retail consolidation and come out victorious, they need a game-changing dynamic — the answer is genetics.

There are two great competing models for avoiding margin compression due to retail consolidation: Driscoll's and Sun World. Both have proprietary produce with unique characteristics. Driscoll's grows berries on its own and brands product with the Driscoll's name. Sun World grows a base and then licenses out its varieties and gives each variety its

own brand — such as Midnight Beauty, Scarlotta Seedless and Honeycot, to name a few.

The apple industry also has engaged on this tactic through so-called "club" varieties.

What is right for each company will vary depending on its resources and goals, but the key elements of a successful approach are the same: First, have a unique variety with distinctive consumer attributes. Second, limit the acreage planted so that there is always unfulfilled demand, and thus pricing can be kept at a premium. Third, restrict the growing to land that will produce optimal quality, and restrict the growers to those who will use the finest horticultural practices. Fourth, make sure the marketers are strong and able to handle the volume.

Once the product is developed this way, it needs a brand so consumers can identify it and ask for it or require it. That brand, of course, needs to be promoted.

Then you wind up with a new world; a world turned upside down, because the retailers need the product more than the vendor needs any given retailer.

We are far from there yet, but every produce shipper should be thinking about where it is going to get its proprietary genetics in 10 years and how that product is going to be branded. Retailers tempted to push for the last nickel should remember that in a not very distant future they may be pleading with those same producers for an allotment of their proprietary — and very popular — produce. **pb**



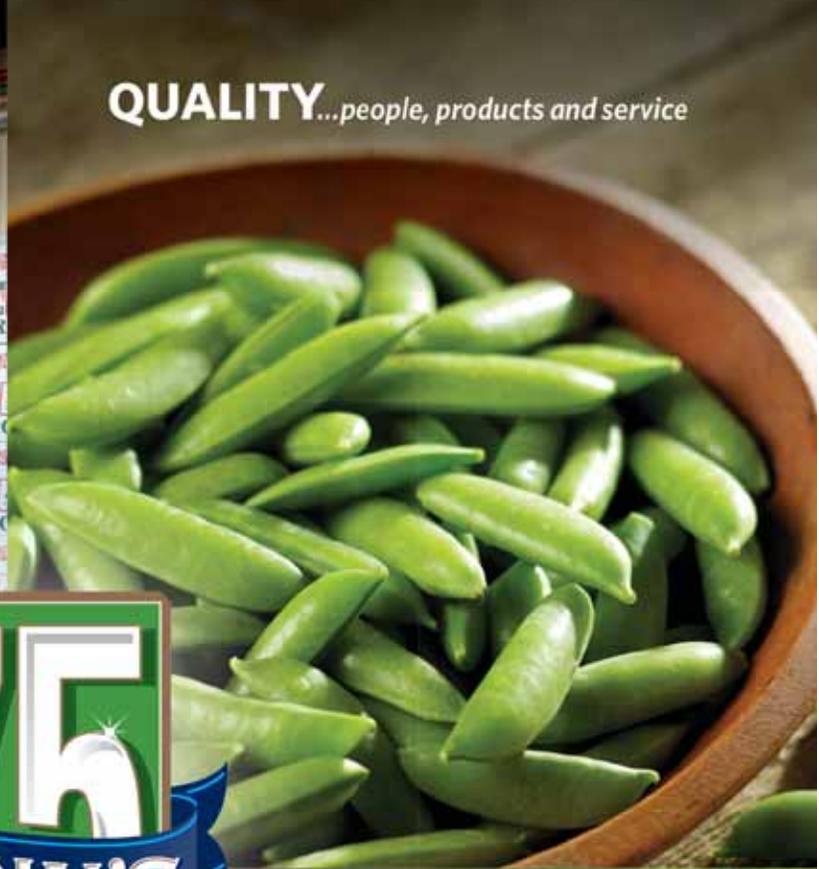
Amazon Fresh decides to enter the market while Whole Foods seizes the local university clientele and Fresh Market does the same with a nearby upscale suburb.

None of these retail concepts are directly competitive to a supermarket, but they don't have to be. If each concept peels off just 1 percent of the supermarket's business, the end is near. Retailers have high fixed costs, and they can't lose 10 or 20 percent of sales without moving into

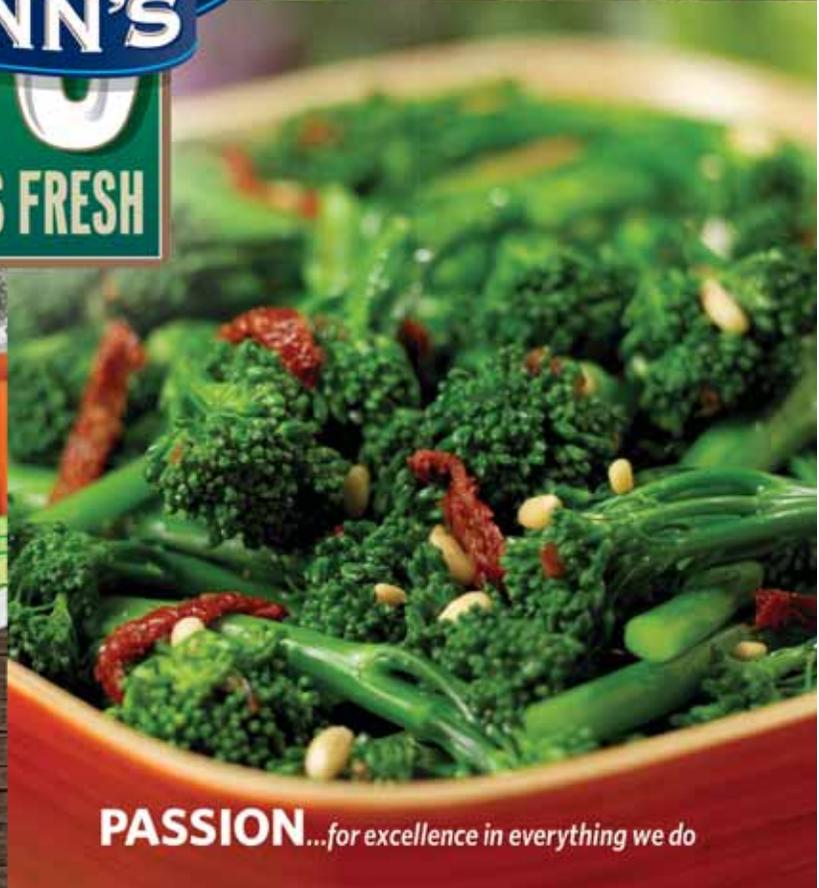
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## When Elmo Is Crying – Will The Sesame Street Brand Be Used To Market Sub-standard Product? Is The Legal Minimum An Acceptable Food Safety Standard When Promoting To Children?

FROM JIM PREVOR'S PERISHABLE PUNDIT 03.03.2014

**O**ur piece, *IMAGINE-NATION: Will The First Lady's Sesame Street Campaign Reduce Produce Consumption*, brought lots of calls and comments. They were universally unhappy about the program and universally saw no upside in going on the record. One former chairman of one of the national produce associations sent this note:

*I've had a few people ask about the PMA/Sesame Street initiative, so I have forwarded your URL to them saying that you covered the subject far more completely than I could.*

*Having said that, I re-read your post and thought that there was one more additional consideration about the program. It struck me that the Sesame Street initiative has all the hallmarks of the launching of the 5-A-Day program and subsequent programs by the Produce for Better Health Foundation (PBH). Again, it is a wonderful message that has not moved the needle on consumption one iota.*

*One needs to ask why PBH has been relatively ineffective. While there are a plethora of reasons, I think the overriding one is the fact that the logo and message became instantly ubiquitous.*

*Everyone's brand is no one's brand. I remember having a conversation one day with the produce director of a very large supermarket chain when 5-A-Day had just come out decades ago. I asked him why they didn't jump into the PBH program as heavily as many other national/regional chains.*

*His answer seared into my memory as a life lesson on many other produce marketing issues over the years. He said, "My boss hires me to promote produce for this chain, not to promote produce for the industry. I am judged on whether I beat the competition, not whether I perform a public service for PBH." Sure, that was a pretty bare-knuckles answer, but it was the kind of candid comment that gets shared among industry leaders to prevent runaway trains (which PBH has become, in my opinion).*

*Fast forward to October with the Sesame Street announcement. I fully agree with all the points that you brought up. Additionally, I think it is a REAL danger for the Children's Television Workshop's brand. First, there is overexposure. The big boys may or may not jump on board the program as you pointed out in your article.*

The comparison with the PBH programs is apt. Our critique of the Sesame Street deal is not that it won't increase consumption; perhaps it might. Our critique is that 1) We have no idea if it will increase consumption or not, 2) It might decrease consumption so it may be reckless to undertake without further research, and 3) If the design of the program is such that it is a roll-out rather than a trial, there will NEVER be any way to know if it has any impact on consumption as there is no control group.

This is pretty similar to our critique of PBH's efforts — not that

they are bad, but that they are set up in a way that never tells us if they are good.

In fact, if consumption declines, supporters of PBH are likely to say that we are lucky to have PBH or it would have declined more. If consumption increases, they will give PBH the credit. Is there any doubt that the White House will say the same about this initiative?

It doesn't work that way. The oldest fallacy in the book is *post hoc ergo propter hoc* ("After this, therefore because of this.") The classic illustration: the rooster crows and then the sun rises. Thus, ignorant people will give credit to the rooster for causing the sun to rise.

We pleaded with PBH years ago to not nationalize the program, to not even run it on a state level, but only to try it in a select few markets with appropriate control groups. Since this is the only way to prove that a roll-out of a program would increase consumption, it was the only hope for getting significant funds from sources outside the produce industry.

Instead we went for the politically easy — just as the First Lady has done with this program.

Our correspondent is also correct that having investment made in these industry campaigns has not proven to be profitable for the supply base. Retail produce operators embraced the idea of having the supply base invest in 5-A-Day, because they preferred that kind of generic promotion as it left them free to promote as they wished in their departments.

They liked that approach much better than a private company or promotional board offering promotional dollars in exchange for better placement or bigger

orders. But ROI typically depends on those types of actions. Even at the retail level, the battle is typically for market share, so boosting produce consumption, which typically will come at the expense of some other department in the supermarket, is not a very profitable game for retailers.

Elmo was created because in the early 1980s *Sesame Street* did not have a preschool character. Elmo is designed to bond with pre-school children. The First Lady praised Sesame Workshop's President and CEO, H. Melvin Ming, at her press conference because he made the characters available royalty-free. Yet young children, the elderly, those who have undergone chemotherapy, or anyone with a compromised immune system, are among the most vulnerable to foodborne illness.

If there is a food safety outbreak, won't people rightly point to the same man and say, "You were irresponsible for allowing the use of your characters to draw a vulnerable population to this food without establishing clear food safety standards!"?

We hope they will be lucky and there never will be such a problem. But Paul Newman pulled his name from bagged salad mixes for exactly this fear — and he wasn't even focused on little children.

All this for a program for which we have zero evidence will ever increase produce consumption.

**All this for a program for which we have zero evidence will ever increase produce consumption.**

## THE 27<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL MYSTERY SHOPPER REPORT

# Inside The Store: What Retailers Need To Know

Will produce staffers rise to the occasion when tested on knowledge, presentation, and customer service?



Welcome to the 27th Annual Mystery Shopper Report. This year we selected two very versatile and different recipes to arm our shoppers\* with a plethora of opportunities to engage with retail staffers. The recipes definitely provided lots of material to work with once in-store. This year's results rendered funny, shocking, positive, and negative feedback.

**\*MYSTERY SHOPPERS AND PRODUCE BUSINESS EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTORS: CAROL BAREUTHER, NICOLE BRAYSHAW BOND, BOB JOHNSON, ELLEN KOTEFF, KEITH LORIA, MADELINE MESA, MICHELE SOTALLARO**



### WEST COAST REPORT

#### STORE 1

#### Cooperative, Helpful, and Very Well Informed

It was late Saturday morning, and I was in hot pursuit of red and green bell peppers, onions, garlic, chipotle and other ingredients for my soon-to-be famous spicy vegetarian chili.

As I approached the produce on display outside this upscale organic-oriented chain, I was struck by the eye-catching cluster of tomatoes, bell peppers and Hass avocados next to the lisianthus, tulips and market bouquet. The Murcotts and limes

were highlighted by the potted hydrangeas. There were pineapples and seedless watermelon (in January), next to the four varieties of apples, with blood oranges and grapefruit serving as color breaks. The bags of easy peel Mandarins were comfortably resting in the calla lily, spray rose and African violet neighborhood.

Once inside, I approached a worker unpacking a box of organic Fuji apples, next to the organic galas, Pink Ladies and Granny Smiths, and asked if he was the produce manager.

"I can find the produce manager for you," he said.

But it would not be necessary; I was speaking with the assistant manager, and his knowledge of the produce was a match for the beauty of the display.

"I'll take you to the peppers as soon as I finish this box," he said.

As he finished, I took the opportunity to look past a couple dozen busy shoppers at the 40-foot long cold case with five shelves of salad greens, fresh-cut fruits and vegetables, and even a three pack of refrigerated white gardenias. My prom days long since in the rear view mirror, the assistant manager and I returned our attention to the vegetarian chili.

Once at the peppers, he explained that the red peppers are generally higher in vitamin C than the green. He added, the longer the simmer, the fewer the nutrients.

"The more you cook, the less vitamins you get. If you want 100 percent of the vitamins, eat peppers raw. If you cook them, you want them *al dente*, like pasta," he explained.

I'd never heard it put quite that way, but it made sense, and I'm sure I'll be repeating that description.

When he took me to the chipotles I explained that on a scale of mild, medium or hot, I was looking for Scandinavian. He explained that with a dish like chili, the chipotle would be mixed in and all I had to do was be judicious with the amount I used.

The produce was beautiful, and exquisitely laid out. The assistant manager was as congenial as he was knowledgeable. But as I looked at the organic red bell peppers at \$3.95-a-pound, I was jolted into remembering the sticker shock.

"You can get those two for \$3 at \*\*\*\*\*,\*" said a middle-aged man discreetly. "And they're just as good."

## STORE 2 Friendly, But With Spotty Knowledge

It was mid-Saturday morning and, in search of ingredients for a mango smoothie, I was at a chain discount store in a commu-

**He took me to the mango display and demonstrated how to select the fruit that is ripe and ready to eat. "When it's soft, it's good. This one is too soft, and that one should be pulled too," he said.**

nity that is found on lists of the most ethnically balanced towns in America. As I entered the produce department, the limes, tomatillos, mandarins, mangos, pineapples and kiwis were attractively displayed, with three boxes cascading at an angle to let the produce show its stuff. Careful thought from headquarters guided the appealing color breaks.

While the signage clearly let me see the low, low prices, there was nothing to tell me the variety of any of this produce, or whether some of it was riper than the rest.

Looking around, I saw a young man stocking the cold case, and I asked if he could help me gather the ingredients for

my smoothies.

As luck would have it, I had just met the store's mango aficionado.

He held one hand out as if cradling a mango, and the other hand carefully with an imaginary sharp knife, as he explained how you circle the mango to remove the skin.

"For me, it's pretty easy. Watch your hand," he advised.

He took me to the mango display and demonstrated how to select the fruit that is ripe and ready to eat.

"When it's soft, it's good. This one is too soft, and that one should be pulled too," he said.

But as we left the mangos, this over-ripe fruit was still on the display.

Avocados were a foreign object to this soft-spoken young man. He did not know one variety from the next. He did know, however, that they give to the touch when ripe and ready.

He took the time to leave the produce section and lead me to the bottles of lime juice that would add a little kick to my smoothies.

As we parted, he politely apologized for his English.

I had no trouble with his English, but did wonder why the manager did not station this young man near the front of the

## BREAKFAST SMOOTHIE

### Ingredients:

- 1 cup chopped ripe mango
- 1/4 Haas avocado, peeled, pitted, and chopped
- 1/2 cup mango sorbet
- 1/4 cup skim milk
- 2 Tbsp honey
- 2 tsp lime juice
- 1/4 cup crushed ice
- 2 mango slices, 1/2-inch thick
- 1 lime slice



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department demonstrating the art of peeling a mango with style.

### STORE 3 Helpful ... If You Can Find Someone

There was an industrial grimness to the front of this store. The cement patio outside had wrought iron tables, complete with wrought iron chairs, for the comfort of deli shoppers who wanted to eat right away. There was no produce, and no color. Nothing outside this store was alive; and nothing had ever been alive.

I was at a large national chain in an upscale community, and I only had three hours to shop and cook up a batch of spicy vegetarian chili before the Super Bowl.

Given the time, I feared the store would be overrun with last minute shoppers. But almost no one was there. I waited five minutes before someone from the produce department showed up after a helpful deli employee paged someone.

When the produce manager did show up, she was quite cooperative and helpful. She smartly brought with her a phone that let her look up the nutritional value of any of the foods I was shopping.

"The red peppers just taste better than the green ones. There's no difference in the vitamins," she said, and then looked at her phone to run down a long list of the vitamins and other nutrients in both red and green peppers.

The selection, however, was less than impressive, and did not help me cut down on my prep time.

"Sometimes I have chopped peppers, but only when there is a sale because they are pretty expensive," said the produce manager.

The news was no better when it came to one of the essential ingredients to bring some zest to my chili.

"We have chipotles at some of our larger stores, but not at this one," she explained.

She took the time to leave the produce department to help me see if there were chipotles in a jar, but to no avail.

The displays in produce seemed designed to impress me with price, and not much else.

Avocados were 10 for \$10, but the variety remained a closely held secret. The bananas were an inviting 68-cents-a-pound, but the color was a decidedly uninvitingly green. There were, however, some organic bananas, at a steeper price, that could actually be eaten.



## NORTHEAST REPORT

### STORE 1: Fear The Customer With The List

Thanks to predictions of another winter storm, the produce displays at this large chain were a bit worse for wear on a Saturday afternoon, as frenzied shoppers acted as if they were on a Black Friday shopping spree. This perhaps created the surly mood of the produce associate who I approached to help me fill my recipe needs.

Understanding the look of a shopper who had questions, he quickly tried to evade me and my list as I advanced, lunging for the aisle as if he was leaving the Titanic. Luckily, the sea of carts in his way would halt his escape, and he was forced to interact.

I told him of my plans to make chili for a neighborhood competition and admitted that I had never done so before, but wanted desperately to win. With the help of my "Aunt," I found an old family recipe for a vegetarian chili, but needed his help and advice.

My first question concerned the ingredients. "I want this to be spicy because it seems the spicier ones always win the coveted Chili Bowl Trophy," I told him. "What peppers are the best to use?"

He responded simply by pointing to a section of peppers and said he really didn't know, but he believed the red would be best. Not really the best advice. I inquired about the intensity of a chipotle, and I was almost floored by his response: "You mean the restaurant?" Suddenly, I was the one doing the informing as I pointed out the section in the produce department where the jalapeños sat.

Now, had this been a young teenager working for some extra money, maybe it could be excused, but this was a man easily in

**I inquired about the intensity of a chipotle, and I was almost floored by his response: "You mean the restaurant?"**



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his mid-forties, and I have seen him in the store multiple times over the past year. I needed to change tactics.

I threw him a gopher ball when I asked if I would lose the taste of the peppers if I boiled them and he said, "they shouldn't" but suggested I look it up on the Internet. I asked if there was anyone else in the department that might be able to help a little bit more, and he agreed (though not right away) to find me his supervisor.

A second produce department worker came out, although clearly not the supervisor, and seemed just as annoyed as the first guy. The good news is that he did sound more knowledgeable about the store's produce and even directed me to what he considered to be the best ingredients for my chili — suggesting to "change things up," and add some carrots. (I didn't tell him that carrots were in my original recipe and acted as if he gave me some great advice.)

Overall, I found the workers to be rude, and off-putting. Maybe it was the horrid winter weather that created the environment, but the store really shouldn't allow its employees to act this way.

## STORE 2: Produce God

Sometimes when you look for help, you hit the jackpot, and that was certainly the case with this mid-size grocery chain. Walking toward the direction of the produce department, I noticed two associates on the floor — an older man I placed in his early 50s and a young woman barely out of college. I decided to go with experience and hit up the former.

Playing the role of a clueless shopper who was out buying ingredients to make his wife a "surprise" smoothie for a birthday brunch, I handed the guy a list of ingredients from a recipe and asked for guidance.

**Overall, I found the workers to be rude, and off-putting. Maybe it was the horrid winter weather that created the environment, but the store really shouldn't allow its employees to act this way.**

"I wouldn't know a mango from a grapefruit," I told him. With the exception of a Seinfeld episode, I had no knowledge about them whatsoever.

The man went into a sermon about the benefits of mangos, touching on everything from their helping to fight cancer, to improving your memory, to alleviating gastrointestinal concerns. The trick, he said, was to put mango leaves in hot water over night and then drink it the next morning (sans the leaves) on an empty stomach.

That was all well and good, but there was more on my list I needed, and I wanted to see how much more help he could give.

I asked him, "How ripe should a banana be before making a smoothie?" and without really answering the question, he told me the beautiful thing about smoothies (or shakes for that matter) is that you could use overripe bananas, saving you the expense of having to throw them away.

Turning the conversation to the strawberries, and the fact that I thought they didn't look so hot, he confirmed that winter isn't the ideal time for strawberries, with the best lot coming usually between April and June. Still, he said, the selection was tasty and in a smoothie, it wouldn't have that much of a taste difference, if at all. He suggested I add a little yogurt to bring out some flavor.

I acted curious about the kiwi and asked if he thought that would be a good addition to the smoothie. As long as I wasn't too concerned about changing its color to a greenish hue, he said it would be a good complementary flavor. I asked about its health benefits and was surprised to find out that the seeds were edible and the fruit was a good deterrent of blood clots.

I asked if he had any other thoughts on how to make a unique smoothie my wife would love, and he suggested adding a little spinach, explaining it would mix in well with the fruit I chose. I thanked him for his time and he quickly resumed work, smiling as he went along.

## SPICY VEGETARIAN CHILI

### Ingredients:

- 2 Tbsp olive or canola oil
- 1 medium yellow onion, chopped
- 1 large carrot, chopped
- 1 stalk celery, chopped
- 1 medium green bell pepper, cored, seeded and chopped
- 1 medium red bell pepper, cored, seeded and chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 Tbsp dried oregano
- 1 Tbsp finely chopped chipotles in Adobo
- 2 tsp ground cumin
- 1 Tbsp chili powder
- 1 ½ tsp salt
- 1 (28-ounce) can diced tomatoes, with their liquid
- 3 cups cooked red kidney beans, drained
- 1 ½ cups cooked black beans, drained



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### STORE 3: Knowledgeable and Accommodating

For this normally crowded supermarket chain, I found customers seemed to have a lot of questions for employees working on emptying boxes in the produce department. I wasn't quite sure monopolizing their time would work for a sustained period, so I decided to let the produce associate come to me.

Holding my list and looking frazzled, I stood close to an employee and channeled my best Robert De Niro impression as I muttered, how I couldn't find the "stupid dried oregano." Like a siren calling for the sailors, the produce guy fell into my trap. "Can I help you find something?" he asked.

I explained to him my wife was sick, and I had this whole list of things that I needed to get, but was having trouble finding them. "I never realized there were so many different types of fruits and vegetables," I said. "And the signs don't seem to help."

We started with the oregano and he showed me the large section where it and other fresh herbs were kept. "Why do people need fresh herbs when they could just use what's in their spice rack?" I asked. He said they tasted better and were healthier for you.

The next item I told him I needed help with was mangos. "My wife said they look like a yellow tangerine," and he showed me where they were. I wondered how to check a mango to know which were the best. He said the trick was knowing they get soft like a peach when ripe and also smelled fresh. "What does fresh smell like?" I asked, but he said, "You just know when you know."

Next on my list was the Hass avocado, and I asked why it mattered what type of avocado I was getting. 'I mean, aren't they all the same?' He said it was simply a taste preference and the recipe may have called for it because it may have been in season at that time. He told me it didn't really matter if I got Hass or not, but agreed with me that if it's what my wife wanted, it was probably best to get it.

I think he was getting a little suspicious when I inquired about the difference in red, yellow and green bell peppers. Again, his answer was all about taste preference, and he didn't seem to have any thoughts about the health benefits of one over another.

Fearing I was about to overstep my welcome, I thanked him for his time and asked one last question about whether organic carrots would be better than non-organic for my chili recipe. He recommended I skip the organics and buy the cheaper option.

Overall, he was friendly, informative and really seemed to care about his work.

### STORE 4: Less Than Stellar High-End

As I entered the specialty, independent and decidedly upscale grocer on New York City's Upper East Side, I was fretting the cost of the produce items I was seeking.

A few weeks earlier, I stopped in and bought two apples — not paying any attention to price — only to find out they rung up to nearly \$10. This time around, I was determined to focus on my



**Examining the mangos, I asked a department employee where they were grown. He said California or Mexico. He was surprised to learn from the sticker they were in fact shipped from Peru.**

selections.

Armed with my recipes for spicy vegetarian chili and breakfast smoothie, I decided to shop in mid-afternoon before the after-work rush. To my surprise, the store was quite busy, and checking out required a 10-minute wait in line.

The store's produce department is immediately to the left of the entrance as gourmet breads and a coffee bar command center stage at the front door.

Apples were the first produce item on display, and while looking at the colorful array of choices, I noticed a great deal of debris and oodles of price stickers on the floor. Just as quickly as the unsightly scene

had settled on my brain, an employee with a broom approached to tidy up.

Examining the mangos, I asked a department employee where they were grown. He said California or Mexico. He was surprised to learn from the sticker they were in fact shipped from Peru.

I also asked the man if he recommended organic or regular produce and how they compared in price.

"It's whatever you prefer," he said. "Because of the high interest in our store, we usually price regular and organic about the same. If there is a difference, it will only be a dollar or two more."

The store was out of chipotle peppers, so another employee recommended substituting jalapeño peppers in my chili recipe, as they have similar heat profiles.

Adjacent to the produce department is the prepared food section where corn salad sells for \$8.99 a pound; roasted root vegetables go for \$9.99 a pound; sweet potato puree prices out at \$9.99 a pound; roasted potatoes cost \$6.99 per pound; and sautéed mushrooms fetch \$10.99 a pound.

When I asked an employee where the Hass avocados were located, he thought I said "house" and told me they didn't have that item. Another employee overheard our conversation and



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redirected me to the Hass avocado display.

Also merchandised within the produce department were high-end beverages — often marketed for the health benefits. One fellow customer — who came into the store to offer a complaint about the sweetness levels in her recent purchase of grape tomatoes — went away satisfied with the explanation she got from a clerk.

For the most part, I too left satisfied but not completely — since the first store didn't have black beans, I had to make a trip to another store.



## SOUTHEAST REPORT STORE 1: Pleasantly Plump

As I walked past the hectic deli counter, swarming with young professionals and families tasting freshly sliced cold cuts, I noticed the smell of something tantalizing wafting from the store's signature demo station. I just finished a long day at work and was committing the cardinal sin of food shopping on an empty stomach.

The featured meal-of-the-day was Italian Rollatini with Caesar Olive Polenta. But I was on a mission to make my way through sensory distractions and examine the produce department of this large, southern retail chain.

Upon reaching the produce section, I observed that the strawberries were on sale, 2 for \$5, which was a minor miracle because

the 1-pound clamshells were averaging around \$4.75 to \$4.99 each for the past few months. The section was almost picked clean and quite messy. I made my selection and moved beyond the sparse assortment of strawberries.

The rows of produce behind the strawberries were neatly arranged and fully stocked — beaming with a sea of primary colors. A staff member was arranging some tomatoes.

"Is this all your doing?" I asked, motioning to the stunning rows of fruits and veggies. He nodded yes. "Looks great," I told him. He smiled and returned to meticulously filing the tomatoes down a straight line.

"While you're here," I said, "can you help me pick a couple of mangos and avocados? I'm the worst at figuring out which ones to choose." He happily obliged.

"What kind of avocados do you need?" he asked. I told him the Hass variety. "Are you eating them right away?" I said yes, and he found two avocados and proceeded to explain that the skin should look a greenish-brown and that it should be soft when you squeeze it.

"Here, see for yourself," he said as he handed both avocados to me. He pointed to the larger, smoother avocados and explained that you can tell its ripeness by shaking it. "If you hear the pit rattle, then you know it's ready."

Next, he informed me that selecting a mango is similar to the avocado. "The softer, the better," he said.

I expressed my satisfaction that the strawberries finally looked decent and were actually on sale. "By the way, when is strawberry

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season, because they haven't been very good in a while?" I complained.

"Hang on one second, I'll be right back," he said, and then made his way toward the backroom. I fiddled with the mangos and looked for the softest one I could find.

"Okay, I spoke to my manager, and he said strawberry season for us runs from March to August," explained the young male staffer. I was impressed that he took the time to ask instead of devising a half-informed response, or just dismissing me by saying he didn't know. Unfortunately, his manager was way off — since strawberry season is November through March.

Next, we made our way to the peppers and celery.

"Which is better for cooking vegetables — steaming them or boiling them?" I asked. He looked a bit indecisive.

"I hear that steaming is better for tasting the flavor of the individual vegetable," he replied, moderately satisfied with his answer. His honesty was refreshing, and he waited for my signal before continuing his tomato task.

I definitely enjoyed my shopping experience. The employee was approachable, sufficiently knowledgeable about his department, and willing to go the extra mile. With the exception of the strawberries, the produce was neat, the aisles were clean, and stock was abundant for a Thursday evening. I would certainly return.

## **STORE 2: A One-Man Band**

I went for a late afternoon shopping trip to a well-known regional supermarket chain close to a college campus. When I walked through the front doors, I was greeted by a plethora of heart shaped balloons, and a garden of flowers and roses for Valentine's Day. The store was a little smaller than most of the chain's outlets and felt very cramped.

Equipped with my list of fresh produce items for vegetarian chili and mango smoothie recipes, I began the treasure hunt. The produce department was a little hard to find as it was located in the back corner of the store, but it was very open and full of shoppers — most of them elderly.

I walked around the apple and orange displays, glancing at my list of ingredients, looking for someone who could assist me in my quest. While I was seeking out a store employee, I noticed the department was a little messy, with plastic bags and random fruit on the ground.

After some time, I saw a man enter from the rear of the store carrying two packages of green beans. He handed them to a customer and started making his way back to resume the task of stocking shelves. Along the way, he greeted customers and asked if anyone needed help.

"Excuse me," I said. "I'm looking for mangos."

"They're right here," he said turning around and pointing to a handful of mangos. It was slim pickings indeed.

"These are all you have?" I asked, a little stunned. I assumed this supermarket would have more produce in stock.

"Yes," he said. "But these mangos are really good."

"How can you tell?" I asked.

**The carrots she showed me were limp as noodles. She impatiently pointed out celery and garlic as if I was keeping her from her true calling of organizing oranges.**

"You can tell by the softness," he said picking up one of the mangos. "Feel how soft it is?"

"Oh great," I said. "Will this be good in a smoothie?"

"Oh yes," the worker said. "Mangos would go great in a smoothie. They're very sweet."

I was about to ask him for help with the lime selection for my recipe, but another woman walked up and asked him a question. Even though the store didn't have what she was looking for, the worker was

very nice, going so far as to check in the back for the product.

Even though I didn't get any more information about my produce selections — the poor guy was so busy — the assistance I did receive was very helpful and delivered in the friendliest way possible.



## **CANADA**

### **STORE 1:**

### **The Blind Leading The Blind**

It's no wonder I live on take out and frozen dinners. The produce aisle can be a minefield of confusion. Every other area of a food store is easier: there are instructions, expiration dates, and nutrition content. But produce is different. You are on your own. Here is my experience as a hapless, would-be cook and host, alone in the produce department of three very different stores.

My first stop was a small grocery chain store near Toronto's financial district, which is surrounded by several new condominium buildings. I had high hopes for the produce.

Alas, my first impression wasn't good. The section was small, as if it was an afterthought. A young woman was stacking oranges, so I approached her. "I have a recipe for a veggie chili and mango smoothie, and to be honest, I never cook. Could you help me?"

First up were yellow onions. The employee walked me past two-bagged varieties, to a pile of loose Vidalia's. I objected that they were huge, and I didn't want to carry those baseballs home, but she repeated, "Those are yellow onions." It didn't improve from there. The carrots she showed me were limp as noodles. She impatiently pointed out celery and garlic as if I was keeping her from her true calling of organizing oranges.

Next I needed bell peppers, red and green. I asked how they were different, other than color. Her response: "Well, the yellow and orange ones are sweet, and the red and green ones are spicy." When I asked the reason for the price difference, she said she had no idea.

"Do you think I should add any extra produce to the dish?" I asked and received no answer. So much for upselling. Why not suggest mushrooms, fresh tomatoes, or spinach for a nutrition boost?

I opened an opportunity for a garnish of cilantro or parsley, with the line: "Maybe I could add some fresh spice?" At that, she scoffed, "Those are herbs, not spices," and walked away.

But my meal was not complete, and she was the only



employee to be seen, so I followed her back to the oranges. I admitted that I had never bought an avocado, let alone a Hass avocado, so how could I tell if these were ripe? No response.

I persisted. "What's the difference between organic and regular?" She said, "Not much, just get that," and gestured at the closest display. I decided I had better figure out how to select the mango I needed myself.

## **STORE 2: Meeting The Chili Man**

I headed for a recently opened outlet of one of Canada's largest grocery chains. In my role of a novice, but eager dinner party host, with recipes in hand, I entered the produce department.

This store instantly looked promising. The produce section was spacious and airy, and everything looked and smelled fresh. The selection was large and colorful, but the layout was not always intuitive. Celery was particularly well hidden. Luckily, I spotted the lone produce employee, walked up with a smile, and explained my plight.

He reassured me he made chili regularly, and quickly showed me the proper yellow onions. He was right on the money with the peppers and even suggested a Scotch Bonnet pepper for heat. He escorted me to the carrots. After pointing me in the direction of the celery, he returned to replenishing the potato display.

Now, I suddenly felt like I was imposing. I pointed out the sign by the garlic that gave a health rating of the item, which was lower than all the other produce items. I found this confusing. He went on stacking potatoes and said, "That's because they're small, how much nutrition could something that size have?"

There were no other produce employees to talk to, and no display information with helpful usage tips and basic information about the various produce items. So I asked the Chili Man what

**I asked the Chili Man what other produce might enhance my meal. Curiously, he offered only non-produce suggestions. "Tofu is nice, but be sure to fry it first, so it doesn't get mushy, and use three colors of canned beans."**

other produce might enhance my meal. Curiously, he offered only non-produce suggestions. "Tofu is nice, but be sure to fry it first, so it doesn't get mushy, and use three colors of canned beans."

My rebuttal for some type of fresh garnish only garnered a shrug. I saw several lost opportunities for extra sales at this impressive produce selection.

I persisted, moving on to the avocados. He told me to buy the darkest ones possible, and that the mention of the Haas variety in the recipe meant nothing since "they all are that kind."

He directed me toward the mangos. On the way, I noticed a large sign that blueberries were on sale; they would have been a natural upsell to a customer making a fruit smoothie.

I made a point of lingering over the mango display to see if he, or anyone else, would offer assistance. My brow furrowed, I must have turned fruit over for a good five minutes. No one came to my aid, and I realized that in both the stores I had visited so far, the produce employee's job seemed to be principally the presentation of the merchandise. Customer service definitely came second.

## **STORE 3: Shopping In Bliss**

I visited a large independent grocery store with only one location in downtown Toronto. This popular, well-known place has a large social media presence, posting recipes and seasonal ideas on Twitter and Facebook. Would they understand the importance of produce — not only the product itself, but also the ability to sell it and provide the customer with information?

I arrived just in time for the busy pre-dinner hour. The store had an almost old-fashioned welcoming ambience. Despite its large size, there was a unique feel to its layout and look. This was no corporate, carbon copy.

The produce section occupied the middle of the store, a departure from the traditional location of produce on the periphery. Large, handwritten-looking signs clearly showed where everything was, including a huge variety of exotic vegetables and fruits. I found black carrots, and about 25 different varieties of mushrooms in appealing wicker baskets. Clearly there was a lot of pride on display in this produce department.

Three very young men were stocking the produce shelves. The one I approached was polite and eagerly showed me where to find everything I needed.

Unfortunately he and his colleagues didn't have much knowledge about the products. When I asked about the fruit, he said he would find his manager to help.

He returned, saying the manager was too busy, but he would try his best. For the first time, I didn't feel like a burden, getting in the way of his "real" job. He walked me around the department giving ideas where he could, and because there were the two other employees on the floor, he had more time to spare.

I enjoyed being there. If I lived in the area, it would be my shop of choice.

**pb**



PHOTOS COURTESY OF FOUR SEASONS PRODUCE



Wholesalers provide retailers with flexibility to choose from niche items, to receive faster deliveries, and to take advantage of re-pack services.

# 7 Ways Retailers Can Benefit From Wholesale Customer Services

Wholesale giants discuss the tricks of the trade for the best business practices. **BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD**

In today's hyper-competitive environment it makes good business sense for supermarkets to make every effort to cut the fat from supply chain costs. However, striving to get the best price on fresh fruits and vegetables by going directly to the grower/shipper could be a penny-wise and pound-foolish venture, according to several industry experts.

Wholesalers can offer produce retailers — from independents to regional and even national chains — ways to not only save on sourcing, but also on a host of other links in the buying-selling chain via cost-effective programs and services.

"I may be selling something at \$12 and a retail buyer may be able to get it for \$10 by going direct," says Charlie DiMaggio, president of FresCo LLC, in the Bronx, NY. "But, that \$10 price doesn't include the warehousing, ripening and distributing costs. These costs are included in our price."

## 1. A Brain Trust

Even before the dance between buyer and seller starts, many experts agree, wholesalers can function as an invaluable resource for

retailers by providing a brain trust of knowledge and information.

"The general state of retail today is a reduced number of buyers in a move to cut overhead. As a reference, I have 15 buyers. No chain in the country has this many," explains Mike Maxwell, president of Philadelphia, PA-based Procacci Brothers Sales Corp, which serves more than 350 independents from Baltimore to Rhode Island. "Retailers rely on wholesalers as their 52-week growing partner who can supply them with both information and product."

"The hired guns at the national chains have to purchase up to 200 items in a few hours and usually don't have someone in-house to do the leg work. This means they may not be as informed on the growing areas of each commodity or what's happening with storage inventory like we are on the street at a terminal market," says Tom Piazza, salesman and third-generation wholesaler at Community-Suffolk, Inc., located on the Boston Terminal Market in Everett, MA, and serving retailers from Boston to the Canadian Maritimes.

A good example, which Piazza shares, occurred during the 2012/2013 season when a

flare-up of bacterial ring rot affected potatoes grown and stored in the Pacific Northwest. The disease caused appearance and quality issues and consequently reduced inventory from what had been previously forecast in annual crop reports. The news spun the market quickly, and wholesalers in terminal markets reacted just as fast to inform their retail buyers of the new par level for potatoes.

"Retailers realize they have more options when working with a wholesaler and this resource is at their disposal because wholesalers have become smarter," says Nate Stone, chief operating officer at Detroit, MI-based Ben B Schwartz & Sons.

"Now, everybody is technologically savvy, and there's been a trend for each generation to get smarter through education. This brings forward lots of good ideas."

## 2. Niche Sourcing Support

Wholesalers can source vast volumes of commodity fruits and vegetables. Where their services also shine, according to several industry sources, is scoring the smaller items such as specialties, organics and locally grown.

"Niche items have become important for

everyone from national chains to independents,” says Dan Vena, in sales and buying at John Vena, Inc., in Philadelphia, PA. “It’s the few of this or that, maybe a half or quarter pallet-load, and retailers need to maintain their SKU assortment as well as differentiate themselves from the competition. For example, tropicals such as dragon fruit, mangosteens, lychees and shaved coconuts for coconut water are big now.”

Ron Carkoski, president and CEO at Four Seasons Produce, Inc., in Ephrata, PA, agrees.

“To the chain, these might be items that are difficult to handle or to work with within their structure. They’re a small segment of the retailer’s business, but an important part of our business and a large program for us. We supply everything from commodity quantities to shipper cartons of organics to several chains across formats.”

The demand for locally grown produce has skyrocketed by West Coast retailers served by Coast Produce Company, says Mark Morimoto, who is senior director of business development

**“We sourced a strawberry grower in one area that now supplies a specific number of stores, and a second grower 100 miles north, to supply the large regional chain stores in that vicinity. We’ve done the same for heirloom tomatoes.”**

— Mark Morimoto, Coast Produce Company

at the Los Angeles, CA-based company.

“We can identify smaller growers that supply independents as well as large regional chains. For example, we sourced a strawberry grower in one area that now supplies a specific number of stores, and a second grower 100 miles north, to supply the large regional chain stores in that vicinity. We’ve done the same for heirloom tomatoes.”

On the East Coast, farmers in western Massachusetts have relationships with wholesalers at the Boston Terminal Market, says Community-Suffolk’s Piazza. “This enables retailers served by these houses to get a safe and consistent supply of local product — potentially gaining what other retailers don’t have.”

Wholesalers can also do the legwork of vetting local growers, as well as all suppliers for their retail customers.

“It is mandatory that our growers use only the most sophisticated and efficient production techniques available, and together, we commit to practicing food safety programs throughout every phase of the growing and shipping process by enforcing voluntary and regulatory inspections of products and procedures,” says Julian Sarraino, vice president of Fresh Taste Produce Ltd., located on the Ontario Food Terminal Board, in Etobicoke, Ontario.

### 3. Logistics Control

Sourcing produce is one thing, getting it delivered to store-level is quite another, say several experts, who often consider wholesalers logistic gurus.

FresCo’s DiMaggio explains, “We have our own importing division that brings produce in through the ports, inspections and customs expeditiously. For example, travel time from

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Costa Rica is seven days. Product could be on the platform for up to two weeks before it's released. A wholesaler that is also an importer can cut this time by half a week. Retailers who want to do it themselves need to hire an importing manager."

On the domestic side, Coast Produce's Morimoto offers a logistics example that benefits grower/shippers and retailers alike. "We deal with a nursery that offers specialty tomatoes. Retailers, such as the Kroger and Wal-Mart, that want to go direct for one or two less than truckload volume SKUs, would need to send a truck from each division. We can streamline this delivery by consolidating with other tomatoes the retailer needs that the grower doesn't handle."

Consolidation of partial truck-load volumes allows wholesalers to offer retail customers several benefits. One benefit is the ability to lessen the risk of chill damage and shrink by not having to combine different items on the same truck during transit. Secondly, there is the ability to get a full load to market more quickly with fresher product than one that needs to stop along the way making partial deliveries. Thirdly, FresCo's DiMaggio says, "is the ability to offer full load



PHOTO COURTESY OF COMMUNITY-SUFFOLK

pricing on less-than-full load quantities."

"Wholesalers such as FresCo provide distribution to individual stores or a chain's distribution center seven days a week," says DiMaggio. "Retailers buying direct would need to do this distribution themselves, and they wouldn't have the luxury of a short lead time. We have a much tighter grip on inventory."

Stone, of Ben B Schwartz & Sons, cautions that logistics need to keep pace with a fast-moving technology-based environment. "Transportation is growing like technology has. And like technology, logistics need to keep up."

#### 4. One-Stop Shopping

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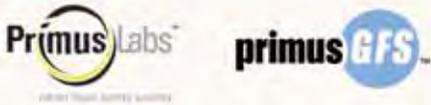
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volume of inventory. This is especially true of wholesalers located on terminal markets that can buy and sell from each other to satisfy a retailer's needs.

Matthew D'Arrigo, vice president of D'Arrigo Brothers Company of New York, Inc, in the Hunts Point Terminal Market in the Bronx, NY — who counts smaller independents, local chains and mom-and-pop stores as core customers — says, “We offer a huge span of products, a lot of choice within each item, and we carry multiple labels.”

Hunts Point neighbor, Joel Fierman, president of Bronx, NY-based Fierman Produce Exchange, agrees, “Price-driven chains can find product that's lower in cost due to abundance, small size or cosmetic imperfections. High-end chains can find the highest quality, plus items like Jerusalem artichokes, radicchio, endive and squash blossoms. We can meet everyone's needs across the spectrum.”

“One trend I've noticed is that chains now like to have someone of consequence walk the terminal market once a week or once every

other week,” says Piazza. “This way, they can identify spot buys, make quality decisions, catch up with new products and packaging, and taste the fruits or vegetables. This trend goes for independents, regional and national chains.”

For independent retailers, the wholesalers serve as their warehouse and distribution center.

“We function as an independent's primary supply chain,” asserts Greg Cessna, president and CEO at Pittsburgh, PA-based Consumers Produce Co., Inc., which serves retailers in western Pennsylvania and eastern Ohio.

Procacci's Maxwell concurs. “We do the legwork for them, supplying everything from the commodities to the oddball item. We make their lives easier. This offers the opportunity of evening out the playing field between independents and chains.”

“The warehouse function is especially vital,” says D'Arrigo Brother's D'Arrigo. “Independents don't have the facilities to handle more than one or two days' worth of inventory, or at a minimum, just what is on their shelves.”

Wholesalers' warehouse facilities are high-tech and include ripening and temperature controlled rooms to maintain produce quality. Another benefit often cited by industry experts is the flexibility in ordering.

“Retailers who order direct from suppliers can't change their order every day. We are more nimble,” says John Vena's Vena. “A retailer can give me their purchase order hours, or a day at most, in advance. This means more just-in-time deliveries on our part, and no need for the retailer to carry extra inventory.”

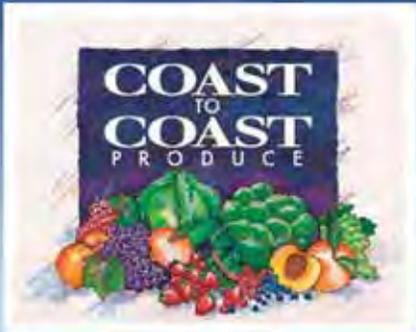
Wholesalers also are often lauded for offering ready assistance with longs and shorts. Procacci's Maxwell explains, “If it is 0 degrees, and the potatoes on ad don't move because no one is coming out to shop, a chain that orders direct could be stuck with the extra inventory.”

Fierman Produce's Fierman agrees. “We act as a buffer for retailers. We can take product back from a retailer and sell it on the market so they don't have to eat it or send it back to the shipper. There's a greater comfort level in buying from us.”

Conversely, Procacci's Maxwell points out, “if a snow scare is forecast and customers come out in droves to stock up, then a retailer can sell out. If they have to get the extra potatoes on their own, they might have to call five companies to get the needed volume. They would then wind up with five different labels as well as having their loading docks tied up with five different trucks. This doesn't happen to retailers that are part of our program.”

Community-Suffolk's Piazza agrees, “We

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can easily fill in shorts. A recent example is when the cold snap hit in January, Chicago shut its railway, and trucks couldn't get out on the road. The supply chain virtually stopped. Except, due to the size of our company, we could supply whole loads to retailers to cover their shorts from our inventory on hand. We generally have a three week supply warehoused depending on the item."

### 5. Re-Pack Services

Coast Produce's Morimoto says the theme for every retailer moving forward should emphasize value. "It isn't necessarily selling cheaper, but instead offering value to customers."

Value-add often comes in the form of packaging. Many wholesalers offer repack and private label pack services for their retail customers.

"A chain may want us to create a custom pack for them with five pears in a cello tray pack," says Consumer Produce's Cessna. "Or, we may have a customer who has oranges in 10-pound bags that aren't moving. We bring them back in, recondition them by culling any bad fruit, and re-bagging in smaller units like 4- or 5-pound bags."

Another example, adds Coast Produce's Morimoto, "is where a large national chain isn't able to use case volumes in particular stores. They ask us to repack something like a 40-pound box of jalapeño peppers into a 5- or 10-pound unit. This helps them to control shrink and attain 100 percent sell-through."

Beyond repacking, wholesalers can introduce retail customers to new packaging options, says Community-Suffolk's Piazza. "If we know a supplier has a new specialty pack,

**"If we know a supplier has a new specialty pack, we'll tell our retail customers so they can come in and see it, and get an honest objective look for themselves."**

— Tom Piazza, Community-Suffolk, Inc.

we'll tell our retail customers so they can come in and see it, and get an honest objective look for themselves."

### 6. Merchandising Assistance

Independent retailers can especially benefit from wholesalers that provide a soup-to-nuts roster of services. "This means everything from sourcing and supply to teaching techniques at store level such as crisping lettuce, setting up displays and making sure the point-of-sale (POS) materials are up. The more a retailer sells, the more they buy from us. It's a win-win," explains Procacci's Maxwell.

Use of POS is a great way for retailers to provide nutrition and descriptive information on fruits and vegetables that are new and different, asserts Coast Produce's Morimoto. "We can expedite the development of POS for our customers. This generally appeals most to small- and mid-sized chains. Recently, we created POS for heirloom oranges. It really helped the item sell."

Coast Produce offered POS assistance in a

unique way a few years ago when there was a widely reported food safety outbreak on jalapeño peppers. "Instead of the usual knee-jerk response by retailers to pull everything from their shelves, we convinced a few to keep their jalapeños, and post documentation about where the product was grown, and results of third-party food safety audits. It worked. They were able to sell the product rather than dump it. We were able to do this for them via the strength of our food safety program," says Morimoto.

Retailers that don't want to use POS in-store can link to online content such as the Produce Geek website, written by Jonathan Steffy, director of sales and retail services at Four Seasons Produce. "This has been an underutilized resource by retailers," says Carkoski. "Steffy lists the Top 5 fruit and vegetables each week and provides selection and storage tips, recipe ideas and other information."

### 7. Promotional Support

Wholesalers can identify produce at an attractive price for immediate in-store sale, and provide pricing forecasts for retailers utilizing circular ads.

Strube Celery & Vegetable, located in the Chicago International Produce Market, in Chicago, IL, primarily serves independent supermarkets, many of which are expanding by buying one or more locations of the former 72-unit Dominick's grocery chain, which closed in late 2013. "Our customers come to the street every day and look for the deals," says president Rob Strube. "They may pick up 10 pallets of oranges at a hot price and blow them out over one to two days on the weekend."

The same holds true for the independents and small chains in New England, asserts Community-Suffolk's Piazza. "Buyers will come on a Friday — when they know the pricing is most flexible because we don't want to carry inventory over the weekend — and pick up the last 220 boxes of something for \$12 rather than \$15. It's not product of lesser quality, but it is an opportunity for the retailer to just roll out a pallet, slap on a sale sign, and make some extra money."

Strube Celery & Vegetable also sends out a weekly sales sheet so that retail customers can set their ad prices. "Sometimes it works in reverse," admits Strube. "A customer may tell us they want to go out with an ad on a 64-count Gala and ask what we can do to get them the best price. Or, they tell us they want to put Roma tomatoes on ad and ask us when we can get the best price. We're flexible." **pb**



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MISIONERO



Research shows that sales of organic bagged salads grew 13.1 percent at supermarkets for the 52 weeks ended July 14, 2012.

# Organic Salad Blends

Growers and suppliers discuss category trends and share how they are addressing consumer demand. **BY PAUL FRUMKIN**

**A**s consumer interest continues to propel organically raised produce out of the local health food store and into the produce sections of mainstream supermarket chains, growers and suppliers are working to meet the growing demand for organic salad blends.

Pointing to an evolving marketplace fueled by the introduction of more flavorful, nutrient-rich greens with longer shelf life, a changing variety of salad mixes and new convenient toppings, suppliers express their enthusiasm about what the future holds for packaged organic greens.

“Organics are not going to go away,” says Dan Canales, vice president of sales and marketing for Misionero Vegetables in Gonzales, CA. “We’re hearing from our major customers that the surface hasn’t been scratched. We anticipate 20 percent growth over the next 10 years.”

Karen Klonsky, cooperative extension specialist at the University of California at Davis, writes in her statistical review, *California’s Organic Agriculture: Two Decades of Growth*, organic production in the state had grown steadily in farmgate sales from \$75 million in 1992 to more than \$1.5 billion in 2012. Of that total, vegetables accounted for \$37 million in 1992, rising to \$561 million in 2012.

In a presentation, Dr. Roberta Cook, cooperative extension specialist and lecturer

at UC Davis, cites Nielsen figures showing that sales of organic bagged salads grew 13.1 percent at supermarkets for the 52 weeks ended July 14, 2012.

“Organic salad sales are up” together with organic produce as a whole, Cook writes.

Kathy Means, vice president of government relations and public affairs for the Produce Marketing Association (PMA), Newark, DE, points out that while interest in locally raised produce outpaces organics among consumers overall, “Organics is important to a subset of consumers, and that is true for salad mixes as well. Though this is a small subset, it is a devoted subset that always buy organics. And there are other consumers that buy organics sometime. So it is important [for retailers] to offer organics.”

Not all organic greens are restricted to the salad arena exclusively. Samantha Cabaluna, vice president of marketing and communications for Earthbound Farm in San Juan Bautista, CA, says research found that non-salad items — such as sandwiches, wraps, juices and smoothies — account for 34 percent of usage occasions. “We find them in all kinds of recipes,” she says.

## Consistency Is Key

Experts note that raising organic products was problematic in the early days. However, growers and suppliers learned how to over-

come many initial challenges. “Over the past 10 years, we as an industry have gotten better at growing organically,” says Misionero’s Canales. “Production is more stable than it was 15 years ago. The quality wasn’t consistent. There was no incentive for consumers to have any faith in the product. But we’ve closed the gap. Consumers today can believe in the product, and the salads last longer.”

Canales also cites seed companies for helping to improve the market. “We’re seeing stronger seeds today,” he says. “They are more mildew resistant, which helps us to be more successful growers.”

As consumer interest in organics continues to gain steam, suppliers are working to meet the growing demand for mainstream products. “When it comes to salad blends, whether organic or conventional, processors working with their supply chain partners are always looking for new blends, unique additions to a mix,” says PMA’s Means. What began with iceberg-cabbage-carrot mixes or a romaine-Caesar mix “has morphed into the wide variety we see today with kale, arugula, frisee, and greens such as mustard and turnip,” she says. “The micro- or power-greens also have been strong.”

And the number of varieties of salad greens available is expected to grow as suppliers and retailers cater to increasingly adventurous consumer tastes. Rochester, N.Y.-based Wegmans Food Markets, for example, features

## SALAD TOPPINGS

a 16-ounce organic spring blend that can include any combination of tango, lolla rosa, red and green romaine, red and green oak, red and green chard, spinach, mizuna, tatsoi, radicchio, frisee, beet greens, arugula, red leaf, red mustard, kale and collards.

Misionero offers 14 to 16 different organic salad blends, the fastest growing of which is baby kale and nutrient-rich Superfood mixes, which include baby kale, chard and spinach. “We offer quite a shopping list of organic salad blends,” says Canales. “Kale and baby kale are very popular right now. As an industry, we didn’t realize how big baby kale would become.”

He also says red and green chards are selling well and spinach “is a big winner. Arugula continues to be a popular variety now because of its spicy, nutty flavor.”

Canales says that Misionero is in the process of expanding its reach with the opening of a new 70,000-square-foot facility in Brantford, Ontario, which will cater not only to Canadian consumption but to U.S. markets in upstate New York, Pennsylvania and other northeastern states as well.

The PMA’s Means also notes that “blends are continually changing” and power greens — baby spinach, baby red and green chard and baby kales — are very popular with consumers. At the same time, she adds, “although everyone is looking for the hottest trends, it would be unfair not to mention iceberg and romaine. They remain powerhouses of salad mixes.”

Cabaluna of Earthbound Farm says her company’s top sellers are mainstream items like baby spinach and spring mix. But other items also are growing in acceptance, such as arugula and Deep Green blends, which include baby kale and power blends.

Meanwhile, suppliers are looking for the next big thing in organic salad blends. “We have a new product development team . . . and at any given time they have 10 products they’re working on,” says Canales. “We want to offer unique items to our customers. It can be riskier, but we believe innovation will push us forward.”

Canales says Misionero offers a new organic lemony blend, which combines citrusy flavored herbs with sweet lettuces. “We’re trying to push the boundaries by adding flavor to salads.”

### New Entries

The expanding popularity of organic salad blends also is prompting companies that previously hadn’t offered organic packaged greens to enter the marketplace. Mann

While suppliers are seeking to provide more flavorful organic salad blends to supermarkets, the addition of new and varied toppings is helping to drive increased interest among consumers looking for convenience and adventurous combinations.

The new wave of salad toppings incorporates a wide range of food items, from shaved Parmesan cheese to croutons, nuts, seeds and dried fruits such as bananas and cranberries. Some are even incorporating fresh fruits, which include apples and pears.

“One interesting trend we’re seeing is that as consumers get more health conscious, they’re moving away from croutons and toward ‘better-for-you’ toppings like fruits and nuts,” says a spokesman for Paramount Farms, Bakersfield, CA.

Waymouth Farms, for example, offers a salad topping line called Salad Pizazz! The line includes Asian Cashew Medley, Strawberry Cranberry Honey Nut, Pome-Cranate Honey Walnut Fusion, and Honey Walnut ‘N Apple. The New Hope, MN-based company also markets an organic trail mix line, which includes such items as apricots, roasted and salted soynuts, cranberries, apples, and banana chips.

Paramount Farms also offers a line of salad toppings called Wonderful Almond Accents, which includes Honey Roasted with Cranberries, Oven Roasted, Honey Roasted, Oven Roasted No Salt, and Sea

Salt & Cracked Pepper.

A Paramount Farms spokesman says the Honey Roasted Almonds with Cranberries currently ranks as one of the more popular salad topping among consumers. “They bring a sweet and savory taste that combines nicely with organic salad blends,” he says.

Helping to stoke the growing popularity of salad toppings is the consumers’ desire for convenience, observers say. Many supermarket shoppers who purchase packaged greens are looking for a complete meal solution, and the combination of organic salad blends and toppings provides one way of catering to those customers. As a result, many retailers have taken to merchandising the two together on display racks.

“Convenience rules right now,” says Kathy Means, director of public relations for the Produce Marketing Association (PMA), “and supermarket operators want to keep things together.”

At the same time, consumers are becoming more adventuresome when choosing their food. “I think the consumer has broken away from traditional combinations, like Parmesan on a Caesar salad blend,” says Means. “People are getting more experimental.”

To help provide consumers with direction, suppliers, such as Paramount Farms, offer suggestions online. “We offer various meal ideas as inspiration, primarily salads, on our website for our consumers,” says the Paramount spokesman. **pb**

Packing Co., Inc., in Salinas, CA, is introducing its first blend in April. “Acadian Harvest, the mix features petit whole leaves, not baby leaves,” says Gina Nucci, director of healthy culinary innovations.

Nucci says Mann Packing entered the organic salad market because of customer demand. “A customer of ours — a retail salad bar chain — is moving to 100-percent organic.”

Arcadian Harvest contains a variety of European lettuce species, bred from combinations of green leaf, red leaf, tangos, lolla rosa, batavia and oaks. The plants are fully matured, she continues. “Instead of growing them for 30 days, they are grown for 90. They’re hardier. The yield is about 40 percent greater than a traditional spring mix. And they have great body and lift.” The company

says a 1-ounce serving of Arcadian Harvest blend equals about 1.5 ounces of spring mix in plate coverage.

In response to retailer and consumer demand, Dole Fresh Vegetables in Monterey, CA, introduced its inaugural line of organic salad blends last year. Director of brand marketing, Michelle Gonsalves, says the move was “consistent with the gradual mainstreaming of organic as well as the need to satisfy a growing interest by our consumer base in organic as a supplement to conventional varieties.”

Today, the Dole Organic line features organic versions of the brand’s most popular conventional salad blends, including Arugula Blend, Baby Spinach Blend and Spring Mix Blend. Gonsalves says all organic blends are

selling well, particularly the spinach blend. “Organic continues to drive growth in the value-added salad category,” she says. “Consumers now enjoy a wider array of organic salad choices.”

Experts say chopped organic Asian blends also are making inroads. Earthbound Farm currently offers its Zen blend, which contains baby spinach, baby kale and such Asian greens as Asian mustards, pak choy, komatsuna and Japanese spinach. “Zen blend is one of our newest products,” says Earthbound’s Cabaluna. It’s only about 6-months old, but the company has plans to expand the line in the future.

Canales says Misionero Vegetables discussed the possibility of adding Asian greens. “We’re always looking out for new possibilities,” he notes. “But you have to ask whether you can grow those varieties organically. If you can only grow for several months of the year, you have a challenge. You must have a supply week in and a week out. The consumer expects it.”

Meanwhile, Cabaluna says the deeper-green, nutrient-rich blends such as Earthbound’s baby kale mixes or PowerMeal Bowls containing baby kale, baby chard and baby spinach, are gaining traction. “Spring

mix opened peoples’ eyes,” she says, “and now they know there’s more than chopped iceberg, arugula or kale. People looking for more flavor know that the darker greens are more nutrient-dense.”

Gonsalves notes that demand for the darker “power/super” greens is driving one of the biggest shifts in the market, which has increased the percentage of acreage devoted to organic kale and darker greens.

With demand for salad blends growing steadily, some supermarkets are allotting additional shelf space for new items. For example, Foodtown, the supermarket cooperative operating in the New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania areas, offers customers a variety of organic salad blends. Selections include Dole Baby Lettuce, Dole Spring Mix with Herbs, Earthbound Farm’s Baby Spinach Salad, and Earthbound Farm Fresh Herb Salad.

At the same time, retailers are increasing organic salad kit options.

While some supermarkets choose to present organic products in a separate section, others display them together with conventional items — making certain that they adhere to the rule that organic products must not touch non-organic products. But, PMA’s Means says

because salads are usually offered in bags or clamshells, “this is not a big concern for merchandisers at the retail level ... it all depends on what the retailer believes its customers want.”

“Years ago people wanted organics segregated,” says Canales. “Now integration is the way to go.”

“But a lot of retailers have a ‘clean-floor policy.’ They don’t like a lot of merchandising. They want it to look like a produce stand, not a flea market,” says Cabaluna.

Because of this request, she says Earthbound Farm is working to create some distinguishing features on labels for different segments of products. “Salad geeks can tell the difference among similar products right away,” says Cabaluna. “But regular shoppers find it hard to distinguish [different blends] when looking at a wall of salads. We need to make it easier for a consumer to find an item.”

In the meantime, as organic product options and sales increase, “organic is becoming a larger part of the packaged salad set,” says Gonsalves. “The price premium for organic continues to decrease, which lowers the barriers to entry for more consumers — inviting organic trial and, ultimately, adoption.” **pb**

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY DEAN BARNES

# Breaux Mart

The small New Orleans retailer captures a big audience when it comes to produce.

BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD

A woman in her 20s stands in front of the 4-foot-wide set of soyfoods and carefully reads labels before making her selection. An elderly man stops at the freestanding tomato display and picks out a couple of the local Creole tomatoes to add to his cart. Right behind him is a young mom with two school-age children in tow who quickly grabs a half dozen organic apples and a 10-ounce carton of organic caramel dip. It's pretty impressive that each of these customers — diversified by age and needs — can find exactly what they want in the tiny 1,200-square-foot produce department in the Breaux Mart on New Orleans' historic Magazine Street.

A grocery store that caters to the needs of neighborhood residents is just what founder, Paul Breaux, had in mind when he opened his first Breaux Mart in 1969. Today, this vision remains alive and well in the third-generation of family owners. No cookie cutters allowed. Each of the chain's five stores in the New Orleans Metropolitan Area is unique to its location and caters to customers in its own vicinity.

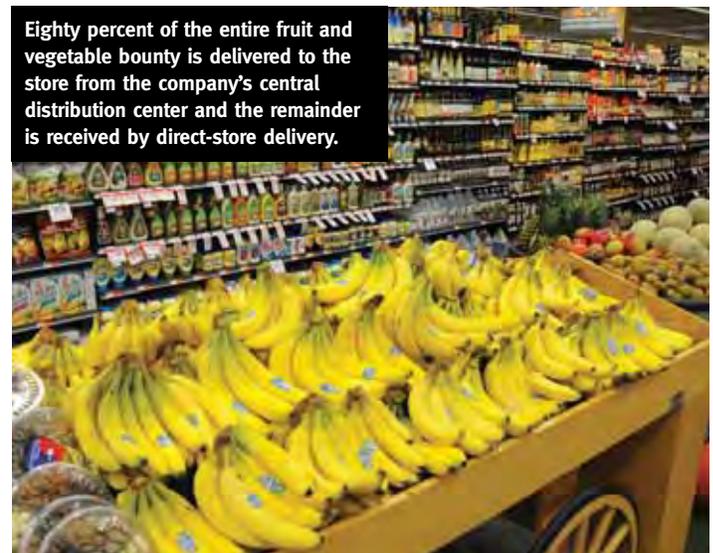
Jay Breaux, vice president, explains how the chain's employees make this happen: "Our customer service goes beyond greeting customers and assuring they make it through the checkouts quickly. We strive to take it to a higher level. That involves getting to know customers by name, their interests, individual needs and purchasing habits, as well as making the experience more personal."

The Breaux Mart in Metairie, which counts residents living in the famous French Quarter as its clientele, is a good example. There's a large Latino population, made up of first-and-second generation shoppers, who have emigrated from Mexico and Central America.

Small-sized mangos and limes and a large variety of hot peppers are a few of the most popular produce items. This differs from the River Ridge Breaux Mart — a suburban, residential area.

The River Ridge store is in a community that sprung up in the aftermath of World War II. It is successful in the high-volume staple commodities rather than the latest and greatest items. This means plenty of russet potatoes, iceberg lettuce and yellow onions as well as bananas and commodity varieties of apples and citrus.

The difference between customers in River Ridge and those who



Eighty percent of the entire fruit and vegetable bounty is delivered to the store from the company's central distribution center and the remainder is received by direct-store delivery.



shop at the Magazine Street location is one that Breaux describes by citing eggs as an example. "It's the standard white that buyers clamor for in River Ridge, while the free range brown eggs — that cost \$6 a dozen — sell like hotcakes at the Magazine Street store."

Magazine Street is a 6-mile-long stretch that runs through New Orleans's Uptown and Garden Districts. The thoroughfare is lined with 19th century homes famous for their eclectic architecture as well as block after block of antique stores, art galleries, classy boutiques and funky thrift shops. This colorful neighborhood is aptly described as a multi-generational mecca for the avant-garde and well heeled alike.

Amidst this old-world charm is lots of contemporary competition for Breaux Mart. Within four and six blocks, there is a Fresh Market and a Whole Foods. Five minutes by car and you can discover a number of independents, local chains, such as Rouses and Robert Fresh Market, as well as national retailers like Winn-Dixie, Save-A-Lot, Walmart, Piggly Wiggly and Albertsons. Breaux Mart has catered to its customers, residents and visitors alike by expanding its selection of local, organic, specialty gourmet, and vegetarian products.

### History Of Offering Local

Breaux Mart's version of local means items such as Louisiana-grown Creole tomatoes, Satsuma oranges and summer squash. The locally grown bounty is most plentiful from May through July.

"We've been supporting local since our stores opened more than 40 years ago, but it's harder today," says Breaux. "For example, Whole Foods offers loans and payouts, so the farmers send them product first."

Breaux Mart carries an average of 50-plus SKUs of organic fruits and vegetables. These range from organics as part of the bagged salad set to a segregated 4-foot by 4-foot refrigerated destination display of organic

**"Our customer service goes beyond greeting customers and assuring they make it through the checkouts quickly. We strive to take it to a higher level. That involves, getting to know customers by name, their interests, individual needs and purchasing habits, as well as making the experience more personal."**

— Jay Breaux, Vice President

items such as celery, crimini mushrooms, grape tomatoes, carrots, grapes, grapefruit, Granny Smith and Fuji apples. Six SKUs of bagged organic dried fruit — including mangos, cranberries and dates — are shown upright on the unrefrigerated top of the display.

Specialty produce spans everything from greenhouse-grown mini San Marzano tomatoes and radicchio to tropicals. The tropicals, namely mangos, kiwi, pineapple and melons, are displayed farm-style on two large metal washtubs that are capped with a black plastic top to beautifully offset the fruit.

The soyfoods set is sandwiched between the cooking vegetables and salad greens. Its five shelves hold a number of items from tofu and tempeh to soy burgers, hot dogs and crumbles. "The rationale of using produce space for these items is that vegetarians and vegans alike are much more likely to shop in produce rather than other departments of the store," says Breaux.

Bananas, lettuce, onions, potatoes and apples are the Top 5 selling produce items at Breaux Mart's Magazine Street location. Bananas are the focal point in the department, which are displayed on decorative wood shelving that resemble a pushcart.

Eighty percent of the entire fruit and vegetable bounty is delivered to the store from the company's central distribution center and the remainder is received by direct-store

delivery. Produce comes in on pallets separate from other products to prevent cross contamination. It then immediately goes onto the sales floor or into a 240-square-foot cooler space dedicated to fresh produce.

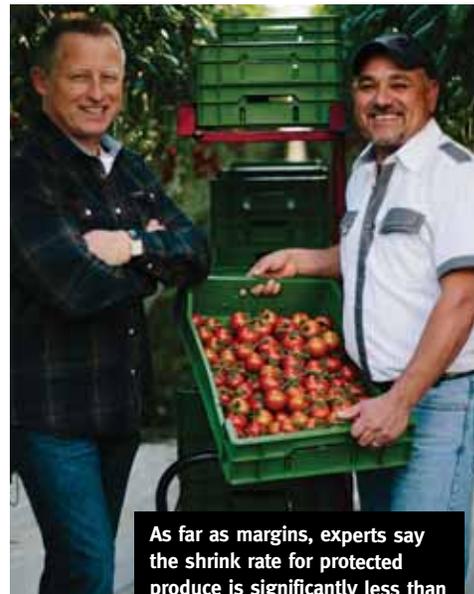
The four Breaux Mart produce employees who work at Magazine Street do a great job of retailing. Proof of this fact is that while the produce department occupies only 8 percent of the 14,000-square-foot store, it generates 11 to 12 percent of total store sales. The team says that the two biggest secrets to this success are cross-merchandising and constant turnover.

Avocados and tomatoes are side-by-side for guacamole, smoothie mixes on clip strips are over the banana display, and bottles of champagne are next to a bright pile of fresh oranges for Mimosas. Plus, no display of a single item is more than a few feet in size. Even the 6-foot wide four-shelf tall wall rack of bagged salads — the largest single category in the store — features nearly two dozen varieties and requires a continuous restocking of fresh product.

A huge advantage Breaux Mart has over the large grocery chains and superstores "is the flexibility and decision-making capability our managers have to respond to customer requests quickly; to give customers good deals for large quantity purchases; and to take care of their individual needs," says Breaux. **pb**



PHOTOS COURTESY OF VILLAGE FARMS



As far as margins, experts say the shrink rate for protected produce is significantly less than field-grown — in some cases, a reported 10 to 15 percent less.

# Optimize Protected Produce Profits By Overcoming Pricing/Promotion Challenges

Challenges and opportunities for retailers to market greenhouse-grown produce. BY KEITH LORIA

It's no secret that costs involved with greenhouse production are higher than normal growing methods. As a result, savvy retailers must work with produce companies to find suitable ways to make pricing palatable for both parties.

The key to commanding higher premiums is consumers need to understand what they are getting for their money. Groups such as the Asociación Mexicana De Horticultura Protegida (AMPHAC) and others are focused on spreading a positive message about the benefits and added value of protected produce.

Gonzalo Avila, CEO of Nogales, AZ-based Malena Produce, Inc., says the company focuses on presenting complete programs to retailers that can transition the chains seamlessly from field to protected agriculture (PA) product, as needed. This ranges from production participation, educating employees, and promotions: a “soup-to-nuts” service strategy designed to help sell more for more.

This doesn't mean that Malena recommends being classified as “gourmet,” given that its category sales percentage in some chains is very small, and the high-end positioning might scare away the more value-

conscious shopper. However, Avila says, in some categories, such as tomatoes or peppers, PA volume often surpasses that of field-grown, and mainstreaming PA produce is the strategy that works best given the growth trend lines.

“As far as margins, the shrink rate for PA produce is typically significantly less than field-grown — in some cases, a reported 10 to 15 percent less,” he says. “So while retailers may pay a bit more for PA produce in the beginning, they suffer less losses.”

As a grower, Dan Edmeier, vice president sales and marketing for Donna, TX-based Kingdom Fresh Farms, says he would love to see premium pricing for protected produce, but he knows while it is more expensive in many cases, the output is still a commodity, and therefore subject to the same behavior from retail.

Victor Savanello, director of produce and floral for Allegiance Retail Services, LLC (a retailer-owned co-op, primarily supplying Foodtown and D'Agostino banners, with more than 80 locations in New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania, headquartered in Iselin, NJ), says greenhouse-grown vegetables are definitely retailed higher, as they generally cost signifi-

cantly more.

“That seems to be okay with the consumer who shops for them,” says Savanello. “For the most part, the greenhouse products are more consistent looking, as well as better-tasting fruits or vegetables, and the consumer who wants that consistency seems to recognize it, appreciate it and is willing to pay for it.”

Dionysios Christou, vice president marketing of Del Monte Fresh Produce in Coral Gables, FL, reveals that input costs continue to rise annually, so the company constantly looks at ways to improve efficiencies, recycle where applicable, and remove costs throughout the supply chain.

“Del Monte delivers value through its quality products, supply chain management, marketing tools, and competitive prices,” says Christou. “Our experience has been that our customers understand this, as this is not unique to the (protected produce) category.”

Count Christou among those who feel protected produce should be marketed as a gourmet item. “The prices of hydroponic vegetables reflect the unique characteristics of this category; however, there's a distinct difference between a commodity item such as a TOV (tomato on vine) and, for example, the

**Editor's Note:** This is the second article in a two-part series on the state of greenhouse produce. Part I, which is featured on page 38 of February's PRODUCE BUSINESS magazine, deals with myriad challenges and opportunities retailers face when marketing protected produce.

**“Greenhouse vegetables are starting to take more of a center stage due to flavor, appearance and consistency. I think retailers are starting to take them out of the corner and put them in more reactive places.”**

— Jim DiMenna, JemD Farms

Del Monte Bon Bon snacking tomatoes,” says Christou. “This item has several desirable attributes — making it a unique product, which is designed to meet the expectations of discerning consumers with special requirements and address their lifestyle needs.”

Christou asserts that the discussion should not revolve around price points, but rather if a product’s cost reflects the value that buyers place on it. In the case of Del Monte, all of its greenhouse operations utilize state-of-the-art technologies, which provide enhanced food safety, consistent quality, and environmental sustainability.

“Individual buyers will have to judge if the product on offer meets their unique demand criteria involving quality, food safety, availability, consumer trust in the brand etc.,” says Christou. “Overall, it (protected produce) costs more so we need to get a premium over field tomatoes.”

Kathryn Ault, vice president sales for NatureSweet Tomatoes, San Antonio, TX, disagrees. She says greenhouse-grown products should not be marketed as gourmet since all consumers are looking to purchase great tasting tomatoes, and implementing high-end marketing tactics would indicate it is not accessible to all.

“We have a year-round price that is for a range of products that are flavorful, consistently great tasting, and available year-round,” she says. “They are also grown in a safe environment to instill confidence in the retailer and consumer that the products are safe to eat. NatureSweet also has full traceability on each of its items and on each pack, which is vital today on any food item.”

Since the product category is still not a standard in grocery stores across the U.S., Diana McClean, director of marketing for Salinas, CA-based Tanimura & Antle, agrees

## MERCHANDISING STRATEGIES FOR GREENHOUSE-GROWN PRODUCT

There are a myriad of options for retailers to display greenhouse products for optimal effect. This could include everything from grouping them together, to adding signage, to marketing to organic consumers.

“With all fresh produce, the product should be rotated and refreshed for optimal presentation. A dedicated section of greenhouse-grown produce — similar to the organic section — to differentiate and clearly define this product group would provide in-the-aisle impact,” says McClean. “Additionally, the enclosed production facilities provide a more controlled environment than growing outside, often eliminating the need for pesticides, which is a key purchase driver for the organic consumer. Greenhouse-grown produce can appeal to the organic consumer on this level.”

NatureSweet’s Ault says the most effective merchandising strategy for her brand is to have NatureSweet on the tomato table and also on a secondary display next to a complementary item to drive additional sales. She says there is an uptick in sales of more than 30 percent when an additional display is used.

Retailers should keep greenhouse-grown produce displays full, clean, and well organized at all times because consumers cite visual appeal as an important factor when rating a produce department’s quality.

“Red, ripe tomatoes should be placed in the front of displays since they move quicker, and bruised or overripe fruit should be removed,” says Del Monte’s Christou. “Placing other produce in the display, like avocados, can be eye catching because it helps to vary the color. Large bulk displays also help to convey an image of freshness, and consumers appreciate

this type of display as they engage in selecting their produce in a natural way.”

Douglas Kling, senior vice president and chief marketing officer of Heathrow, FL-based Village Farms, advises retailers to feature greenhouse-grown produce as a destination category for health and wellness, and to cross promote with other healthy items that drive consumers looking for these products.

“Keep these items front and center. There is nothing more appealing than walking into a retailer and seeing bright fresh fruits and vegetables first thing,” says Kling. “Appeal to consumers not just by the price of the items, but also through the benefits of fruits and vegetables by offering sampling programs, recipe cards, and online suggestions for cleaning, cooking, and serving.”

“Edible Garden offers its own displays for the produce departments so that managers can move them around the store. It is also utilizing packaging that makes it easier for a product, such as basil, to go on the shelf or on the wall of the supermarket,” says Ken VandeVrede, director of business development for the Belvidere, NJ-based company.

“We are constantly conflicted about how to make our package more appealing with racks, using the existing supermarket footprint, and also with what consumers want their produce to look like,” says VandeVrede. “It’s brand awareness and teaching the produce people about what to do with our stuff.”

Environmentalists will be happy to hear that Edible Garden is also devising a plan to eliminate the plastic clamshells, and researching innovative packaging ideas that use environmental paper, or something better for the planet. **pb**

that pricing should remain comparable to like-products so that shoppers will try it rather than avoid it because of price.

Jim DiMenna, president of JemD Farms, headquartered in Kingsville, Ontario, says a premium price is necessary and warranted for the protected produce category.

“It starts to lend itself toward quality. My belief, subject to the elements, is the quality of

a high-tech greenhouse-grown product is much higher in appearance and taste,” says DiMenna. “Greenhouse vegetables are starting to take more of a center stage due to flavor, appearance and consistency. I think retailers are starting to take them out of the corner and put them in more reactive places. It’s really a good product and is becoming the produce of choice in many departments.”

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When it comes to price, Fried De Schouwer, president of Greenhouse Produce Company, Vero Beach, FL, says that if products exhibit more consistency in flavor, color, size and maturity, it's a better product and deserves a better price. Still, that doesn't mean, he says, that just because it's greenhouse grown, it's better.

"What happens so many times is companies rely on their production method as the sole provider for the better price, and it's not always worth it," he says. "In a nutshell, I do not believe that merchandising should be based on that. I think it's more of a factor of the product being better, and that is what warrants the higher price."

### Sales Growth Obstacles

When selling greenhouse-grown produce, experts advise retailers to develop a strong, targeted strategy to obtain successful sales. Often this involves devising the best way to distinguish between the products, coming to a smart price-point, and letting customers know the advantages.

"The key challenge for the PA industry is mainly in higher costs for producers, coupled with more stringent food safety requirements," says Malena's Avila. "It is the industry's job to educate retailers about the cost/benefit ratio and help them pass on that message to consumers. Another challenge is to deliver good tasting products and varieties the consumer will demand."

By not implementing these simple measures, retailers more than likely will be losing money. "The variety and volume of new products in the produce aisle continues to challenge any new product introduction," says Tanimura & Antle's McClean. "With a dedicated section in the department, and a commitment to building the category, the consumer will have a consistent opportunity to purchase greenhouse-grown produce and experience the difference."

Del Monte provides point-of-sale material to enhance the display, so retailers can place small signage around the product describing the health benefits, nutritional information and proper handling instructions. The company also encourages retailers to use informational brochures, price cards and recipe cards to their full potential in order to attract and educate consumers.

"We provide full technical support and expert merchandisers that work with retailers' produce departments to guarantee optimal product quality, product display and merchandising," says Christou. "Our category managers help retailers develop category-specific strategies, design plan-o-grams, perform sales analysis, conduct business reviews, and assess promotion and pricing initiatives."

Allegiance's Savanello appreciates that most of these greenhouse growers are so in tune with their products, and so stringent with their standards, that they won't ship product if it doesn't meet a standard of brix, which deter-



PHOTO COURTESY OF GREENHOUSE PRODUCE PRODUCTION PARTNER

**“It is the industry’s job to educate retailers about the cost/benefit ratio and help them pass on that message to consumers. Another challenge is to deliver good tasting products and varieties the consumer will demand.”**

— Gonzalo Avila, Malena Produce

mines the consumers taste experience.

“They would rather scratch product and pull ads than ship an inferior product by their standards into the market. It’s admirable,” says Savanello. “Annoying sometimes to a retailer — who wants to give their customers everything they want every day — but admirable nonetheless.”

Kingdom Fresh Farms’ Edmeier feels the lack of year-round supply has been a hindrance to retailers in their efforts to grow greenhouse

items as a category. “Another challenge is that greenhouse growers all have different product offerings, which sometimes spill into non-greenhouse commodities,” says Edmeier. “In other words, you have a field grown bell pepper and greenhouse-grown in the same retail set, which becomes a challenge for retailers and their customers.”

Canadian retailers have been taking advantage of greenhouse-grown produce in their department over the past 20 years, and

DiMenna says the past decade has seen more U.S. retailers following their lead.

“Retailers can be very creative in how they market and how they distribute eye appeal to get good attention to the products, and we are starting to see good presentations in U.S. stores,” he says. “The education part of separating shade house from greenhouse is the biggest obstacle we have. We need to promote better, and to educate consumers better.” **pb**

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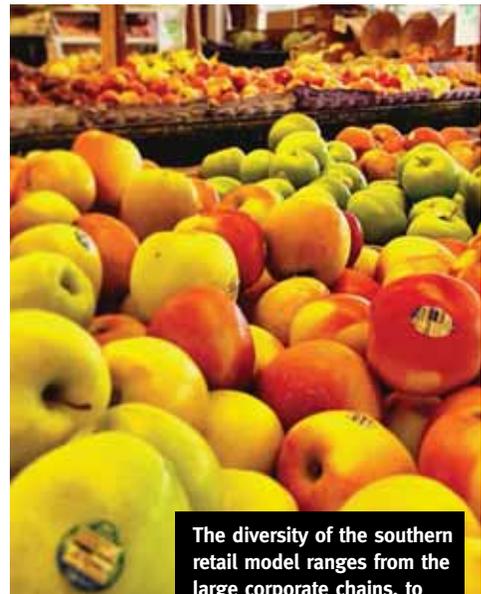
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The diversity of the southern retail model ranges from the large corporate chains, to the independents, to specialty stores.

# Celebrate The South

Southern retailers find profit in diversity and connecting with customers. **BY JANEL LEITNER**

**R**etailers in the southern United States have generated a first-class reputation for customer service coupled with an attractive, wide assortment of beautifully displayed fruits and vegetables that are often locally sourced. Comprising a diverse group of businesses, southern retailers often employ unique and innovative marketing techniques, but what also sets them apart is their celebration of pride in fresh produce.

“We celebrate the diversity of our South Florida population,” says David Lorenzo, vice president of Lorenzo’s Farmers Market in North Miami Beach, FL. “North Miami Beach, Miami and South Florida are a unique region of America; we are becoming New York City with beaches and palm trees!”

## Diverse Businesses

The diversity of the southern retail model ranges from the large corporate chains, to the independents, to specialty stores. Though individually unique, each business shares the common goal of serving its customers.

One of the largest supermarket chains in the South is Publix Super Markets. Publix currently operates in five states with 1,076 locations throughout Florida, Georgia, South

Carolina, Alabama, Tennessee, and its soon-to-be sixth state, North Carolina. “We are best known in the industry for our customer service, which extends to our friendly, knowledgeable associates,” says Maria Brous, director of media and community relations at Publix Super Markets. “As associate owners, we have skin in the game and our success can be

directly attributed to how well we take care of our customers.”

Independent retailers such as K-VA-T Food Stores (Food City) with 105 stores, located in Abingdon, VA, put a lot of stock in serving customers with a wide array of produce offerings. “We have the largest selection of locally grown varieties in our marketing area,” says



PHOTO ON RIGHT COURTESY OF K-VA-T FOOD STORES

**“Not only do we advertise locally grown items for several weeks during the season, we will also have displays on the sidewalk featuring locally grown products.”**

— Keith Cox, K-VA-T Food Stores

Keith Cox, produce category manager of K-VA-T Food Stores.

“We have so many items that are local that when the customer sees them growing in the field, they expect to see it in the store,” says Tony Smith, merchandising manager for produce at J.H. Harvey Company LLC, a Nashville, GA-based retailer with 73 stores.

Laurenzo’s Farmers Market is uniquely upscale and family owned since 1951. It encompasses an Italian family supermarket, cafe, wine shop, and farmers market spanning three to four city blocks. “Of course, we feature Italian and homemade products, but our unique diverse selection of produce reflects the unique Miami/South Florida landscape,” says Laurenzo.

**The Customer Connection**

Southern retailers count on connecting with the customer to drive sales. One important communication point is the demand for local. “Not only do we advertise locally grown items for several weeks during the season, we will also have displays on the sidewalk featuring locally grown products,” says Cox of K-VA-T. “We have special signage that specifies the name and location of the farm when pricing.”

“We have a program for any of our local growers who want to participate,” says Smith of J.H. Harvey. “Not only do we put their pictures in our ads, we put their pictures in the store right next to the produce that came from their farms. We want people to realize they are buying local from a lot more than just one farmer.”

Emphasis on meal preparation is another popular way of connecting with customers. “We offer in-store demos, recipe cards, and produce selections/side dishes as part of our weekly Aprons Simple Meals program,” explains Brous of Publix. “This program features one to two meal solutions. We also

prepare and sample the recipes in-store, provide recipe cards and offer all the ingredients necessary to recreate the meal at home in an adjacent refrigerated case for customer convenience.”

Special promotional events add another connection opportunity. “We have a lot of contests in produce,” says Smith. “We also use loyalty cards, and during holidays, we tie-in festive displays in produce, such as the nuts and shelled pecans, which Georgia is known for.”

Laurenzo agrees that multiple marketing

tactics are important and customer service is key. “The customer is king, and they’re the life blood of our business. Customer service is a focused priority. We always have in-store demo’s and seasonal displays for holidays.”

Pricing is yet another tool for reaching customers. “We are known for our aggressive prices in our ads,” explains Smith. “We have a ‘Wednesday Supersaver Day,’ which makes Wednesday one of our busiest days. We are known for having what customers want at the price they want.”

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**“Our support of the Redland Raised program in South Florida is one example of how we can better inform our customers about the benefits of buying products (such as green beans, yellow squash, zucchini, okra and avocado) grown close to our marketing areas.”**

— Maria Brous, Publix

Stores are also helping consumers better understand the concept of fresh or seasonality. “As a population, we have lost the sense of seasonality of fruits and vegetables,” says Brous. “As consumers, we expect our produce to be available year-round. As such, we introduced a customer awareness program more than six years ago called At Seasons Peak, to remind customers of the true seasonality of fruits and vegetables — meaning when they are at their freshest, sweetest, and most ripe.”

**A Growing Local Focus**

The South has long been a major produce source, and utilizing local yields is a big advantage to the southern retail community. Brous explains, “As a Southern retailer we are blessed

to have optimal growing seasons, so we can offer a plethora of local produce to our customers.”

Smith couldn’t agree more. “We have been around for almost 90 years now, and we have a very good relationship with all the vendors. The vendors trust us, because we do what we say. We keep our promises. Our location is an advantage in that a lot of the crops are right around us. We can actually see the crops, get out to the fields and look at them.”

“We have local growers from apples to zucchini,” says Cox of K-VA-T Food Stores. “We will start off with local strawberries in late April to early May then move to squash, beans, corn, tomatoes, cabbage, and end with pumpkins and apples in the fall. We are always eager

and excited for the kickoff of the locally grown season with strawberries. Two reasons we look forward to local strawberries are because customers are waiting for them and our competition doesn’t do it.”

Laurenzo agrees that it’s all about local with consumers. “With a 63-year history, we have a network of great local growers and suppliers in Homestead, the West Coast of Florida, and throughout the entire state.”

Special relationships prove effective and beneficial for both the grower as well as the retailer. Cox explains that K-VA-T’s program worked very well over the past 12 years. “We meet with each grower in January to discuss the past season and how we will proceed for the upcoming season,” he says. “We also discuss our needed quantities for each week and agree to a set cost for the growing season. This way, the grower will know up front how much to grow and at what price he or she will be paid.”

“We are proud to offer a large variety of products grown in the states where we do business,” explains Brous of Publix. “Our support of the Redland Raised program in South Florida is one example of how we can better inform our customers about the benefits of buying products (such as green beans, yellow

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squash, zucchini, okra and avocado) grown close to our marketing areas.”

### Competition Inspires Ideas

Regardless of retailer size, the continuous stream of competitors motivates innovation. Smith of J.H. Harvey’s explains, “It’s hard for the ‘little man’ to make it with all the competition that is coming. For example, the Dollar General stores in our area have small produce and meat sections now.”

Keeping the focus on meeting specific customer needs is the southern retailer’s mantra. “Regardless of area-of-operation, there will always be competition from traditional and nontraditional competitors,” asserts Brous. “Regardless of competitor, we remain focused on providing the best customer service as well as quality products at competitive prices.”

Laurenzo of Laurenzo’s Farmers Market acknowledges competition is heating up. “More competition from smaller stores and independents do take a bite out of customer growth or sales, and also the large chain stores and natural food markets are even more of a factor as organic and sustainable produce selections increase.”

Innovative sustainability practices also serve as a way to attract the attention of an ecologically focused consumer, as well as support the environment. “Publix recycles floral buckets from our stores’ floral departments every day,” says Brous. “By recycling them, instead of just tossing them away, our company will save on disposal fees and landfill space. In addition, by working with our suppliers, we are able to modify our produce bags to save more than 377,000 pounds of plastic per year. That is a reduction of 374 tons

of greenhouse gas (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions, which is equivalent to taking more than 65 cars off the road for one year.”

Laurenzo agrees. “Customers enjoy and appreciate the practice of sustainability. We purchase and handle sustainable produce when cost effective.”

Another opportunity to exhibit sustainability is through local programs. “While Publix has a variety of exotic food choices from around the world, we are proud of the products we source from ‘just down the street.’ From produce to seafood to floral, Publix supports area suppliers and offers fresh, local products whenever possible,” explains Brous.

Local programs also provide opportunities to emphasize support of the local economy. “We want to bring to the customer’s attention how buying the local produce affects the local economy,” says Smith of J.H. Harvey’s. “We use signage noting: Georgia vegetable crops add a combined \$1.24 billion in revenue and jobs.”

### Demographic Changes

Changing demographics affected the assortment of what southern retailers offer. “As a Florida-based retailer, we always had a melting pot, now referred to as a salad bowl, of ethnicities,” says Brous. “Over the years, and most recently in the past decade, we’ve seen the migration of the once South Florida Hispanic population into our other operating areas including Central and North Florida and beyond. Having such a diverse customer base with deeply rooted traditions presents an opportunity to offer our customers a wide array of fresh fruits, vegetables and roots.”

Laurenzo agrees changing demographics

provide challenges and opportunities. “As a mature business operation, it has always been important to celebrate and serve multiple cultures and heritages of the population as well as the entire community. Our mission is to provide South Florida’s diverse community with the produce and products each culture is accustomed to. The bottom line is — it’s always about family, from the daily meals to celebrations, and the holidays.”

Cox of K-VA-T Food Stores also asserts that southern traditions likewise offer opportunities. “The southern customer’s unique ways of using produce provides additional sales opportunity.

“There are still several people in the South that can or freeze different products for later use. We offer full case items such as tomatoes, corn and beans during the locally grown season at a discounted retail if purchased by the case,” Cox says.

For J.H. Harvey, opportunity comes in the form of green peanuts. “We are located right in the middle of everything from fruits to vegetables to green peanuts,” says Smith. “No one in the United States sells green peanuts like us, because our customers like to buy them fresh and boil the green peanuts themselves.”

Many of the southern retailers outlasted various demographic changes because of a sustained emphasis on customer service, and continuing to stay one step ahead. “Our company was founded in 1951 by Ben Laurenzo, and his family. He remains vital and active today at 85 years young, and still working seven days a week,” says Laurenzo. “Our customers are our best word-of-mouth advertising, and since the 1950’s they’ve been singing our praises throughout Florida.” **pb**

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As the economy recuperates, the industry continues to weigh opportunities between rail and trucking companies.

# The Driving Forces Behind New Companies And Services For Rail Transportation

Transportation experts cite several factors to consider for faster, improved deliveries in this every-changing industry. **BY BILL MARTIN**

**A** century ago the railroads were king when it came to moving freight. This changed dramatically in the 1950s after President Dwight Eisenhower launched what today is the massive interstate highway system leading to the emergence of the long-haul trucking industry, which now hauls the vast majority of the nation's goods. Beginning in the 1970s there were some initiatives launched in the rail industry to capture more of the perishable foods business, primarily with refrigerated rail cars and piggyback trailers. These initiatives, however, resulted in only limited success.

In recent years, a revitalized interest for hauling produce by rail developed, but many question the motives behind it.

Are the rails providing better service? Is the high cost of diesel fuel making railroads more competitive? How about the environmental factors? Or is there a rail-government conspiracy to regulate trucking so much that

the rails are made more competitive by default (see The Truck/Rail Adversarial Relationship side note on page 61)?

## Rail Revitalization

"The downturn several years ago in the economy opened the minds of people in transportation to new ideas," says Jason Spafford, vice president of business development for McKay Transcold of Edina, MN, which launches a new service in May. "The poor economy has business people considering options they have not considered in the past.

"We are talking to people about using our forwarding distribution hubs," says Spafford. "You talk to transportation people, and they may say that's a different department; that's warehousing. Now people are saying let's not look at transportation from point A to point B, but point A and beyond. This is where you can actually roll some of your warehousing into our transportation, utilizing our forwarding distribution centers on each end."

Paul Kazan, president of Target Interstate Systems, Bronx, NY, uses a lot of CSX rail service, and is currently in talks with some rail entities. The truck broker likes a lot of things McKay TransCold is doing, but he is on the East Coast and McKay is only operating between the West Coast and the Midwest.

However, Kazan is not keen on rail entities talking about warehousing. "To me that means storage handling. There is nothing good about warehousing in the fresh produce industry. They do a lot of LTL (less-than-truckload). You have to pick up the produce out West, bring it to a warehouse, unload it, get it on a train, unload it, load it on a truck, and then unload off the truck. There's just way too much handling of the produce and each time it's handled, there's the potential for delay," observes Kazan.

C.R. England of Salt Lake City is one of the nation's largest refrigerated carriers, and Ricky Stover is director of business development – intermodal. He believes anything that

# “We have great relationships with all the railroads. It gives our customers great flexibility. Most intermodal companies align themselves with one railroad in the East and one in the West. But we like our strategic relationships with all the rails.”

— Ricky Stover, C.R. England

is working effectively in transportation is driving its growth. This may be cost savings, capacity, competitive service, or reducing the carbon footprint.

“It’s a great story,” says Stover of the rail revitalization.

He says C.R. England’s rail transportation network centers around Southern and Northern California and into the Pacific Northwest, with service stretching not only into Chicago, but the Southeast.

“We have great relationships with all the railroads,” asserts Stover. “It gives our customers great flexibility. Most intermodal companies align themselves with one railroad in the East and one in the West. But we like our strategic relationships with all the rails.”

Vince Norman is marketing manager for

Locus Traxx of Jupiter, FL, a company formed in 2005 specializing in improving food safety and security of food shipments. It recently introduced its Smart Traxx monitoring system for rail, as well as over-the-road trucks.

Norman says one reason for development of the new product is the renewed interest in shipping produce by rail. The SmartTraxxGo provides real time text and e-mail alerts on shipping data. It also has features for alerts relating to load damage, theft, or tampering.

“If you can put it on a train and get it where you want to go — and it’s not too time sensitive — it’s a more efficient way to go. Plus there are the environmental factors,” says Norman.

## Freight Rates

Logistics veteran Rob Goldstein is president

of Genpro Inc., a logistics provider in Rutherford, NJ. He notes railroad freight rates are driven by those in trucking.

“As fuel costs go up, customers look for alternatives and the rails are more fuel efficient,” says Goldstein, adding Genpro uses some rail service, depending upon the needs of customers.

Spafford at McKay Transcold says transport users are not necessarily going to change what they are doing, so rails have to be competitive with trucks.

“We say rail service has to be eight to 15 percent less than truck, depending upon the commodity and the specific traffic lane,” notes Spafford.

“Truck rates are key to what we do,” says C.R. England’s Stover. “We know we can provide a value versus trucks. It has to be within some measurable proximity to a rail facility, and there are not too many out-of-route miles to get to that rail facility. If you are delivering to high density population areas, chances are we can find a value versus trucks.”

Fred Plotsky, president of the truck brokerage Cool Runnings Ltd. of Kenosha, WI, points to Rail Logistics Cold Train of Overland Park, KS. He said Cold Train’s service is good as it loads on Monday in Washington State or California, and delivers by Friday to Chicago.

## THE TRUCK/RAIL ADVERSARIAL RELATIONSHIP: IS IT CHANGING?

**M**any in long haul trucking believe the railroads and government are working together to stifle competition by increasing the costs of operation for truckers and making trucks less competitive through excessive rules and regulations.

Paul Kazan is president of Target Interstate Systems Inc. based on New York’s Hunts Point Terminal Market. The truck brokerage arranges around 15,000 truckloads of produce and dry freight annually.

“You have a tremendous amount of pressure from the rail industry on the government to restrict and hamstring [trucking]. The absurd hours-of-service rules slow down the trucks, and this leads to more parity with rails and trucks,” says Kazan. The rails used to be a joke, now you have to look at the rails as a viable alternative . . . on certain types of loads.”

Jason Spafford is vice president of business development for McKay TransCold of Edina, MN, which recently launched a dedicated service for fresh and frozen produce, using refrigerated boxcars between the Midwest and West Coast via the BNSF Railway Co, headquartered in Fort Worth, TX.

Spafford, who has 25 years of high-tech and logistics experience, says he’s heard the stories of rail/government

conspiring against trucking, but adds he has no idea who sponsors the legislation and other efforts in this area.

But he agrees, at least in part with Kazan. “There’s the restrictions on driving hours that make it harder, and push toward a rail solution,” notes Spafford.

Ricky Stover is director of business development – intermodal, for C.R. England, one of the nation’s largest refrigerated carriers with about 4,500 trucks. The Salt Lake City based fleet operation had an intermodal division since about 2006, which started with a trailer-on-flatcar program, but has since switched to using containers. It now has 1,150 refrigerated containers, with plans to add 400 more this year.

“I think the view of a truck versus rail scenario is of a day gone past,” notes Stover. The fourth generation of the England family is running this trucking company, and they don’t view truck/rail as an adversarial situation. “We are the first to tell you we can’t do this intermodal service without trucks. The trucks are picking up and the trucks are delivering freight.”

Stover describes intermodal as a complementary service, which is really the next evolution for the companies that have yet to take advantage of it.

“They’ll set a rate of say \$3,600 and the truck rate is \$4,000. At week’s end, if the truck rates inch up to \$4,400 or \$4,500...Cold Train will be up to \$4,000,” says Plotsky.

### Rail Service

Still, the success of rails hauling fresh produce depends on some important factors, as pointed out by Allen Lund, president of the Allen Lund Co. of LaCanada, CA.

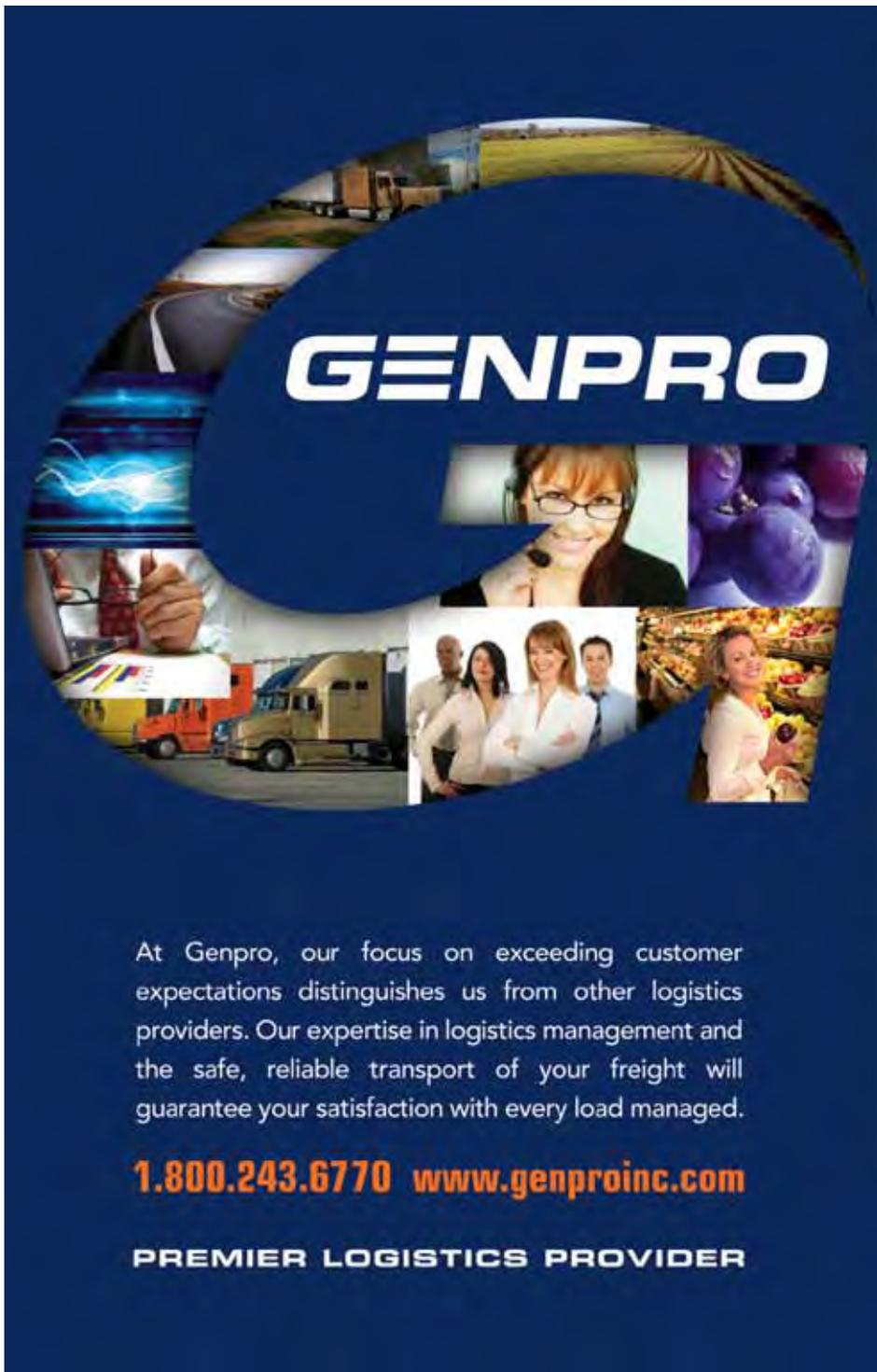
“What the rails like is consistency. Produce is the opposite of consistency, because growing

regions change, and demand [for product] changes. The rails build their world around schedules,” explains Lund.

The Nickey Gregory Co. LLC is a large and growing wholesaler on the Atlanta State Farmer’s Market. Owner and president Nickey Gregory also oversees its sister company, Nickey Gregory Family Express, which operates 14 big rigs, and also 16 straight trucks. The straight trucks run between his Atlanta operation and its facility in Miami. The wholesaler uses some rail for a limited amount of

**“A main reason for the newly formed rail service is you can save one dollar to \$1.20 per package. The savings are substantial if you have the extra time for it to be delivered.”**

— Nickey Gregory, The Nickey Gregory Co.



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purchases of potatoes and onions from Idaho and Oregon. He used to buy Washington state apples and ship them by rail, but some deliveries took up to a month, and any claims might not have been settled for up to nine months.

Gregory adds, “A main reason for the newly formed rail service is you can save one dollar to \$1.20 per package. The savings are substantial if you have the extra time for it to be delivered.”

Vice president, Doug Stoiber, at L&M Transportation Services in Raleigh, NC, notes that 98 percent of all consumer goods are delivered by truck, and about 95 percent of the produce.

“Rail service can take a lot of long loads of produce off the highways. But rather than eliminate transportation, it is really kind of just re-arranging it, because you still have to pay [the trucker] the first mile and the last mile, because the rails can’t deliver to store doors, or most distribution centers, at least not yet,” says Stoiber.

Spafford at McKay Transcold doesn’t argue the difficulties rails have had with produce in the past, including claims. However, he points out his company developed a racking system creating a “rock solid load” that results in less shifting than in a truck load.

“One of people’s concerns with boxcar service is the off truck, on a train, off a train, on a truck. We’re looking at dealing with this in a positive way,” he says. “We’re talking about additional points of inspection and temperature checking. We view it as a rolling warehouse. Each rack and boxcar is bar coded. Each product going into the car needs a specific temperature zone and a specific commodity zone. So we’re paying attention to some of the details that were previously missing from rail,” asserts Spafford.

Kazan at Target Interstate Systems says the rails shy away from wholesale terminal markets because the receivers tend to hold onto the trailers too long and use those trailers as storages. As an example, he says the Hunts Point



Transportation experts say the service gap between solo-driven truck service and expedited intermodal rail service is diminishing.

Wholesale Terminal Market in New York was built when the truck-of-choice was a cabover (truck body style) pulling a 40-foot trailer. Refrigerated storage space is critical, and you need an appointment to deliver. By contrast, the Wakefern Food Corporation and Costcos of the world don't require appointments for deliveries and tend to unload upon delivery.

"These new [rail] companies, their services don't come this way [Atlanta]. We'd use more if there was a super [expedited] train to here," says Gregory of Nickey Gregory.

C.R. England's Stover observes the service gap between a solo-driven truck and the expe-

ditated intermodal rail service is very minimal.

"We can pick up a load in Southern California and deliver a load in Chicago, Wisconsin, Illinois or Indiana four days later. Now team drivers are a different deal," says Stover. Still, he notes their rail-expedited service can deliver from California to the East Coast in seven days. "Those are truck competitive transits," he says.

#### Return Loads

Stover readily admits L&M's intermodal division hauls a lot more frozen foods, dairy products and beverages than produce. He

notes produce works best for intermodal when it is being consolidated and can be loaded right away. A good example is hauling carrots out of the Arvin district in California. Since they have westbound freight coming back to their rail facility, it makes a nice fit.

Target Express's Kazan likes the 53-foot Hyundai containers in the fleet of Tiger Cool Express of Overland Park, KS. Still, he is looking for the savings and service over trucks. He also likes some of the things McKay TransCold is doing, but adds its West Coast to Midwest service doesn't help him on the East Coast. "We got to this point, because we needed large capacity going westbound," he says.

Spafford says due to excessive government regulations in California, his company is shipping more eggs than ever from Iowa to the Golden State — and shipping it by rail. Unlike most rail-related companies, McKay Transcold started looking at eastbound fresh produce and other perishables to have more balance with its westbound business. This has appealed to the railroads, since companies wanting to launch their rail services with eastbound perishable loads have historically approached them. **pb**



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Packaging and technology companies across the board prepare for industry-wide migrations for PTI.

# PTI, Packaging And Software Advancements Enhance Food Safety

Industries fall in line with new retail mandates. **BY BOB JOHNSON**

**T**his year marks the beginning of a new era where anyone shipping produce to the largest retailers will be expected to affix a standard label to each case.

If food poisoning occurs, the label should make it possible to quickly and easily determine when and where the offending produce was harvested and the path it traveled to market.

As an added benefit, the new case labels also have the potential, when combined with the right software, to open an entirely new world of produce logistics, inventory control and cold chain management.

## The 'Wal-Mart Label'

"As of January 1, 2014, there's an expectation that all suppliers of produce to Wal-Mart have Produce Traceability Initiative compliant labels," says Andrew Kennedy, president of FoodLogiQ — a web-based service providing cloud-based solutions in the areas of sustainability, traceability and food safety for the food industry, located in Durham, NC — and

co-chair of the technology-working group of the Produce Traceability Initiative (PTI). "What we saw was an alignment around the Wal-Mart requirement."

Wal-Mart vice president for produce and floral, Dorn Wenninger, and Sam's Club senior director for produce and floral, Russell Mounce, put the new requirement in a letter to produce suppliers late last May.

"Food safety and traceability continue to be one of the most important focus areas," wrote Wenninger and Mounce. "To that end, we're ready to take the next big leap towards standardized case labeling and product track and trace. We recognize and commend those of you that are already there. We appreciate your trail blazing efforts. The fundamental pieces are in place, and are being demonstrated on a commercial level by many small, medium, and large suppliers. It is now time for us to move it to the norm."

That letter marked a turning point in convincing suppliers to accept a uniform standard for a case label that can be used to trace

produce back to the time of harvest in a particular field.

"Since the Wal-Mart letter, there's a general agreement on what the label is going to look like. You can trace it back to the packer, the date it was packed, and the lot number," says FoodLogiQ's Kennedy.

Though the label is widely called the "Wal-Mart label," other large retailers and foodservice companies also helped establish the standard label that makes it possible to trace produce back to a specific company, field, harvest date and lot number.

"The label being used is a PTI label, and not just a 'Wal-Mart label,' says Dan Vaché, vice president for supply chain management at the United Fresh Produce Association, Washington, DC. "The industry has a basic traceability label as shown on the PTI website, so all can receive the basic information required for a trace back. The label from the Wal-Mart letter to suppliers was designed in conjunction with Safeway, Kroger, and Loblaws. This label was designed for use on both the corrugated and reusable

plastic container cases.”

### PTI Wave

The alliance of Wal-Mart with the other heavyweights in produce retail and foodservice gave clout to the request for traceability labels that smaller retailers couldn't muster.

“Many regional retailers, distributors and wholesalers made requests to the supply side, but without critical mass they are a low volume voice,” says Vaché.

There is already evidence that many produce shippers have bought into PTI since the Wal-Mart announcement that their suppliers must use the compliant label.

An educated guess is that around half the produce shipped nationwide is already in cases bearing this label, according to Vaché.

“There are no hard numbers on participation at this point. It is difficult to determine how many supply-side trading partners are applying PTI-compliant labels today. Field observations, distribution center visits, show anywhere from 40 to 60 percent of cases are PTI labeled. This does vary from distribution center to distribution center, but it's a valid range,” asserts Vaché.

There is even more incentive to use the labels because the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), for the first time, accepted express deadlines for issuing regulations under the Food Safety and Modernization Act (FSMA) of 2011 in a February 20, 2014, U.S. District Court agreement. The agreement settled a lawsuit filed by the Center for Food Safety and the Center for Environmental Health.

Under the settlement, the FDA will issue regulations for preventive controls for: human and animal food on August 30, 2015; imported food and foreign suppliers as well as produce safety on October 31, 2015; food transportation on March 31, 2016; and intentional adulteration of food on May 31, 2016. The deadlines for the sanitary transportation and intentional food adulteration rules will be pushed back to 2016.

The importance of food safety and being able to quickly trace contaminated produce back to its origin and to retailers who may have received product from the same lot was underscored most recently by the tragic case of the Colorado cantaloupe with listeria.

“The Jensen Farms fiasco — where more than 30 people died and at least 140 more fell ill from listeria — showed the critical importance for retailers and suppliers to work together to know exactly where product is going and where it's coming from,” asserts Randall Fields, chairman and CEO of Park

City Group, an agency providing solutions and services to support retailers and suppliers to reduce out-of-stocks, shrink, inventory and labor while improving profits, efficiencies, and customer service in Salt Lake City, UT. “Technology now exists to help with the process of documenting this information and limiting the potential for similar foodborne illness outbreaks in the future.”

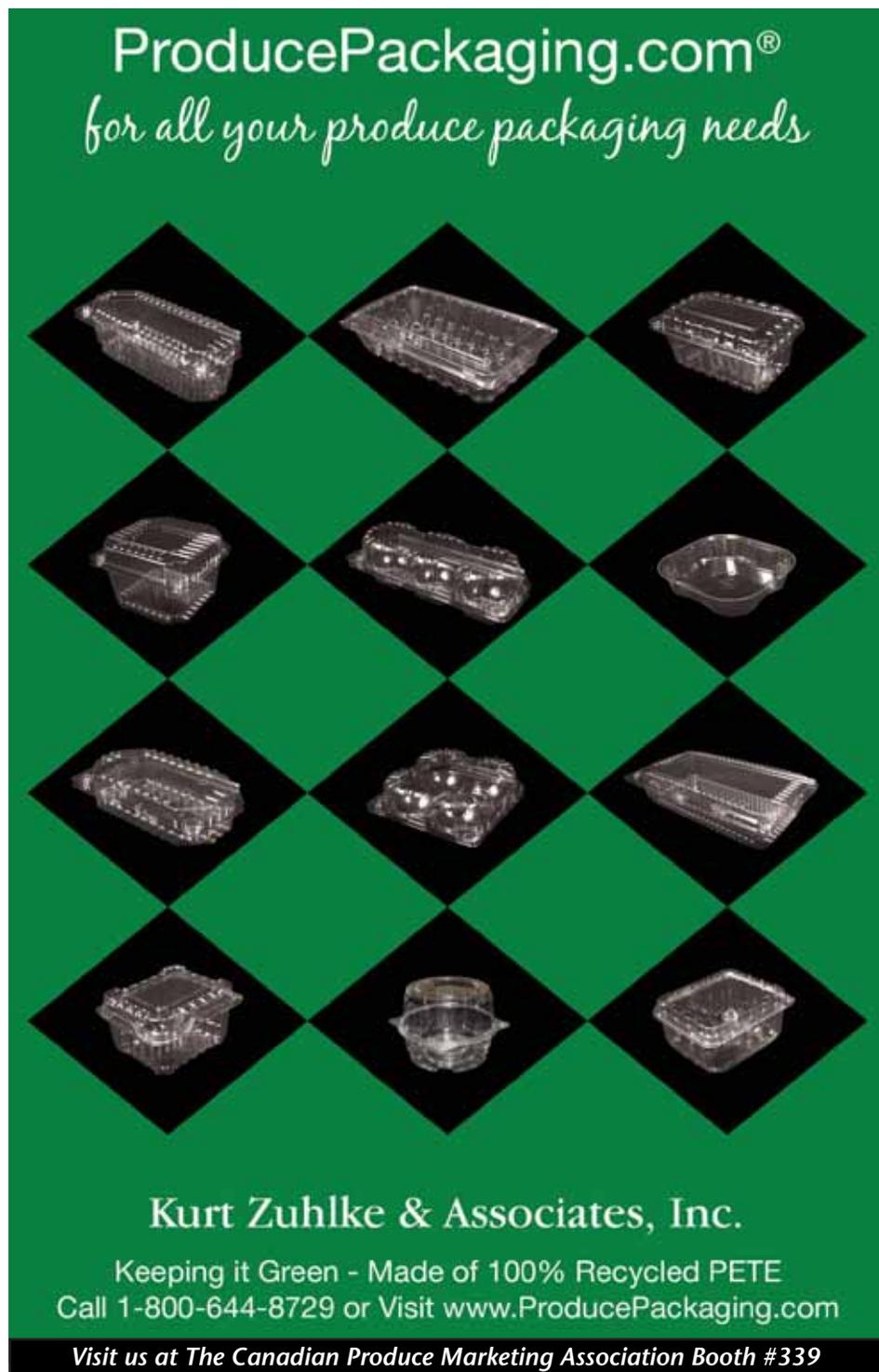
### Putting Packaging Technology To Use

Software options already exist that make it

easy to trace produce, under fairly complicated conditions, involving multiple growers and multiple packers.

“PTI Lite now supports cloud-based databases for shippers with multiple packing partners,” says Todd Baggett, CEO at RedLine Solutions, Santa Clara, CA. The PTI service provider can select the shippers' cloud-based database to print their labels, enabling the shipper instant visibility to what was packed and labeled by their partners.

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## “The new thing is the tracking technology on the case. Now that we have the information, the next step is to share it.”

— Andrew Kennedy, FoodLogiQ

packers and shippers to keep track of produce coming from multiple sources, or going to multiple sources.

“The great thing about this new option is it provides the best of both worlds. The packers can continue to pack and label their own products with their local database, and the shippers get all the data from their packing partners rolled up into one database for traceability as well as aggregate production reporting when the packer connects to the shippers cloud database,” says Baggett.

The next generation of traceability technology will make it possible for growers, shippers, wholesalers and retailers to track the movement of produce as it moves through the supply chain from field to fork.

“I’ve had increased interest and orders this year because of the Food Safety Moderniza-

tion Act rule as well as the farm bill,” says Vince Norman, marketing manager at Locus Traxx, a company offering real-time shipment monitoring devices that transmit a shipment’s temperature, security, and location information, located in Jupiter, FL. “We work with grower-shippers, and we work with some retailers.”

“UPS and FedEx can tell you exactly where a package is at any time. The difficulty with produce is it is not internal. External traceability means anyone in the world can tell where the item is,” says Charles Shafae, co-founder and president of dProduceMan Software, an integrated accounting, inventory and management software company based in Half Moon Bay, CA.

FoodLogiQ’s Kennedy believes technology, which allows retailers and others to track

produce as it moves, will be developed this year. “The new thing is the tracking technology on the case. Now that we have the information, the next step is to share it,” says Kennedy.

Once the tracking technology is in place, the final challenge could be finding some way to track fresh produce that is no longer in the case that carries the label.

“The grocery business has been using UPC to trace where product can come from. When you get down to the smaller lots, the system breaks down,” says Shafae.

Perishable produce is particularly difficult to track because it must be moved quickly out of the labeled case to the restaurant or homeowner’s kitchen. Once the product is out of the case, it is no longer possible to track where it was harvested and shipped.

“If I’m a grower, and I find out two days after shipment that a lot might have problems, then I let everyone I sent it to know. But by then, half of it has been sold. It’s the problem of perishability. You can’t let produce sit in the refrigerator; you sell it or smell it,” says Shafae.

### The Logistical Possibilities

As this technology becomes more wide-



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spread, one question for retailers involves how much the label and software will cost to use effectively, and what they get for the money.

“The cost is minuscule. It’s pennies on the case, basically,” says Shafae.

FoodLogiQ’s Kennedy believes the total cost of traceability labeling will be from a half-cent to 2 cents per case. Within that range, the cost will depend largely on the size of the operation.

Some believe the definitive answer to the return on this investment will come with the next large-scale epidemic of produce-borne illness. “The next time there is a produce item involved in a ‘recall,’ that will be the ultimate test,” predicts Vaché.

In the meantime, however, improved produce quality and inventory management, as well as safety, will more than likely have to be part of the return on this investment.

“More and more supply chain participants recognize the need to measure all segments of the cold chain and take action to improve each process. Monitoring the entire supply chain should be looked at as an investment in a solid food safety and quality program, and not strictly as a cost,” emphasizes Vaché.

Retailers will have many options for devel-



PHOTO COURTESY OF IFCO

oping the ability to use the labels, including options that allow use of the label to help facilitate inventory and cold chain management.

“The fact the pack date is printed helps rotate the stock properly to eliminate or reduce culls. This is an added benefit of the PTI label and not part of traceability in the event of a

product removal situation,” says Vaché.

As the case label becomes universal, produce software companies are racing to introduce products that will let retailers take full advantage of the information.

“We don’t sell software that only traces the product back; we sell enterprise resource planning software,” says John Carpenter, president of Silver Creek Software, a software company that offers financial management programs to address the business needs of fresh produce wholesalers, distributors, packers, shippers, processors, brokers and growers located in Boise, ID. “It’s basically a system that includes sales orders, purchase orders, inventory control, receivables, payables, general ledger and the warehouse.”

This software suite of functions comes in a package that is compatible with the “Wal-Mart label,” and Carpenter has already enjoyed increased orders for the package from people interested in traceability since the beginning of February.

Cold chain monitoring can also be done in real time as the produce moves from the field to the supermarket.

“The market now has new methods for in-

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# “The market now has new methods for in-transit monitoring — real-time monitoring as opposed to passive recorders. What this means now is we can be proactive in maintaining the correct temperate during transit.”

— Dan Vaché, United Fresh Produce Association

transit monitoring — real-time monitoring as opposed to passive recorders. What this means now is we can be proactive in maintaining the correct temperate during transit,” says Vaché.

Available hardware and software packages make it possible to monitor the cold chain as produce moves in the truck from the field to the distribution center.

“Smart Traxx portable attaches to the back of the trailer and to the cases. You have the benefit of load security; you can tell if the load has been tampered with. You have real-time access to your shipments. You know where they are, and if you program in a temperature range, we will let you know if the shipment is outside of that range, and if you need to do something,” says Locus Traxx’s Norman.

The widespread adoption of PTI-compliant labels will encourage software companies to search for entirely new packages of produce solutions.

“There are a growing number of technology vendors working to offer retailers and their suppliers solutions that accurately track and trace products throughout the food supply chains. These technologies address the market need of receiving, storing, sharing, and maintaining regulatory documentation, all-in-one convenient location,” says Park City’s Fields.

## Plastic Solutions

While traceability is an important trend, plastic technology continues to provide new ways to ship, store and display produce with a minimum of waste and a maximum protection against exposure to pathogens.

According to Jack Tilley, market research manager at Inline Plastics Corp., Shelton, CT, “An increasing trend is in perimeter real rigid plastic containers, such as in our Crystal Fresh and Visibly Fresh container lines; because the lids are sealed completely around the container to the base, it prevents containers from ‘popping open’ during transportation. The better seal also improves shelf-life of the food contents.”

Inline was among the pioneers introducing tamper-evident plastic containers to the produce department. “Our flagship Safe-T-

Fresh tamper evident, tamper-resistant product line helps prevent food tampering, increasing food safety at retail level,” says Tilley.

Plastic has also become the predominant material for containers used to bring produce to the store, because plastic has the economic

advantage of being reusable.

There is no end to the introduction of options in resealable and tamper-evident packaging to protect produce. Orlando, FL-based IFCO — an international logistics service provider operating a pool of over 180 million Reusable Plastic Containers (RPCs) globally to maximize the advantage of RPCs in controlling pathogens — is developing procedures to make sure its plastic containers are disinfected on schedule. Also, there could be new evidence in the next few months that exposure to pathogens is reduced by shipping produce in reusable plastic containers, rather than cardboard or wood.

Paul Pederson, director of food safety, at



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IFCO Systems, says, “We are using traditional sanitizing agents on reusable plastic containers, but now we’re monitoring the applications of those agents down to every 10 seconds to ensure that every single RPC is sanitized to our specifications. This helps keep the produce commodities transported to retail as safe as possible.”

Plastic containers can also be designed with more airflow, which should help slow down the development of pathogens. “The increased airflow of the reusable plastic container helps keep the temperature and moisture level of the commodities in the RPCs more even, thus extending the shelf life of those products. The RPC is also more sturdy than traditional card-

board packaging, dramatically reducing product damage at both the distribution center and the store,” says Pederson.

Airflow could be an essential piece of a program to reduce pathogens on the product as it travels to the produce department. “Proper airflow is so important in packaging, and everyone involved in the packaging industry sees their role in the proper design,” says Vaché. “Even though packaging is part of a marketing program, it is critical to maintain the proper form and function to help ensure product is protected and reaches the store or restaurant in prime condition. The RPC suppliers continually make design adjustments to meet the needs of specific commodities.”

IFCO commissioned Franklin Associates of Prairie Village, KS, (a division of the consulting firm ERG based in Lexington, MA) to conduct a study scientifically examining the extent to which reusable plastic actually reduces human exposure to toxins.

“While the comparisons of human- and eco-toxicity impacts are not as certain as comparative measures for solid waste reduction (and other key sustainability indicators), certain methods were recently updated, which bring more scientific consensus in these areas,” says Rebe Feraldi, Franklin Associates’ certified life cycle analysis practitioner and primary analyst for the study on exposure to toxins. **pb**

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# 10 Ways To Sell More Avocados

Learn how the industry is utilizing trends, consumer demand and flavor profiles to creatively market this rich-tasting fruit. **BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD**



PHOTO COURTESY OF BROOKS TROPICALS

Experts agree that offering ripe fruit and creating attractive displays are two influential tactics to increasing sales.

Most people know what put ‘California’ in the name of one of America’s favorite styles of sushi. It’s the avocado, a signature ingredient in the 1960s-created California roll. Today, consumer’s love affair with this rich-tasting fruit has spread from sushi to salads, sandwiches, and of course the widely popular staple dip, guacamole.

This bump in demand has boosted supplies out of California plus imports from the avocado’s native lands of Mexico, as well as Central and South America. It’s no wonder that from an imperceptible blip over a decade ago, the avocado category now contributes 2.5 percent of the produce department’s overall sales, according to IRI-data for the 52-weeks ending December 1, 2013, as provided by the Irvine, CA-headquartered Hass Avocado Board (HAB).

What’s more, consumers from coast-to-coast are now clamoring for avocados. In Anaheim, CA, headquarters of the 36-store Northgate González Markets, avocados are one of the Top 5 sellers in produce, reports Alfonso Cano, assistant produce director. “We have a huge competitive advantage because our stores are located right near California’s

avocado groves. The fruit is also a daily staple for our customers.”

In the East, avocados are a Top 10 item and a big part of the produce business at Acme Markets, a Philadelphia, PA-based chain with 113-stores in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware and Maryland, explains produce sales manager, Jay Schneider. “At one time in the past we would move only one pallet of avocados a week. Now, it is full truckloads. Avocados have become a more mainstream item here in the Northeast and a solid staple.”

Consumer demand for avocados is showing no signs of slowing down, so clearly there’s a ripe opportunity to continue growing sales across the country. Here’s how:

## 1. Know The Forecast

An estimated 1.7 billion pounds of Hass avocados are forecast to be sold in the U.S. in 2014, according to HAB. This figure is nearly identical to 2013, where the year closed out at 1.69 billion pounds.

The majority of this fruit will come from Mexico, which is the only year-round supplier of avocados to the U.S. market. Mexico contributed more than 60 percent of the avocados sold in the U.S. during the 2012/2013 fiscal year — or 1 billion-plus

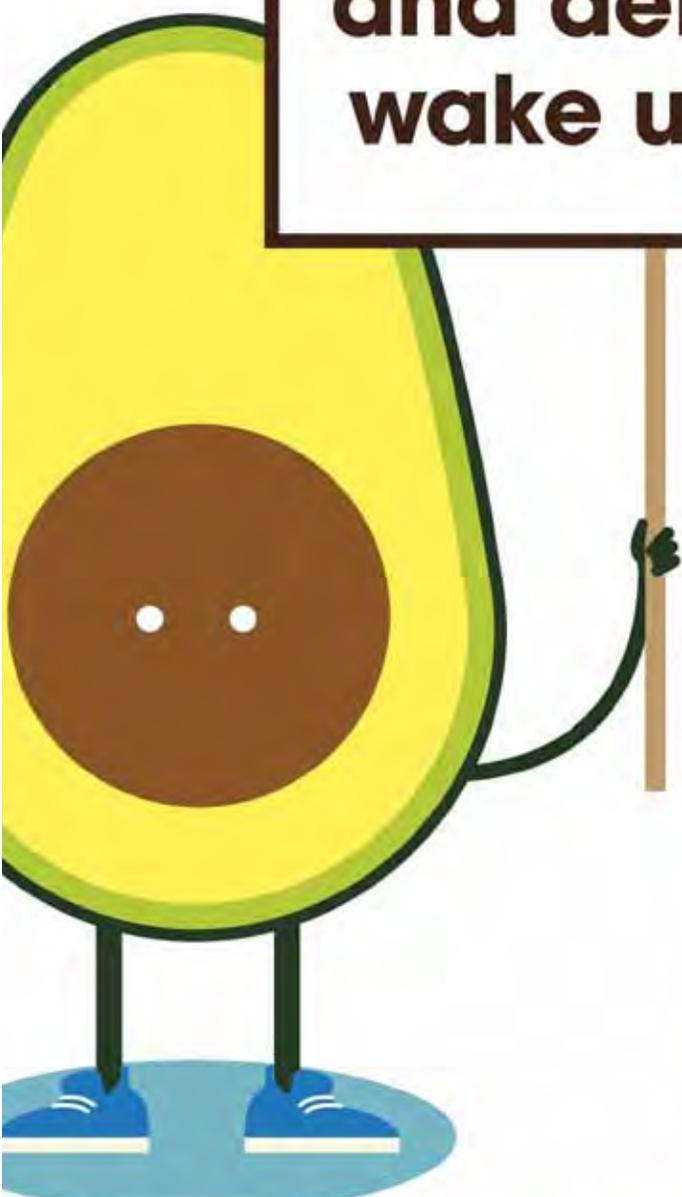
pounds — according to the Denver, CO-headquartered marketing agency, Avocados from Mexico, Inc. (AFM).

Current projections by HAB for 2014 volumes may be understated as Mexico has not yet given its total estimates, explains AFM’s vice president of trade and promotion, Maggie Bezar Hall. “New projections for the 2014/15 season are expected to be reviewed in May.”

California’s avocado crop is projected shorter this year at 325 million pounds versus around 500 million pounds in 2013. The fact that the state has enjoyed back-to-back record years may play into this as avocados are traditionally alternate-bearing crops.

Jan DeLyser, vice president of marketing for the Irvine, CA-based California Avocado Commission (CAC), says, “The 325 million pounds is only slightly under our 10-year average. What we will see is the same weekly volume and good promotional opportunities this year as last, but in a tighter window. We’re looking at mid-April to Labor Day rather than March to October.”

“Our Peruvian avocado imports will be starting in late April,” says Doug Meyer, vice president of sales and marketing for West Pak Avocado, Inc., in Murrieta, CA. “It will be a nice complement to help offset this year’s lighter



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California crop. This will be the third season that Peru has shipped their fruit to the U.S. and we are optimistic they will send considerably more fruit than last year.”

The Peruvian Avocado Commission (PAC), headquartered in Washington, DC, estimates 90 to 100 million pounds of avocados will be shipped to the U.S. during this coming June to September — more than double last season.

Chile was expected to export more than 70 million pounds of avocados to the U.S. during its October 2013 to March 2014 season, according to the Chilean Avocado Importers Association (CAIA), based in Washington, DC. The U.S. is facing competition for Chile’s fruit by Chile itself as well as Europe; therefore Chile is not a dominant supplier of avocados to the U.S.

The Dominican Republic and New Zealand export small quantities of avocados to the U.S., primarily in December.

Spain received approval to export avocados to the U.S. as of January 2014. The country anticipates shipping around 500,000 pounds across the Atlantic this year. Spain’s avocado season runs from December to June.

“In the next three to five years, Hass avocado volume will continue to grow. The demand

growth for avocados in the U.S market will stimulate increased supply volumes from global sources,” says Bruce Dowhan, vice president and general manager of Giumarra Agricom International, LLC, in Escondido, CA.

**2. Maximize SKU Count**

The avocado display at Northgate González Markets routinely features three SKUs of avocados and sometimes even more, explains Cano. “We carry a large, a medium/small and a four-count bag. These are all the Hass variety. We carry other varieties too when available seasonally.”

“The average number of avocado SKUs retailers are carrying increased to three or four and this is a positive trend,” says West Pak’s Meyer. “As avocado programs mature, retailers found that adding SKUs can continue to drive growth and profit.”

Top retail performers, adds AFM’s Bezart Hall, “will offer a minimum of three SKUs plus an organic SKU.”

The Hass variety represented 94 percent of avocado category dollar sales for the 52 weeks ending December 1, 2013, according to HAB supplied IRI data. However, there is opportunity to add incremental sales by offering other

varieties too.

“There are seven commercially grown avocado varieties,” says the CAC’s DeLyser. “One that is great eating is the Reed. It’s available from late summer to mid fall and gaining traction with some retailers.”

Zutano avocados, Bacon and green-skinned avocado varieties are featured for sale when available at Northgate González Markets. “Each has a different look and taste,” says Cano. “They are usually low volume, but they do add to our sales.”

Mary Ostlund, director of marketing for Brooks Tropicals, Inc., in Homestead, FL, offers a creative way to display multiple avocado varieties. “Consumers want to know more about what they eat, so show them the avocado ‘family tree.’ Build a display resembling a tree using our green-skinned SlimCados and other varieties as the leaves, and guacamole mixes and other guacamole/salsa ingredients as the trunk. The tree’s branches are the low hanging fruit for easy fruit selection. The avocado ‘family tree’ helps consumers realize there are lots of different kinds of avocados to be enjoyed like apples.”

The best-selling size of avocado at Acme Markets is large or 48 count, while customers at Northgate González Markets like a choice of

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**“One of the best ways to grow demand is to give the fruit visibility within stores as avocados tend to be impulse buys.”**

— Jose Rossignoli, C.H. Robinson

two sizes of avocados.

William Tarleton, director of marketing communication for Mission Produce Inc., in Oxnard, CA, says, “This year’s crop out of Mexico will feature size 48 and smaller.”

Meanwhile, “California will have a better range of sizes this year, unlike last year when we had more small fruit,” says the CAC’s DeLyser.

Small-sized avocados are often sold bagged. Sales of bagged avocados have increased 129 percent in volume and by 106 percent in dollars between 2009 and 2013, according to data supplied by HAB. This increase has not appeared to cannibalize bulk sales.

While bulk avocados account for a majority of avocado purchases, explains Jose Rossignoli, strategic category manager at C.H. Robinson Worldwide, Inc., in Eden Prairie, MN, “bagged avocados are growing at a much faster rate and are capturing an increasing share of the category. As consumers get more adventurous and are looking for ideas to use avocados, the retail space on bags is used to communicate information about the fruit and offer suggestions for preparation or additional resources. We offer Green Giant® Fresh-brand avocados in bulk as well as mesh bags and stand-up pouch bags.”

Organic avocados are a small slice of the category, representing 1 percent of volume and 2 percent of category dollars during the 52 weeks ending December 1, 2013, according to HAB-supplied IRI data.

“Many shoppers want organic products and this includes avocados,” says Rob Wedin, vice president of fresh sales and marketing for Calavo Growers, Inc., in Santa Paula, CA.

**3. Sell Ripe Fruit**

Ripe avocados sell. This is something produce professionals at Acme Markets discovered when they switched over to a ripe program five years ago and instantly saw a sales increase. “Most customers want to purchase it and have it the same day rather than wait,” explains Acme



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHILEAN FRESH FRUIT ASSOCIATION

Markets’ Schneider. “Having ripe fruit available was a big win with our customer base.”

The selling power of ripe fruit is so strong at Northgate González Markets that the retailer started ripening its own avocados in 2011. “Our customers shop four to five times a week, and they want ripe avocados just like they want ripe bananas, tomatoes and papayas,” says Cano. “We don’t worry about shrink. The risk of loss of a small percentage of fruit is far outweighed by the increase in sales by having ripe on display.”

Ripeness is second only to an eye-catching and abundant display of avocados in a shopper’s purchase decision hierarchy, according to HAB’s 2013-published, *Shopper Motivations and Influences: Driving Hass Avocado Sales at Retail, Qualitative Path-to-Purchase Study*.

“We encourage retailers to offer avocados at varying degrees of ripeness so that consumers can use them that day, or in a few days,” says Giumarra Agricom’s Dowhan. “An ideal retail program would include both preconditioned and hard fruit — not just ripe avocados. Consumers should have a choice when they walk into the produce department.”

**4. Drive Sales In Mature Markets**

“Mature markets for avocado sales are primarily in the West and South Central regions of the U.S.,” says Emiliano Escobedo, HAB’s executive director. “Cities such as Los Angeles, Phoenix, Denver, Portland, Seattle, Dallas and Houston are prime examples.

“Just because these markets are developed, doesn’t mean there’s a slowdown in sales. Even in mature markets avocado demand continues to increase.”

The CAC’s DeLyser agrees. “Los Angeles is the largest market for avocados in the U.S. Yet, in the third quarter of 2013, volume was up 3 percent.”

In mature markets, avocados are consumed much more frequently as a meal component when compared with other fruits, explains C.H. Robinson’s Rossignoli. “The way to generate sales is by positioning avocados with other items that complement it in a meal like salad or sandwich items.”

Additional ways to drive demand in developed avocado markets, according to HAB’s Path-to-Purchase Study, are giving consumers permission to buy with feel-good nutrition messages, offering an assortment of sizes and price points, and setting up displays in multiple locations.

**5. Boost Purchases In New Markets**

“The fastest growing markets for avocados in the U.S. are the Northeast, Southeast and Mid-South,” says HAB’s Escobedo. “This growth ranges from 21 to 27 percent in volume and from 21 to 25 percent in dollars over the last year. Other opportunity markets are in the Great Lakes and Plains regions.”

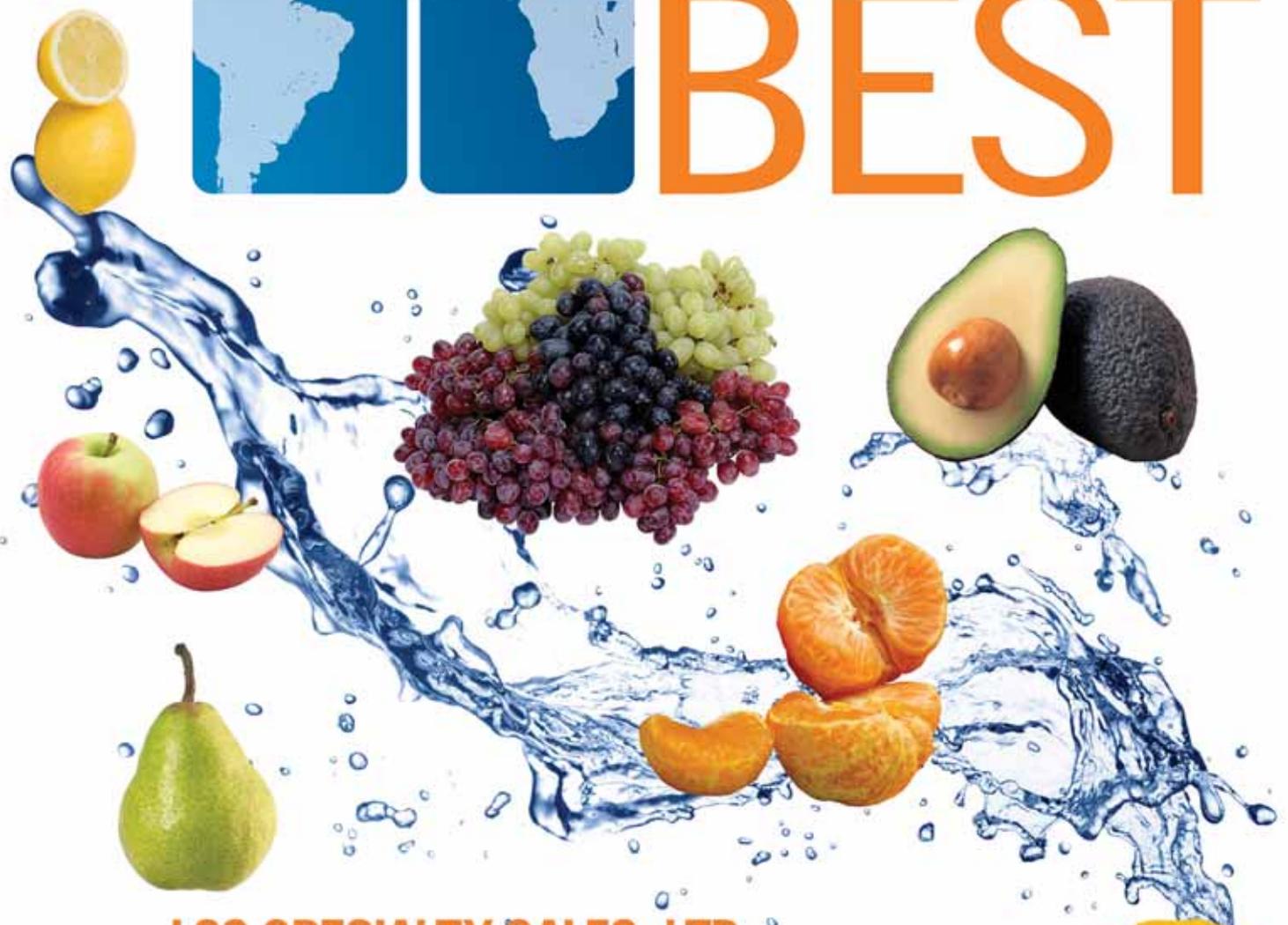
Special pricing is a good way to encourage trial of avocados. However, “one of the best ways to grow demand is to give the fruit visibility within stores as avocados tend to be impulse buys,” explains C.H. Robinson’s Rossignoli.

“We have a dedicated end cap for avocados that is 3 to 4-foot wide,” says Acme Markets’ Schneider.

“Education is key to increasing avocado sales in newer markets, whether it’s in-store demonstrations or recipe integration at the



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store level, to familiarize consumers with the item,” asserts C.H. Robinson’s Rossignoli.

### 6. Go Beyond Guacamole

Guacamole is the gateway for many consumers to try avocados for the first time, but this application is far from the only way to enjoy this versatile fruit. For example, according to the Spring 2013 released consumer tracking study by HAB, titled *A Look at Fresh Avocado Consumers’ Attitudes, Awareness and Usage*, while 63 percent of consumers in the six

months prior had used avocados to make guacamole, 60 percent also used the fruit in salads, 51 percent on sandwiches, 48 percent ate the fruit plain, 34 percent enjoyed them on hamburgers, 33 percent cut avocados up with other fruits and vegetables, 32 percent used the fruit as a main dish topping, 30 percent as an appetizer other than guacamole, 22 percent used avocados in a sauce or dip for an entrée, and 20 percent cut them in half and stuffed with other ingredients.

In addition, a consumer tracking study

conducted in September 2013 by research and strategy firm, Bovitz Inc., based in Los Angeles, CA, on behalf of the CAC showed that 16 percent of consumers questioned said they used avocados in baking, up from 10 percent in 2012.

Retailers say cross-merchandising is a great way to put these ideas in shoppers’ minds.

“Avocados are displayed next to tomatoes at Acme Markets,” says Schneider. “Most of the time our customers are putting both of these ingredients in a salad, so it’s a natural tie-in.”

Cano, at Northgate González Markets, ensures avocados are merchandised adjacent to the tomatoes, green onions, cilantro and radishes within the produce department for salsa- and guacamole-making, as well as in the meat department for tacos and guacamole burgers; in the bakery with crusted buns (called *bolillos*) for preparing hearty sandwiches or tortas; and in the chip aisle on clip strips for snacking.

Driving diversity across the supermarket has been AFM’s focus for the 2013/14 season, says Bezart Hall. “We’ve created strong partnerships with consumer packaged goods companies to spread the word on the versatility of avocados through multiple touch points and multimedia tools,” she says.

“This includes coupons, new recipes, advertising, shelf talkers (small signs displayed on store shelves that call attention to advertised items), demos and multiple secondary display materials. Companies such as Mission Foods and La Tortilla Factory, chips and tortillas (chip aisle), Cholula Hot Sauce (sauce aisle), Crown Imports or Heineken USA (liquor aisle), and American Egg Board (dairy aisle) offer the opportunity to cross-merchandise in other sections of the supermarket as well as in the power aisles.”

“Recipes can increase sales of avocados, especially if they encourage the consumer to use avocados as a substitute in every day meals or as a healthy component in snacks,” says C.H. Robinson’s Rossignoli. “We promote a variety of recipes online, including avocado stuffed cherry tomatoes, avocado-corn salsa and a variety of smoothie recipes.”

This season, the CAC will spotlight snacking as part of a new, fully-integrated promotional campaign. Avocado snacking opportunities will be communicated in a number of ways such as recipe ideas shared on social media, recipe tear pads at point-of-sale, on-pack offers with complementary ingredients, in-store broadcasts and through a public relations campaign using chefs, and registered dietitians as spokespersons.

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## 7. Tout The Good-For-You Message

Avocados once had a ‘bad-for-you’ stigma. Today, says Northgate González Markets Cano, “We know the fat in avocados is good for us.”

Touting the avocado’s nutritional benefits is a potent way to promote the fruit. This is especially true for heavy consumers (those who consume 37 to 120 pieces of fruit annually) and super heavy consumers (those who consume more than 120 avocados each year). These customers represent 54 percent of all avocado buyers, however they purchase 90 percent of the fruit. What’s more, heavy and super heavy users place a greater importance on the nutritional benefits of avocados than other groups, according to HAB’s Spring 2013-released Avocado Tracking Study. In fact, more than 50 percent of these shoppers valued the fact that avocados provide nearly 20 essential nutrients and contain antioxidants and good fats.

“As an industry, if we fully leverage the great nutritional story for avocados, we should be able to increase sales among both mature and newer market consumers across the U.S.,” says Giumarra Agricom’s Dowhan.

## 8. Price It Right

Deep discounts aren’t needed to move avocados. In fact, “With the tremendous growth in demand, retailers have been successfully promoting avocados at higher prices than ever before,” says Dowhan. “Showcasing the product to the consumers in an ad has shown to stimulate sales at price levels that are fair for growers, and produce effective margins for the retailers,” he says.

Cano at Northgate González Markets concurs. “We promote avocados up to 48 weeks

a year, but we don’t run any crazy ads such as 4 for 99 cents. Our game plan is to cater to our regular customers who are looking for good quality rather than chase the cherry pickers.”

Acme Markets’ Schneider will put avocados on the cover of the chain’s circular a few times each quarter at a sale price of 10 for \$10. “We get a significant bump in sales, especially when coupled with a front feature table display,” he says.

There are many effective pricing strategies for avocados, says C.H. Robinson’s Rossignoli. “We found that nearly two-thirds of avocados are price-promoted in multiples; for example, 5 for \$5 or 2 for \$3.”

Avocado sales are sensitive to price fluctuations, according to the January 2014 report, *Understanding Retail Price to Drive Hass Avocado Sales*, by HAB. Consumers will increase their purchases when price goes down. However, they don’t reduce their buys by the same extent when prices rise. This fact gives the retailer the ability to use pricing to drive incremental sales while still protecting their margins.

The report shows that large avocados have a greater price sensitivity than small fruit, explains HAB’s Escobedo. “Price discounting large avocados from \$1.50 to \$1.30 a piece will not increase sales as much as reducing the price to 99-cents. At the same time, you can achieve good movement on small fruit with a 20-cent reduction or by dropping the price from 70-cents to 50-cents each.”

## 9. Theme Promotions

Sports and holidays are popular promotional themes for avocados. “Super Bowl is the

biggest,” says Acme Markets’ Schneider. “We’ll tie in with our in-store made deli tortilla chips. It’s a good way to get customers to buy more avocados for guacamole.”

Cano at Northgate González Markets plans promotions on both Super Bowl and Cinco de Mayo. “In the run-up to these events, we work with the different trade commissions and use their themed point-of-sale and secondary display units as well as run display and sales contests.”

“Two other holidays ripe for avocado promotion are St. Patrick’s Day, by tying in with the green theme, and Halloween, where retailers can promote a recipe for Ghoulish Guacamole,” says Karen Brux, managing director for the Chilean Fresh Fruit Association, headquartered in Santiago, Chile.

“We plan retail promotions throughout the entire calendar year. Because consumers emotionally tie avocados to holidays and other celebratory events, there are great opportunities to promote avocados all the way through the end of 2014,” says Giumarra Agricom’s Dowhan.

The AFM will launch a new promotion this month to promote avocados for a particular daypart. “We are partnering with the American Egg Board and Cholula Hot Sauce to create a winning breakfast for consumers,” explains Bezar Hall. “This partnership will enhance usage of avocados for breakfast and promote nutritional benefits while increasing consumption.”

## 10. Seek New Opportunities

Twenty-seven percent of avocados were sold during 13 key holidays in 2012, according to HAB’s 2012-published retail purchase behavior study, *Holiday and Events (January-December 2012 vs. 2011)*. What this means is that 73 percent of avocado sales weren’t holiday-related. There are many windows of opportunity to increase sales that simply correspond to good availability.

C.H. Robinson’s Rossignoli recommends, “Promoting during the fall and winter months when Mexican imports to the U.S. are in full swing.”

Another significant high volume time, says HAB’s Escobedo, “is early spring, between Super Bowl and Cinco de Mayo.”

The opportunity to sell avocados between major holiday promotional events is great, explains West Pak’s Meyer, “Because volume doesn’t just ramp up for the promotion and then just fall off. Plus, each country of origin has its peaks in quality and availability at different times all throughout the year.” **pb**

# As Consumption Rises, Blueberries Receive Special Attention

A look at best practices to marketing and merchandising blueberries. **BY KEITH LORIA**



In a recent poll, nearly 60 percent of consumers said they were very likely to purchase blueberries based on information they saw on their preferred social media channels.

**B**lueberries may be the oldest known plants still thriving today; as they have been traced back more than 13,000 years, but that maturity hasn't slowed the little blue dynamo down. In fact, the reverse is true. Mark Villata, executive director at the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council (USHBC), notes that demand for blueberries is growing by leaps and bounds.

"As they seek to convey the health and lifestyle benefits of blueberries to more consumers, marketers have much to gain from web-based communications," says Villata. "According to our research, 57 percent of consumers report having seen news stories about the healthfulness of blueberries, and more than 50 percent say they found the news online." Additionally, nearly 60 percent say they are very likely to purchase blueberries based on information they've seen on their preferred social media channels.

For 2014, the blueberry industry teamed up with Alison Sweeney, host of NBC's "The Biggest Loser," to convince more Americans that adding blueberries to their diet is a little change that can reap big rewards. According to Villata, this partnership is already generating increased awareness and appeal for

blueberries, particularly among the key consumer group of women between the ages of 25 to 45.

Sharon Robb, national marketing manager for North Bay Produce, Traverse City, MI, says the biggest challenge for the industry is to increase consumption as much as possible to absorb the significant production increases worldwide that continue year after year.

"There's a buzz about opening new export markets and also tapping into new consumers domestically by making blueberries more readily available at nontraditional locations," she says. "We must get blueberries into new outlets throughout the U.S. This includes offering them at schools, restaurants, convenience stores, and event venues, etc."

Additional opportunities include marketing to foodservice vendors, baby boomers who are concerned with health, and athletes and fitness-focused consumers who are looking for a flavorful and nutritious addition to their diets.

Although blueberries are one of the only fruits native to North America, they are enjoyed worldwide in a diverse range of cuisines from Asia to the Mediterranean. They are also being grown in more places to meet demand.

Marco Nuques, West Coast sales manager for Giumarra International Berry, Los Angeles, CA, says there is more volume coming from new growing regions, such as Peru and Mexico.

## Retail Differentiator

Dovey Plain, marketing coordinator for Family Tree Farms, Reedley, CA, notes buyers' knowledge about varieties is definitely growing, especially when it comes to flavor.

"As blueberries continue to grow in popularity, buyers are looking for ways to differentiate their program from the competition, and flavor is a strong component of that," she says. "We're looking for ways to help distinguish our berries from 'run-of-the-mill' programs through recognizable labeling and new packaging options."

Victor Savanello, director of produce and floral for Iselin, NJ-based retailer co-op, Allegiance Retail Services, LLC, says blueberries always sell more when they are in pints.

"The imported 4.4- and 6-ounce containers are a necessary evil, but sales definitely lag when in those sizes," he says. "As far as merchandising goes, obviously you tie them in with the entire berry category, creating a 'Berry Patch' theme in your department."

Savanello says that when blueberries are on sale, it draws consumers to other varieties of berries. Conversely, he says, when blueberries are not on sale, other berries draw customers to the section and usually help promote some sales.

One savvy marketing tactic Allegiance's chain of stores has done is run ads showing that it gets blueberries from one grower who won the Blueberry Grower of the Year award from the NJ Vegetable Growers Association the previous season.

"Two distinct advantages we have, being a retailer with stores in New Jersey, is the Jersey Fresh program and the fact New Jersey is the blueberry capital of the U.S. in the summer," says Savanello. "We take advantage of the locally grown trend and have a label that our consumers identify with. For us, 'Top Crop' means 'from our backyard,' and the fresh produce consumer today identifies with that, trusts that, and comes out in droves for that."

### Selling Tactics

Consumers are very responsive to the health messages of blueberries so many in the industry believe an increased education on the health benefits of including berries in people's diets, combined with the knowledge of who's growing the product, is a powerful combination that can help increase sales.

"Education and transparency is a must," says Giumarra's Nuques. "Consumers are smart and want to know more about the products they buy and where they are coming from. We like to showcase our growers and let people know who's growing their product."

Oppenheimer's Quinn believes that blueberries are one of the most versatile items in produce — especially for snacks and to complement cereals and salads.

"By stocking and promoting a larger size unit and using signage to cue usage ideas, retailers can enjoy a higher ring per blueberry unit sale," he says. "Also, we see many retailers effectively grouping different kinds of berries together with comparable or line pricing; so a shopper who might just have had 'berries' in their minds, or on their list, will choose multiple packs instead of just one."

Steven Dandrea, owner of Dandrea Produce, Vinewood, NJ, agrees the industry can do more to get the message out to the consumer. He cites great campaigns from yesteryear of Anita Bryant and the Florida citrus industry, as well as California raisins as examples of what the blueberry industry should be doing.

"If you look at pistachios right now, they

are going through a phenomenal ad campaign with different celebrities, like Stephen Colbert," says Dandrea. "We need to do something similar. There are customers out there who we need to reach. We need to get our message out and find a new demographic of people who will try our berries."

To accomplish this, Dandrea thinks it wouldn't require much — just getting everyone together and trying some new marketing ideas.

Highbush Blueberry Council's Villata says retailers should be taking better advantage of signage, displays and cross-merchandising with items from other departments (yogurt,

granola, oatmeal, muffin mixes, etc.) to remind consumers that blueberries are a simple, beneficial and enjoyable addition to their diet. The company also offers copyright-free photography and graphics on its website for retailers to use year-round.

Another tip Villata offers is to engage a variety of audiences to keep blueberries top-of-mind for consumers. "The USHBC works with health professionals, supermarket RDs, chefs and other foodservice decision-makers, because consumers are often inspired to use more blueberries at home when they enjoy a good dish at a restaurant. For example: blueberry oatmeal at Starbucks or a blueberry

## Growers See Volume Increase And Variety Refinement

Nolan Quinn, berry category director for the Vancouver, British Columbia-based Oppenheimer Group, says in addition to the excitement of new growing areas, the industry is seeing refinement of the varieties that are being grown, and innovation and experimentation with new pack options.

"With fruit from key regions in Canada and the U.S., as well as Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Peru, and Uruguay, we are able to offer larger programs to retailers in the pack styles they prefer," he says. "We are moving toward bigger packs (like 2-pound clamshells) that have been successful in club formats and are gaining momentum at mainstream retail."

North Bay Produce is now offering a new ready-to-eat blueberry in a single-serve snack-size pack. Sharon Robb, national marketing manager for North Bay Produce, Traverse City, MI, explains the blueberries will be carefully washed, dried and packaged on state-of-the-art equipment with food safety in mind. The final product features a crush-resistant package that can easily fit into a lunch box, purse, or backpack for on-the-go snacking.

Cindy Jewell, director of marketing for California Giant Berry Farms, Watsonville, CA, says the total annual U.S. per capita consumption of fresh blueberries is 1.3 pounds, whereas 10 years ago it was 0.34 pounds.

"Based on the continued rise in consumption California Giant continues to increase volume each year to build our fresh blueberry program, and to have a greater share of the market to supply our key customers with year-round product," she says. "This year our volume is expected to increase by 20 percent overall."

Family Tree Farms has been planting steadily over the past five years in Mexico and has nearly completed its planned acreage.

"Most of those plants are approaching full production giving us big boosts in volume year over year for the next couple of years," says Dovey Plain, marketing coordinator for Family Tree Farms, Reedley, CA. "In Mexico, the varieties we grow are exclusive to Family Tree Farms. These varieties are from an Australian breeding program, and we are really enjoying introducing North American buyers and consumers to the powerful flavor profile of these berries."



**“Parents seeking an easy fruit they know kids will enjoy often turn to blueberries, knowing blueberries are high in antioxidants and especially good for you. I think it is more a matter of making the fruit accessible and appealing to parents purchasing for their kids, as opposed to marketing to kids directly.”**

— Nolan Quinn, Oppenheimer Group

chicken salad at Wendy’s,” he says. “Or when a health professional recommends blueberries to them in person, on TV, or online.”

Plain argues that nothing talks like a sample, and nothing could be easier to sample than blueberries.

“BOGO (buy one, get one free) promotions are great for increasing consumption,” Plain says. “Consumers are excited to get a good deal, but they also start looking for new ways to incorporate these ‘extra berries’ into their diet. By doing so, blueberries start to become more of a habit than a special treat.”

Teddy Koukoulis, director of blueberry operations for Wish Farms, Plant City, FL, says blueberries are a very strong category and highly promotable, which adds to the foot-traffic in the stores.

Koukoulis says recent studies show blueberries can help lower the risks for dementia and stroke. “Plus for those who are overweight — it is such a healthy snack, helping in our country’s efforts to fight obesity.

“You can’t expect a retailer to promote every product, so it’s really up to guys like ourselves and our growers to pull together funds and approach the marketing by touting these benefits.”

Koukoulis says there’s not enough packaging that highlights all blueberries can do, and that’s an industry-wide problem everyone needs to work on together. Wish Farms currently is developing a package, shaped like a coffee cup, which will encourage mothers to give blueberries to their kids.

### Child’s Play

Children are an important target segment of the consumer market as blueberries are ideal snacks due to their kid-friendly size, ease of preparation and sweet flavor. Of course, the health and delicious flavor of blueberries also appeal to moms.

“Parents seeking an easy fruit they know kids will enjoy often turn to blueberries,

knowing blueberries are high in antioxidants and especially good for you,” says Oppenheimer’s Quinn. “I think it is more a matter of making the fruit accessible and appealing to parents purchasing for their kids, as opposed to marketing to kids directly.”

This year, Family Tree Farms developed a special label aimed at kids called “Baby Blues,” which is a value package with a cartoon character designed to appeal to those with little ones.

Research from Cornell University demonstrates that using attractive names for healthy foods increases kids’ selection and consumption of these foods. Marketers are falling in line with this theory and characterizing blueberries in ways that appeal to kids — such as turning yogurt cups into yogurt topped with little blue dynamos, or fruit shakes into Halloween “boo-berry” shakes.

California Giant Berry Farms focuses a lot of its efforts including kids in its daily marketing efforts. “We have a kid’s section on our website and kid friendly recipes. We love seeing kids in the kitchen helping to prepare meals so they feel more connected with the end result, and excited to include our berries in their recipes,” says Jewell. “The more they are involved in preparing meals, the more likely they are to eat them.”

### Season By Season

Intuitively, summer holidays lend themselves well to blueberry dishes like pies and dessert crumbles, no doubt because domestic fruit is widely promoted and very good that

## Recipes For Retail Success

Blueberries are so versatile, and retailers who think outside of the typical breakfast, fruit salad, and dessert arenas open the door for many interesting uses. Berry category director for the Vancouver, British Columbia-based Oppenheimer Group, Nolan Quinn, has a favorite way to enjoy blueberries: simply a hand full of blueberries at any time of day. But here is a look at some other ideas to get the party going.

Cindy Jewell, director of marketing for California Giant Berry Farms, Watsonville, CA, recommends a Blueberry Gingerbread Loaf with Lime Glaze and Baked Blueberry Citrus Pears a la mode, both winners in the company’s recipe contest.

Speaking of contests, in the winter of 2013, the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council sponsored a very successful recipe contest — “Blueberries Meet Their Match” — which challenged bloggers to pair fresh, frozen, and/or dried blueberries with coconut, balsamic vinegar, rosemary, or bananas. The results were colorful, creative blueberry dishes developed by 140 food and lifestyle bloggers.

Sharon Robb, national marketing manager for North Bay Produce, Grand Rapids, MI, offers a recipe for “Blueberry, Strawberry and Jicama Salsa.” “The colors are vibrant and it brings the tastes of summer any time of year,” she says. “This salsa is also great with grilled fish or chicken. It is best eaten the day it is made.”

### Blueberry, Strawberry and Jicama Salsa

Ingredients:

- 1 cup fresh blueberries
- 1 cup diced strawberries
- 1 cup diced jicama
- 1/3 cup chopped cilantro
- 1/4 cup finely chopped red onion
- 2 Tbsp finely chopped jalapeño pepper, stemmed and seeded
- Juice of 1 large lime
- Salt, to taste
- Tortilla chips, for serving

Directions:

In a medium bowl, combine blueberries, strawberries, jicama, cilantro, red onion, jalapeño, and lime juice. Stir until well combined. Season with salt, to taste. Serve with tortilla chips at room temperature or chilled.

pb



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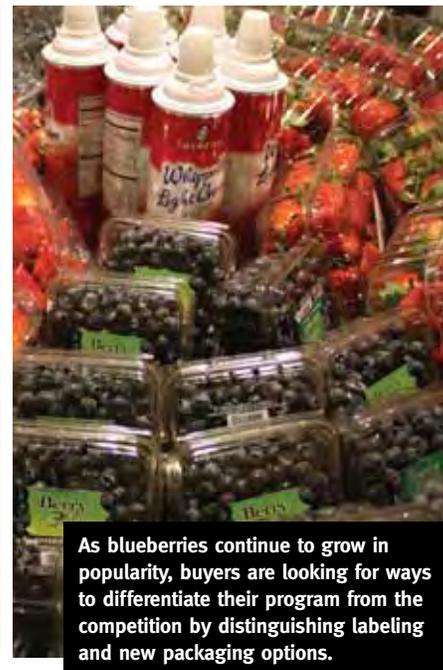
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As blueberries continue to grow in popularity, buyers are looking for ways to differentiate their program from the competition by distinguishing labeling and new packaging options.

## Organics Rise

Industry experts claim blueberries are the fastest growing berries for consumption, and not surprisingly, organic blueberry sales and production are starting to rise. Organic products remain important for consumers who are interested in fruit with attributes outside of the conventional realm.

“As far as overall sales, conventional is still very dominate, as the majority of producers are conventional,” says Marco Nuques, West Coast sales manager for Giumarra International Berry, Vernon, CA. “However, organic sales do increase significantly every year, incentivizing more growers to become certified organic to keep up with the demand.”

The Oppenheimer Group’s imported blueberry programs have been very popular this past winter, with growth in step with the overall organic category.

Organic blueberry demand continues to increase every year according to Sharon Robb, national marketing manager for North Bay Produce, Grand Rapids, MI.

“There are certainly times of the year where there’s an opportunity to really increase organic production,” she says. “When you look at the June to November time period, I would say demand probably exceeds the current supply.”

**pb**

**“As far as overall sales, conventional is still very dominate, as the majority of producers are conventional. However, organic sales do increase significantly every year, incentivizing more growers to become certified organic to keep up with the demand.”**

— Marco Nuques, Giumarra International Berry

time of year. Quinn says as more imported berries become available, the fruit will be used more often during the winter holidays as well.

According to Giumarra’s Nuques, blueberries can be featured prominently in stores during all four seasons. For winter, he suggests highlighting blueberries being used in traditional pies and desserts, as well as being incorporated into cocktails, appetizers, and salads. For summer and spring, retailers should appeal to those planning barbeques, and for fall, he suggests promoting jams, pies and preserves, as well as holding Halloween “boo-berry” promotions.

North Bay Produce’s Robb believes Memorial Day, being the kickoff to summer, is always a good time to promote.

“We usually see the domestic market switch from six-ounce clamshells to pints around this time so that is always a good time to promote,” she says. “The Fourth of July is also big because we are in the middle of domestic production and fresh blueberries are a must for any red, white and blue themed event.”

California Giant Berry Farms completed a

winter fresh blueberry promotion with Concord Foods that was a recipe contest using its social media channels, and it had great success with thousands of entries and some amazingly creative recipes.

“With the multiple growing regions today, we are emphasizing in our communications and marketing promotions that anytime is blueberry time,” says Jewell. “In the past, messaging was more about the great ways blueberries can be part of winter baking and really bring color and freshness to winter recipes that help to warm up the house with great smells and flavors.”

Even though blueberries continue to notch very strong consumption growth and get very favorable health buzz, many consumers do not purchase them on a regular basis.

“More presence on restaurant menus would go a long way toward taking blueberries mainstream, and the industry is starting to make some inroads there,” says Family Tree Farms’ Plain. “Retail stores could also help by featuring fresh blueberries in prepared salads, bakery and other ready-to-eat items.”

**pb**

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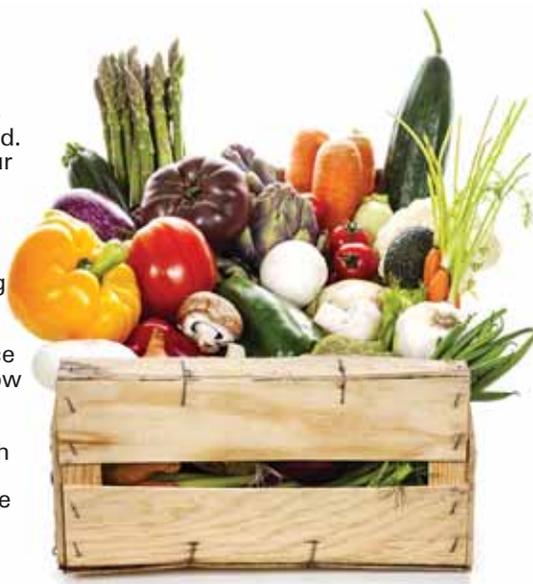




A note from Jim Prevor,  
Editor-In-Chief,  
PRODUCE BUSINESS magazine

Every once in a while, the opportunity presents itself to do well while also doing good. Such is the case with this, our thirteenth 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 growers find outlets for production and help the world by encouraging a more healthful diet.



Increasing sales of fruits and vegetables is not only a matter of big industry initiatives. 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 promotions just to keep consumer interest high.

Retailers, please take the time to review this offering carefully. When did you last think about how to increase sales of carrots? Or papayas? Or artichokes? Here is a chance to think of merchandising 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, 20 or 30 years ago? Here is an opportunity to

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revisit tactics 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'." Retailers today are in a position to expect more support from producers, and intellectual capital is just about the most valuable support one can provide. So kudos to our Masters of Merchandising sponsors.

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 2014 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.

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While apples are a staple of the produce department, retailers can increase excitement and sales by focusing on advertising local, buying local and supporting their local agricultural community. Two thirds of North America's population lies within 600 miles of New York'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. Increasing consumer interest in local and farm fresh produce turns a bit of extra merchandising into extra sales.

### POINT-OF-PURCHASE AND DISPLAY

Use creative messaging to communicate with consumers in English and Spanish — easily done with NYAA's eye-catching and informative point-of-purchase materials.

Take advantage of technology to reach consumers with effective in-store video clips. NYAA provides an easy online link to a number of educational and promotional videos.

Provide signage highlighting varietal name and attributes including flavor profile and if good for baking or cooking.



Link bulk apple displays to value-added apple products such as gallons of fresh, New York cider or impulse-catching single-serve bottles, thus reminding customers of other ways to get their apples.

### PROMOTION

The NYAA offers creative and customized promotional programs for retailers to use to increase apple sales.

Promotion of health benefits and cause-marketing is always a win for all. Over the years, we teamed up with the American Cancer Society and other charitable foundations to raise cancer research funds through the sale of New York apples. We partnered with retailers across the Northeast 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!"

Health oriented promotion is backed by research. NYAA has promoted numerous research studies about helping to prevent cancer by eating more fruits and vegetables as well as more apples. In today's weight-conscious world, customers can always be reminded how fresh apples are a healthy alternative to other higher calorie or higher fat options.

Sampling apples at store level is always a draw. Focus on providing samples of new and unique varieties to acquaint consumers with the varying flavor profiles of apples.

In this ever-changing world of multi-media and instant access to everything always, the NYAA has started adapting to meet the needs of consumers. Working together with retailers to utilize innovative digital marketing tools such as online and kiosk couponing is a sure-fire way to increase sales.



### Quick Tips

Market apples as a grab-and-go snack item by placing popular varieties in baskets around the store — near the sandwich or sub bar, carryout or coffee counter, or at checkout.

Highlight LOCAL! Consumers will gravitate to local apples.

Educate customers on the wonderful variety of apples. Use NYAA's variety guide for easy information access at store level.

### Out-Of-The-Box Promotional Ideas

Coordinate promotion with NYAA's social media resources. Link in-store and on-line promotions to the NYAA's consumer video series. The series highlights a wealth of apple information including nutritional aspects, how to better incorporate apples into your diet, and a history of cider.

Take coupons to the next level! Use digital advertising. NYAA reports great success with retailers using online click-to-clip coupon programs, Facebook programs and instant couponing at store level.



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### 90 YEARS OF GROWING HEIRLOOM ARTICHOKES

In 1924, Ocean Mist Farms was founded by Italian immigrants growing artichokes and Brussels sprouts along the Pacific Ocean's Monterey Bay in Castroville, California. Ninety years later, Ocean Mist Farms is still owned by four generations of family farms, the largest grower of artichokes in the U.S., and now grows a line of more than 30 fresh vegetables year-round in regions of California, Arizona and Baja Mexico.

### HISTORY OF HEIRLOOM ARTICHOKES

The Heirloom variety is the "original" variety of artichoke brought to California in the early 1900's by Italian immigrants. It is the variety the U.S. fresh artichoke industry was built upon, and today it is still the preferred variety of chefs and culinary foodies who cook with fresh artichokes.



### WHAT MAKES IT AN HEIRLOOM ARTICHOKE?

Like a family recipe, this unique variety of artichoke grows only from the same root stock that has been passed down to each generation of Ocean Mist Farms family farmers for more than 90 years — and never from seed.

### GROWING REGION AND SEASONALITY

Ocean Mist Farms Heirloom Artichokes grow only in the region of Castroville, California — "The Artichoke Capital."

This variety is seasonal with peak volume between March and May.



### UPC/PLU STICKERS

Each Ocean Mist Farms Heirloom artichoke will feature a red sticker branding the variety with a PLU and stacked UPC code. The stickers (available in all sizes of artichokes) are applied in the field during harvest.

Ocean Mist Farms worked with our packaging partner to create a special food-safe adhesive.

### MERCHANDISING HEIRLOOM ARTICHOKES

Fresh Heirloom Artichokes stack well for building large end-cap displays that will prompt impulse purchases. Using special point of sale cartons,



signage or display bins will help build seasonal excitement as well — all of which is available to order on [Oceanmist.com](http://Oceanmist.com).

Cross-merchandising with commonly used ingredients such as fresh lemons, bread crumbs, olive oil and fresh garlic will entice impulse purchases.

### NUTRITION INFORMATION DRIVES SALES

The antioxidant level of fresh artichokes is another powerful merchandising opportunity. Seventy-nine percent of survey respondents noted the fact that the artichokes are higher in antioxidants than any other vegetable. This knowledge has a significant impact on future purchases.



### ARTICHOKECLUB.COM

Got Chokes? Join the 40,000 Artichoke Club members for a weekly chance to win free artichokes, receive monthly artichoke news, recipe ideas and peak of season "Arti-Alerts" for where to find artichokes on sale. Ocean Mist Farms features all Heirloom Artichoke retail promotions with their Artichoke Club members based on where they live.



### SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media tools, such as Facebook and Twitter, allow us to communicate advertised specials to a targeted audience. Retailers can also leverage their internal corporate digital teams for promotional support. [facebook.com/californiaartichokes](https://facebook.com/californiaartichokes) [twitter.com/artichokerecipe](https://twitter.com/artichokerecipe)



### OCEAN MIST FARMS

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## CHEF PREFERRED

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When it comes to creating dishes, chefs prefer the one and only Ocean Mist Farms heirloom artichoke. Chefs understand that using only best-in-class artichokes inspire the ultimate eating experience.

Discover the one and only Ocean Mist Farms heirloom artichoke at [oceanmist.com](http://oceanmist.com)



Heirloom  
Artichokes  
PEAK SEASON  
March-May



Offering asparagus year round increases sales! Today's consumer wants health and convenience and fresh asparagus fits in perfectly. Promoting its nutrition, ease of preparation and great flavor will grow the category all year. Asparagus from Peru, a principal supplier, allows retailers to complement other seasonal sources and offer quality product year-round.

At retail level, count on consistent, quality Peruvian asparagus to build sales and provide ample displays of product throughout the year.

At food service level, Peruvian asparagus serves as an interesting versatile side to maximize flavor and interest on plates.

### VISIBILITY MOVES PRODUCT

Make sure asparagus is displayed prominently. It may not be on shoppers' lists but eye-catching displays will result in sales. Consider these key elements to help boost sales:

- **Showcase Color:** Use of multiple colors makes for attractive display alternatives. Fresh asparagus is readily available in green, white and purple (all available from Peru). Showcase unique colors, like purple or white, by adding these products to displays where



fresh green asparagus is featured to create interesting and impactful displays.

- **Visibility:** Size sells!!!

Strategically display the category to ensure consumers see it. Many successful retailers display asparagus at the front of the produce department and utilize island displays and corner caps to guarantee consumers see it. Making sure displays are especially visible and well-positioned in the produce department will gain sales.

- **Variety:** Fresh asparagus now comes in a wide variety of sizes and packaging to enhance display practices and meet consumers' needs. Display several different packaging options to increase convenience for customers. Large display tables of different product forms (whole spear bunches, microwave tray-packed trimmed spears, packaged green and/or white asparagus, packaged asparagus tips, white and purple asparagus) will increase sales and add profits to the produce department.

### KEY PROMOTION AREAS

**Holiday Opportunity:** Focus special promotion on fresh asparagus at holiday time, especially during Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas. Retailers can also capitalize on the opportunity to promote asparagus during the summer for picnics or barbecues.

**Pair It Up:** Advantageously cross-merchandising asparagus with other grocery items will build asparagus sales and add additional ring for the department, including salad, oils

and dressings, with deli or seafood items, and wines. During the summer, place a display next to barbecue-style meats and fish to promote grilling. Value packaged or tray-packed fresh asparagus can also be cross-merchandised with packaged salad. Fresh and packaged asparagus can be cross-merchandised in other departments to provide a meal solution for customers.

#### Promote Alternatives:

Selling packs of multiple colors together may encourage consumers to try a new color. Retailers can also use alternative pricing methods, such as by the bunch instead of the pound, to showcase the value of the product. Value-added and packaged fresh product can be used as part of a meal solutions offering. Use signage to stress usage ideas including "tasty party item", "easy to barbecue", "microwaveable", and "quick and healthy snack."

**Highlight Nutrition:** Health-related promotion is a definite method of gaining sales. Asparagus contains a host of health benefits:

- Asparagus is low in calories
- Naturally fat-and cholesterol-free
- Good source of potassium, Vitamin A, Vitamin C
- Rich in rutin and folacin, which has been proven important in the duplication of cells for growth and repair of the body.

### WORK WITH SUPPLIERS

To assist retailers in managing the category, the Peruvian Asparagus Importers

Association (PAIA) has developed a Category Management Plan Outline for Fresh Peruvian Asparagus, available from any PAIA member or the association office at [prestige@1scom.net](mailto:prestige@1scom.net).

To increase household penetration and reach new consumers, a number of Peruvian asparagus importers are working closely with suppliers to increase the category through value-added options — including microwaveable and ready-to-eat designed for both retail and foodservice. Ask your supplier about the available options.

### CARE AND HANDLING

Asparagus should be bright-looking with closed, firm tips. The butt-end of fresh asparagus should be cleanly cut and sufficiently hydrated. Display under refrigeration or with the butt-end in water or touching a wet pad. Be sure to monitor the condition of water in display trays and change frequently. In the backroom, keep asparagus cold (34-36 degrees F) and moist (damp room) prior to display. Fresh asparagus is not ethylene-sensitive but is susceptible to absorbing very strong odors.

### FIVE WAYS TO GROW THE CATEGORY

1. Visibility sells! Build large, prominent displays.
2. Highlight simplicity. Communicate easy preparation instructions such as steaming or grilling to customers.
3. Promote alternative colors, especially for home chefs and entertaining.
4. Cross-merchandise with proteins or dressings.
5. Focus on nutrition and health.

### Out-Of-The-Box Promotional Ideas

Provide customers a meal idea by displaying asparagus and a protein together.

Promote mixed-color packs for holiday or summer entertaining.

Offer value-added or packaged fresh product for an easy convenient side dish.



PERUVIAN ASPARAGUS IMPORTERS ASSOCIATION

Contact: Priscilla Lleras

817.793.3133

[prestige@1scom.net](mailto:prestige@1scom.net)



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### CALIFORNIA AVOCADOS – LOYALTY AND MARKETING SUPPORT

Sixty-three percent of retailers that merchandise California Avocados indicated that loyalty and marketing support were key reasons for carrying California Avocados.

*\*2013 California Avocado Retail Survey*

### CALIFORNIA FRESH SNACKING IS A KEY INITIATIVE

Consumers are eating snacks throughout the day and some snacks are replacing main meals. The demand for guilt-free snacks is on the rise. Retailers can capture a larger share of the “buy and consume” behavior by rotating the types of items stocked near the entrance or check-out counter to align with the time of day. California Avocados are a perfect ready-to-eat option as a tasty choice for a snack that fits into a healthy lifestyle. They’re irresistibly rich in flavor and are naturally cholesterol and sodium free, containing the good fats the body needs.

Snacking with California Avocados is being promoted with the development of new 100-calorie recipes, and a snacking microsite. Additional California Avocado nutrition information and recipes are available online at [CaliforniaAvocado.com/healthy-living](http://CaliforniaAvocado.com/healthy-living).



### CONSUMER MARKETING AND RETAIL SUPPORT TO PROMOTE CALIFORNIA AVOCADOS FOR BREAKFAST

Promoting avocados for breakfast is a growth opportunity for avocado consumption. Retail sales of



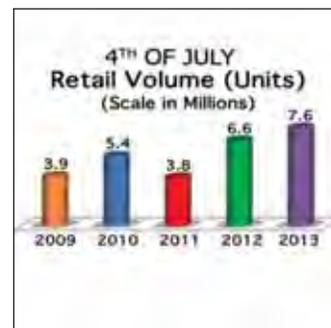
California Avocados are being supported with breakfast-themed promotions. Breakfast provides an important start to the day, and avocados make a great addition to any morning menu. They work well for spring merchandising events including Easter, Mother’s Day and Cinco de Mayo.

California Avocados encourage demand by increasing awareness of the breakfast meal with a *Wake Up to Breakfast with California Avocados* recipe booklet, which can be ordered at [CaliforniaAvocado.com/retailers](http://CaliforniaAvocado.com/retailers). Retailers can include the breakfast recipe booklets on their California Avocado displays. California Avocados are also being promoted through online and social media outreach to support the breakfast marketing initiative with a microsite that features fast recipes for use during the week and special weekend breakfast recipes, as well as nutrition information.

### AMERICAN SUMMER HOLIDAYS = CALIFORNIA AVOCADO SALES OPPORTUNITIES

American Summer Holidays (Memorial Day, Flag Day, Father’s Day, 4th of July and Labor Day) are the perfect time to promote the All-American Avocado – California Avocados. Retail volume increased 98 percent and retail dollars

increased 17 percent from 2009 during the 4th of July holiday\*. Add signage to your California Avocado display to maximize category performance during the American Summer Holiday season. Position a second or third display of avocados in a featured location to increase shopper awareness. Bagged California Avocados are also an excellent secondary or tertiary display.



*\*IRI/ FreshLook Marketing Data  
Retail Data Source: SymphonyIRI Group / FreshLook Marketing  
4th of July 2013 = Week ending 7/7/13*

### INSIST ON CALIFORNIA AVOCADOS

Visit [CaliforniaAvocado.com/](http://CaliforniaAvocado.com/) Retail or contact your CAC Retail Marketing Director for more information and to order your *Hand Grown in California* materials as well as other promotional tools.

### Did You Know

California produces about 90% of the nation’s avocado crop.

Avocado household usage is nearly 80% and 82% in the Pacific Mountain and Southwest regions, respectively.

Avocado volume has increased nearly 53% since 2011.



**CALIFORNIA AVOCADO COMMISSION**

12 Mauchly, Suite L, Irvine, CA 92618-6305

☎ 949.341.1955

☎ 949.341.1970

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### INCREASE AVOCADO CATEGORY SALES WITH SLIMCADOS®

With less fat and fewer calories\*, SlimCados deliver a delicious choice for the avocado aficionado, the healthy-minded and the diet conscious. Many Latinos choose SlimCados because they're the avocado of choice in their native cuisines.

The SlimCado is an attention grabber. Its large size complements any avocado display, and it is an avocado that will interest your value-conscious customers.

Avocados are a growth category. Expand sales with a wider selection. After all, you don't eat just one variety of apples. Why limit your sales to one variety of avocados?

Avocado aficionados were thrilled to hear that avocados contain "good" fat. Still, doctors suggest that even good fat be eaten in moderation (70 calories a day). Those 70 calories go much further with SlimCados. SlimCados' distinctive, light avocado taste can be added to:

- Green Salads
- Hot Soups
- Chunky Guacamole
- Sandwiches or Hamburgers

Or SlimCados can be simply enjoyed with a squirt of lime. Any dish can be made into a little celebration with SlimCados. Besides being lower in fat and calories, these Florida

avocados are also rich in vitamin A and high in potassium. They are cholesterol-free. SlimCados are food safety certified from the field to the store. They are not genetically modified — SlimCados come by their size, lower fat content and fewer calories naturally.

### POINT OF PURCHASE/SIGNAGE

Consumers want information about what they eat. Signage showing the SlimCados' nutritional information (highlighting the lower fat and fewer calories of the fruit) pays off. Emphasize that this fruit is non-GMO and has been grown in the U.S. for more than 80 years by Brooks Tropicals. It's a lot to put on a sign; include our QR code so consumers can use



a smartphone to scan and download details from the SlimCado website.

### DISPLAY CARE AND HANDLING

Display enough to sell in one day, roughly 15 to 30 pieces (depending on the traffic in your store). 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 hydrocooling that is done immediately after harvesting. Hydrocooling 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 dock 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 shelf life. SlimCados have approximately a four-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° F and 48° F. Do not store below 40° F.

Optimum humidity is between 85 percent and 95 percent.

SlimCados are UPC- and PLU-coded as well as 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 additions to salads.

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

### VARIETY AND AVAILABILITY

Available June through January, Florida avocados are generally pear-shaped and green-skinned. Their weight can vary from 14 ounces to a hefty 34 ounces. Avocados will vary in size. They can be from four to 12 inches long and up to six inches wide.

*\*Contains 50 percent less fat and 35 percent fewer calories than the leading California avocado.*

*SlimCado and the Brooks Tropicals logo are registered trademarks of Brooks Tropicals, Inc.*



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## Out-Of-The-Box Promotional Ideas

The SlimCado season is in full swing by mid-July, just in time for summer's outdoor eating events. Look for promotional volumes of 12-count fruit in July and 10-count fruit in August — just in time for chopping up into the salads that make their yearly debut during summer barbeques.

During demonstrations, garnish in-store cooked food with a piece of SlimCado. Any heated dish will slightly melt the SlimCado for an added treat.

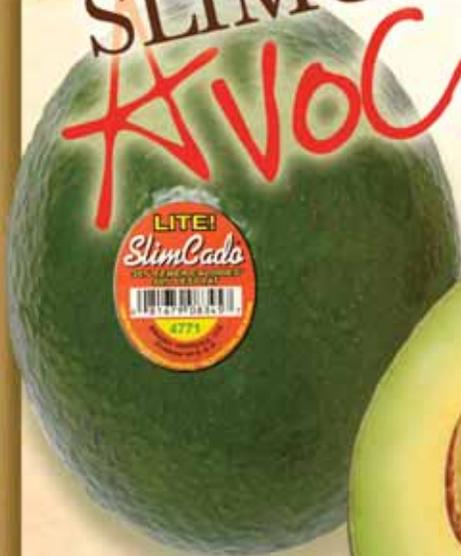
Celebrate avocados' "family tree." Display the fruit with other avocado varieties in a tree shape using guacamole mixes, limes and other tropicals as the display's trunk and ground.

Avocado displays can be a sea of dark green. Break it up with bright green-skinned SlimCados.

Guacamole displays work, but don't stop there. Salsa displays can also entice SlimCado buyers.

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## DOLE ENCOURAGES EVEN MORE AMERICANS TO “PEEL THE LOVE” IN 2014

Dole’s “Peel the Love” tour campaign was such a hit in 2013 that the produce leader is out to make fruits and vegetables even more fun in 2014. Again this year, the focus will continue to be on all there is to love about DOLE® Bananas: their sun-shiny color, sweet taste, nutritional goodness, affordability and peel-worthy fun. Like unwrapping a present, peeling a banana feels special every time. That’s why, from banana shrimp kabobs and banana coffee smoothies to tropical banana bruschetta, “Peel the Love” 2014 unwraps the potential of America’s favorite fruit. Now more than ever, bananas aren’t just for breakfast anymore. They can add fun, recipe versatility and great-tasting nutrition any time of day.



## DOLE’S 2014 “PEEL THE LOVE” SUMMER TOURS

In 2013, Dole took its healthy-eating-can-be-fun message to banana-loving cities across the U.S. In all, the pink-and-turquoise food truck handed out more than 107,000 recipe samples made from more than three tons of DOLE® Bananas at 147 tour stops at supermarkets, special events and other local venues.

After last year’s success, Dole is now embarking on two simultaneous national “Peel the Love” Tours featuring Banana Cabana events throughout summer 2014 to accommodate increased demand — one starting in New York City and a second launching in Dallas. In all,

Dole will travel nearly 12,000 miles, visiting more than 25 cities coast-to-coast to show residents how to enjoy bananas in easy-to-make recipes perfect for work, home and play.

These Banana Cabana events will offer close brand interaction and engagement with consumers including staff cooking demonstrations, dish-preparation highlights, recipe booklets, games and visits from Bobby Banana®.

Throughout, a steady stream of social media,





PR and blogger interactions will announce and report Banana Cabana events in each city and seek to expand the usage message by engaging even more banana ambassadors.

As always, Dole will partner with retailers to collaborate on in-store promotions and provide point-of-sale materials, local community event

support and other activities to prove that there is a lot more to our favorite yellow fruit.

To help drive traffic and encourage transactions, consumers who visit the Dole® Banana Cabana at “Peel the Love” retailer stops and show proof of a 3-lb. DOLE® Banana purchase, will receive a special giveaway.

We welcome everyone to get inspired by some of our favorite “Peel the Love” recipes at [dole.com/peelthelove](http://dole.com/peelthelove).

Keep your eyes on the road!



**DOLE**  
 One Dole Avenue  
 Westlake Village, CA 91362  
 818.874.4000  
 818.874.6501  
[www.dole.com/bananas](http://www.dole.com/bananas)

# KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE ROAD





# Peel the love.



**Dole's "Peel the Love Summer Tour"**  
is coming back with even more stops and  
promotional opportunities than last year.

Contact your Dole representative to provide you with  
materials and help you schedule a Peel the Love event.



**BERRIES ARE TRENDING**

According to the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council, U.S. consumers are two times as likely to purchase blueberries in 2014 compared to last year. Blackberry has been dubbed "Flavor of the Year" by flavor experts at Firmenich, noting that blackberries have been gaining popularity as health continues to grow as a priority for consumers.

**DISPLAY IDEAS**

Take advantage of the growth and popularity of berries and give your customers every opportunity to include them into their daily diet.

Create "Peak of the Harvest" or "Peak of the Season" displays. Feature growers in your ads, in-store POP and sampling demonstrations to promote flavor!

Encourage more berry behavior and purchase intent. Customers continue to buy more berries and represent almost 20 percent of total fruit sales (see chart).

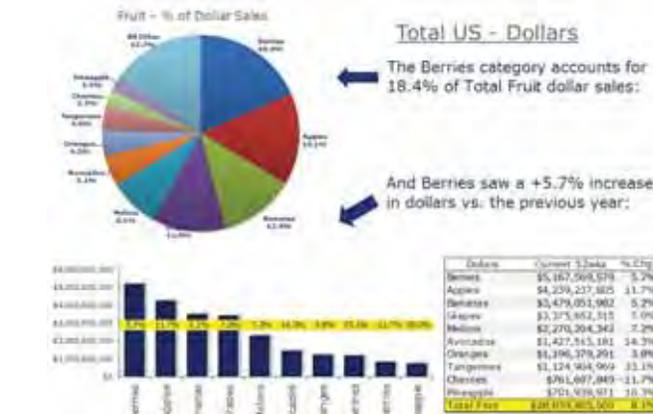
Take advantage of increasing berry demand by creating a "berry destination" with strawberries, blueberries, raspberries and blackberries.

Build secondary displays around health, flavor and convenience themes.



**PROMOTION & ADVERTISING**

- Create an "in the field" experience: display a complete berry patch, feature a grower and their family-farm story, offer consumer take-a-ways for more grower information.
- Use health, flavor and convenience messages and QR codes to help consumers find tips, usage information and recipes
- Berries on promotion or ad are the best way to increase consumer awareness and create purchase intent.
- Promote health and flavor aspects with signage and recipe suggestions or in-store sampling.



advantage of this fact and get creative with holiday opportunities such as long stem strawberries for Valentine's Day or a red, white and blueberry flag cake for the Fourth of July.

Create additional excitement and drive sales by featuring Naturipe Selections: the next generation of healthy and better tasting berries through our international plant breeding programs. Highlight these great new varieties with terms that

draw consumers and stimulate impulse sales like: "New," "Proprietary Varieties," "Best Tasting," "Peak of Harvest."

**DISPLAY CARE AND HANDLING**

Strawberries, blueberries, blackberries and raspberries should always be stored and displayed with as little break in the cold chain as possible. Berries should always be kept at 32°F.

**VARIETY AND AVAILABILITY**

Naturipe® berries are available year-round! Take



**NATURIFE FARMS**

PO Box 4280, Salinas, CA 93912

831.443.2358

[naturipefarms.com](http://naturipefarms.com)

[sales@naturipefarms.com](mailto:sales@naturipefarms.com)

**Out-Of-The-Box Promotional Ideas**

Dark and white chocolate are always fun for creative dipping.

Think outside of sweets, and pair blueberries with avocados and chips for a salsa; or strawberries, brie cheese and crackers.

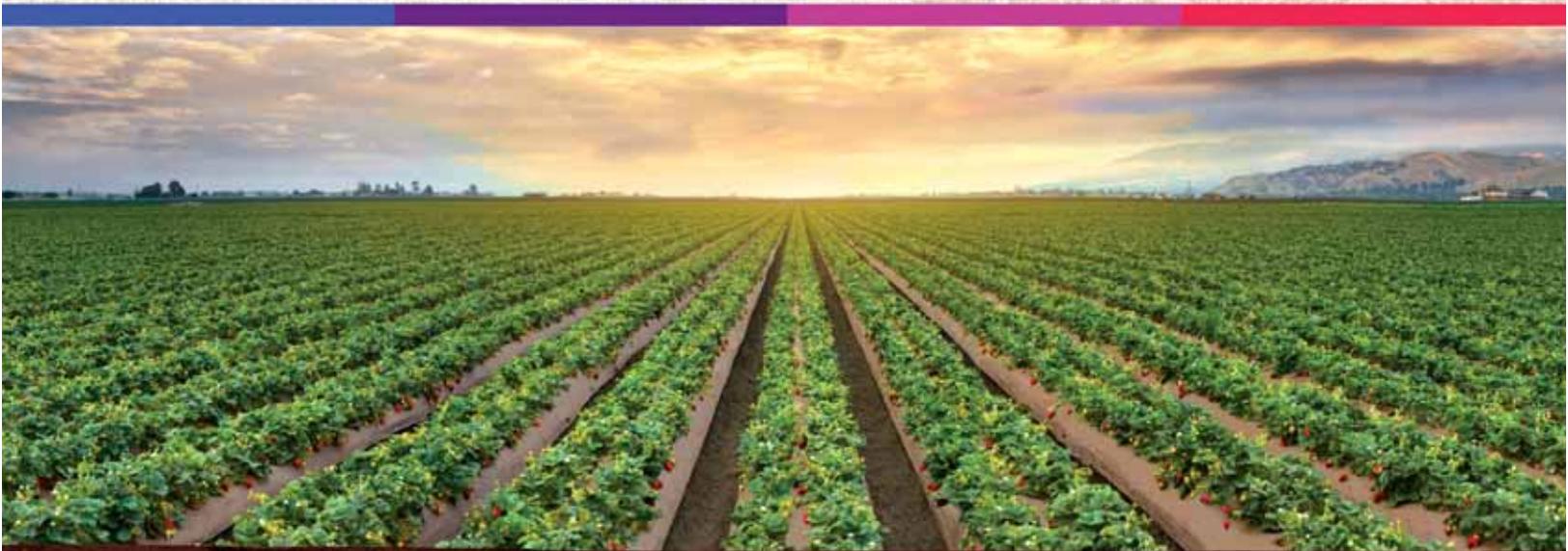
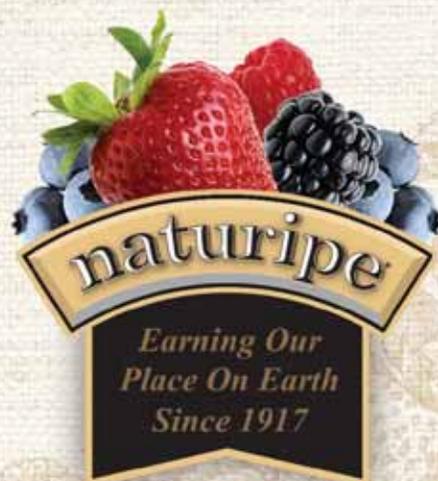
Promote a better breakfast with rice cakes, Greek yogurt, honey and berries.



# NATURRIPE

## WHERE INNOVATION IS ALWAYS IN SEASON

Naturipe® Farms, is an industry leader in producing healthy and delicious Fresh berries and Value Added berry products. With our wide selection, commitment to quality and food safety, year-round availability and a focus on innovation, we are perfectly suited to be your **Total Berry Solution**.



[www.naturipefarms.com](http://www.naturipefarms.com) | 831.443.2358



### RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

Carrots have become the “go to” vegetable of the produce department. As the snacking category continues to grow in popularity, there are an entire host of opportunities to display carrots. From the traditional whole carrots, to bunch carrots, and through the value added set — Baby-Carrots, Carrot Chips, Shredded Carrots, and Microwaveable Petites — the merchandising opportunities are endless.

The goal for merchandising is to drive the time-starved consumer to the value added set in the carrot category. Traditionally, carrots were merchandised in a block format that included all carrots from A – Z. Today, one should focus on merchandising the value-added carrots towards the entrance of the refrigerated set next to the bagged salads and premium dressings. This optimization highlights the occasion-based elements of carrots.

Consumers can purchase the shredded carrots as a topping for their sandwiches, purchase a bag of carrot chips to dip with their dressing, or simply



purchase a bag of Microwaveable Petites to complement the protein on their dinner plate.

The occasion-based strategy holds true for the bunched and whole carrots. These carrots are usually consumed as an ingredient in your favorite soups or as the side vegetable to your family’s pot roast. Since the purchase intent is centered on cooking, whole carrots offer the perfect accompaniment to the bunching greens, celery, and other deep colored vegetables in this set. This strategy optimizes consumer purchases while introduces them to other vegetables, as well as offering a vivid color break within the set.

### POINT OF PURCHASE MESSAGING

As many retailers implemented clean store policies prohibiting point of purchase signage, this is a great miss in communicating with the consumer. Twenty-eight percent of today’s consumers don’t know how to cook, while other consumers struggle with trying new carrot dishes outside of their comfort zones. Point of purchase materials allow for effective communication on fresh meal solutions, nutritional messaging, as well as creative calls to action.

The return of in-store signage is an effective way to merchandise carrots. Please contact Grimmway Farms for your customized POS materials.

### VARIETY AND AVAILABILITY GUIDE:

Grimmway California carrots are available year-round with consistent quality. California’s abundant sunshine and premium growing regions produce approximately 85 percent of the nation’s carrots.

### PROMOTIONAL ADVERTISING IDEAS

Evaluate your category insights to develop a strategic promotional plan by quarter. Grimmway Farms can assist you with this plan through our enhanced insights that analyze the 4Ps (Product Assortment, Price, Placement, and Promotion). Through this detailed diagnostics, together we can develop a quarterly promotional plan to optimize your carrot set.

Develop a creative promotional campaign focusing on the latest trends. As our population aspires to live healthy lifestyles, create interactive campaigns that move the consumers to your category. Through various social media channels, we have seen great success connecting with our consumers to spread the “lifestyle” message. Our passionate consumers share their success stories, challenges with maintaining healthy habits, and great tips to staying on track in their quest to live more vibrant lifestyles. This marketing effort allows us to positively influence the consumers’ take on carrots.

### DISPLAY CARE HANDLING

With bulk carrots, maintain temperatures from 33° F to 35° F with relative humidity of 98 to 100 percent. Bulk carrots can be lightly misted, but they 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.

The whitening of carrots is caused from the air within drying the outer cells, otherwise known as oxidation, of the peeled carrots. Soak the peeled carrots in ice water to bring the freshness and brilliance back to the carrot.

Proper handling of the cold chain throughout the distribution channel is crucial to extending the shelf-life of processed carrots.

### CROSS MERCHANDISING OPPORTUNITIES

The cross merchandising opportunities are endless. Offer on package coupons that promote savings across the premium dressing, dairy, premium juice, and meat department categories. Participate in licensing agreements that allow you to cross promote with DVD releases that promote the retailer’s electronics section. Cross promotions with storage containers and/or cooking utensils are also very effective.

### Quick Tips

Offer a complete selection of value-added Grimmway carrot products.

Promote the healthful attributes of carrots.

Highlight carrots through seasonal promotions and secondary displays.

Key in on value and diversity of occasion usage of carrots.



A family of *Growing* companies™

GRIMMWAY FARMS  
PO Box 81498, Bakersfield, CA 93380  
 661.845.9435  
 grimmway.com

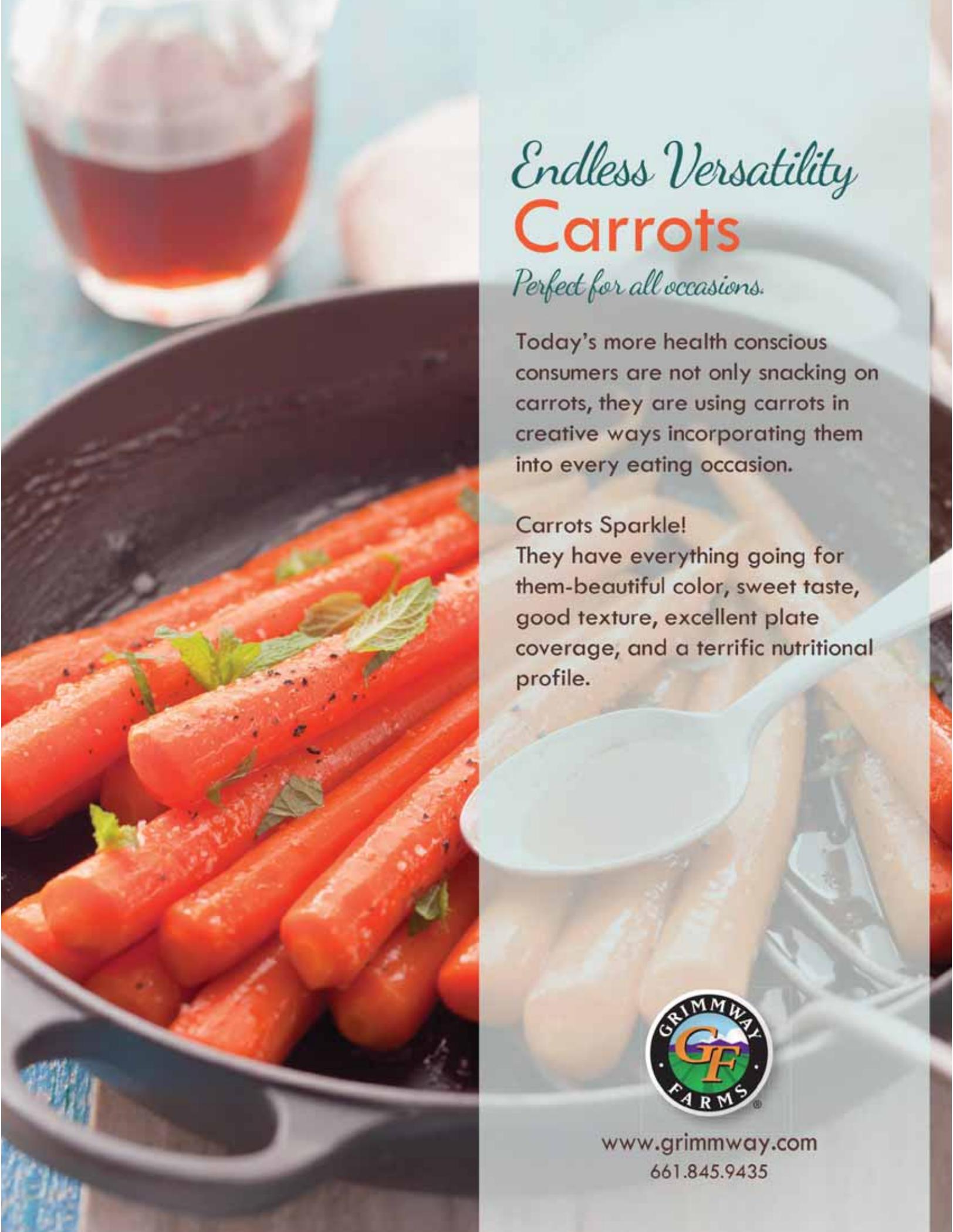
### Out-Of-The-Box Promotional Ideas

Develop interactive contest/sweepstakes that require the consumers to visit your social media channels.

Share successful lifestyle stories that encourage others to develop healthy eating and snacking habits.

Develop in-store creative display contests a few times a year around key occasions. Back to School can feature a special secondary display that promotes carrots as the perfect lunch-time snack.

Offer creative carrot recipes with premium photos on company websites to expand the usage of carrots.

A glass of beer with a white head of foam sits on a light blue surface. In the foreground, a dark grey skillet is filled with bright orange carrot sticks, garnished with fresh green herbs and a light dusting of white powder. In the background, a white plate holds several pale yellow carrot sticks, with a white ceramic spoon resting on top of them.

# Endless Versatility Carrots

*Perfect for all occasions.*

Today's more health conscious consumers are not only snacking on carrots, they are using carrots in creative ways incorporating them into every eating occasion.

**Carrots Sparkle!**

They have everything going for them-beautiful color, sweet taste, good texture, excellent plate coverage, and a terrific nutritional profile.



[www.grimmway.com](http://www.grimmway.com)

661.845.9435



### DUDA FARM FRESH FOODS CELERY

Duda Farm Fresh Foods is the largest celery grower/shipper in the country; our roots with celery began in 1926. We've built our business on producing the best quality celery products, and we will continue to provide year-round availability. Duda's Dandy® brand is the leading brand in fresh-cut celery sales and growing.

### THE CATEGORY LEADER

Duda Farm Fresh Foods is the leader in the celery category because we invest in innovation to ensure the category meets consumer preferences for taste, quality and convenience. Then we work with our retail partners to ensure each customer's celery assortment is optimal for their unique shoppers. Finally, we work to raise consumer awareness about this staple category through high-profile marketing communication activities.

### RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS AND POINT-OF-PURCHASE/SIGNAGE

Celery has a unique position in the produce department because consumers buy celery to eat as a snack and to use as a cooking ingredient. As a result,



total celery dollar sales showed an increase of 11.5 percent over the same period a year ago and for the 52-weeks ending Dec. 29 2013 (Source: Information Resources, Inc. ) volume showed a 5.3 percent increase over the same time period.

Retailers can increase celery sales by merchandising a full line of fresh celery items from bulk to value-added, then managing for out-of-stocks. Use cross promotions with complementary items (i.e. stuffing mix, salad dressing, dips and soft cheeses) to drive sales and draw consumer focus in store with signage.

### PROMOTIONAL/ADVERTISING IDEAS

Duda Farm Fresh Foods provides coupon opportunities and offers additional support such as 18 promotional weeks per year that can be tailored to retailers' individual sales goals. Duda is also socially connected via various social media tools and nurtures a network of brand ambassadors including bloggers, food writers and editors to connect with consumers — driving product awareness and inspiring celery usage ideas.

### OCCASIONS AND HOLIDAYS

Above-average celery purchases are occasion-and holiday-driven. Sales of regular celery and celery hearts peak in January (key weight loss season) Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas while sales of prepared celery peak during

New Year's, Super Bowl, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas.

If space allocation is under sized, the category will fail to grow, despite the innovative packaging provided. We recommend increasing the display and providing secondary displays during peak snack seasons — especially during Super Bowl week.

### DISPLAY CARE AND HANDLING

It's important to merchandise value-added celery in the cold case adjacent to packaged salads and refrigerated dips/dressings. Proper temperature control is paramount to the success of these items. Keep constantly refrigerated between 34°F and 38°F.

### BACKROOM RECEIVING AND PREPARATION PROCEDURES

Value-added celery should be refrigerated immediately upon receipt. Even a few minutes at room temperature will greatly impact fresh-cut celery shelf-life and quality.

### CROSS-MERCHANDISING OPPORTUNITIES

Key eating occasion for celery is dinner. Inspire consumer usage of celery for soups, casseroles and sauces by promoting with other fresh key ingredients like onions and carrots. Provide simple recipes and signage to spotlight complementary items and drive

product trial and repeat sales. Fresh celery snack consumption is growing, which creates opportunities for overall category growth. This behavior is growing as part of the In-Home Lunch and Carried from Home Meal/ Snack occasions. Celery should be promoted as a snack alongside peanut butter, ranch dressing, or dips to drive purchase for this trend. A target consumer group is females over 55 years old — especially those who currently snack on fruit.

### Quick Tips

Monitor inventories closely to avoid out-of-stocks especially during key promotional periods.

Keep displays consistent.

Use point-of-purchase signage to draw attention to the category and new items in the category.

Promote, promote, promote...leverage Duda's customer support and integrated marketing program.



DUDA FARM FRESH FOODS  
PO Box 620257, Oviedo, FL 32762

407.365.2111

407.365.2147

dudafresh.com

Visit us  
at CPMA  
Booth #609

# Harvest Happy

FOR NEARLY

# 90 YEARS



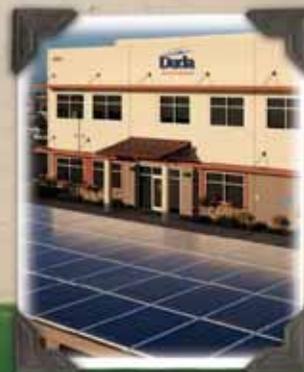
*Andrew Duda, Sr.*

In 1926, Andrew Duda and his family brought their first cash crop of celery to market and Duda Farm Fresh Foods was born. Today, we are in our sixth generation of family ownership and we're still harvest happy!



*The Duda Family in 1909*

MEET THE *Happy Faces* BEHIND THE **DANDY** BRAND  
at [dudafresh.com/harvesthappy](http://dudafresh.com/harvesthappy)



Fresh-cut celery facility located in Oxnard, CA is a monument of energy conservation



Dandy Fresh Fruits & Vegetables



@Dandy\_Fresh



DudaFreshProduce



DandyFresh



DandyFreshProduce

Duda Farm Fresh Foods • PO Box 620257 • Oviedo, FL 32762 • (407)365-2111



Capitalize on the excitement of one of the few seasonal products left in the produce department. The limited availability of cherries allows a fantastic opportunity for retailers to promote a “get-it-before-it’s-gone” product.

Northwest cherries are mainly an impulse item, which makes merchandising very important. Even though the Northwest cherry season lasts only about eight weeks, these cherries can actually outsell other produce items that are available year-round. Cherry consumption continues to increase, and retailers can take

advantage of their growing popularity by properly displaying, handling and promoting this highly profitable item.

### DISPLAY IDEAS

- A large, high quality display is the base of profitable cherry sales. Display cherries front and center in produce to ensure customers see them.
- Allow ample shelf space in that high-traffic area and steadily rotate supplies during the course of the day.
- Remember, a display doesn’t have to be mounded to look big! Use false-bottom

displays to avoid crushing fruit. Also, display bulk Northwest cherries in shipping cases.

- Offer a mix of Dark Sweet and Rainier in the display and include different packaging options. Additional choices spur extra sales.
- Disney brand cherries are a great product to market to kids. These convenient packs are easy to handle, to display and to reduce shrink. Each pack comes with a unique Disney offer to increase excitement!

### AVAILABILITY

Northwest cherries are available from early June to late-August with peak volumes in July.

Package types include:

- slider bags
- clamshells
- cup of stem free cherries with a reservoir lid for the pits

### Quick Tips

Offer in-store sampling.

Ask for your complementary Chelan secondary display to increase impulse sales.

Make displays visible; build them front and center!

Offer Cup o’ Cherries as grab-n-go in produce and deli.

### Out-Of-The-Box Promotional Ideas

Use demos to win over the 73 percent of customers who reportedly don’t purchase cherries.

Promote health aspects of cherries to health-conscious consumer segments, including the elderly and parents.

Moms buy what kids love, and kids love Disney! Promote Disney brand cherries as a great snack or lunch item.

Capture the grab-n-go customer with the Fresh Cup o’ Cherries in your cut fruit section or additional displays.

Promote heavily in July, which is peak production time!

Expand sales with secondary displays! Secondary displays increase sales from 10% to 70%. Use Chelan’s stand-alone displays to place cherries in high traffic areas and create impulse sales.



### CHELAN FRESH MARKETING

PO BOX 878, Chelan, WA 98816

📞 509.682.2539

📞 509.682.2651

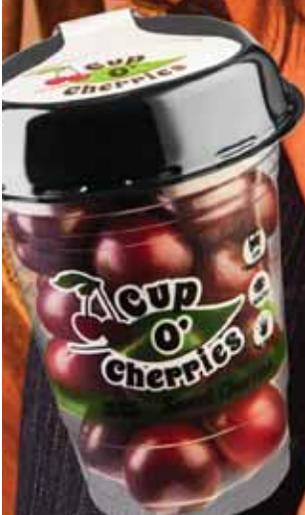
🌐 chelanfresh.com

✉ comments@chelanfresh.com

# Go

# Fruit

*100% Guaranteed To Go!*



BROWSE OUR PRODUCE & PROGRAMS  
[WWW.CHELANFRESH.COM/](http://WWW.CHELANFRESH.COM/)  
[CHERRY-PACKAGING/](http://CHERRY-PACKAGING/)  
CALL 509-682-4252



**RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS**

A large display of oranges is always an attention getter when the consumer enters the produce department. It's hard to miss the bright orange color, and catching the consumer's eye means catching their purchase. Comparatively speaking, oranges are always a real value; therefore they are always a good mover — especially in slower economic times. Consumers appreciate the value.

Don't forget about a second display with bags. Some consumers prefer to pick each piece individually, but others enjoy the convenience of bagged oranges. Also, bags always lead to a nice ring at the register and less sales per carton than with the bulk fruit.

**POINT OF PURCHASE/SIGNAGE**

Booth Ranches offers several point of purchase options to help stimulate movement at retail. For example, a dynamic high graphic bin that is a real attention getter and a great way to build a secondary display outside of the produce department. No room for a full bin? No problem! Booth also offers a smaller pop-up display half bin that will hold two boxes of fruit with the same distinctive graphics as our full bin, but easily set up in a smaller area. The pop up is also great for waterfall displays. Another option is our high graphic black carton which is great for building displays on existing shelving or to use freestanding.

**VARIETY AND AVAILABILITY GUIDE**

Oranges from California are



available almost year round. Booth Ranches Navels are in the market from November through June, and Valencia's are available from April through September. They can be promoted in winter and summer.

In the winter, there's nothing that beats a delicious Booth Ranches California Navel. While there are also Navels from the Southern Hemisphere in summer months, a sweet and juicy California Valencia is a great, lower priced alternative customers will appreciate.

**PROMOTIONAL/ ADVERTISING IDEAS**

Because of the generally competitive price, oranges make a great promotional item any time of year. They are especially attractive for promotion in mid-winter, when a slice of sunshine is a welcome change for consumers in many areas. Their value, however, suggests that an ad is a profitable idea any time of year, including during summer when Valencia's are in

season. They offer great value!

Promotions should include large displays, and perhaps even a second display elsewhere in the store. Place a Booth Ranches high graphic bin at the entrance to the store for a display that really generates sales.

**RIPENESS RECOMMENDATIONS**

Oranges are ripe and ready to eat as soon as your customer picks them up. Unlike some other produce items, there's no need to wait for ripening, and Booth Ranches oranges are specially selected for their premium flavor. The only oranges we pack and sell are ones we grow ourselves, giving us incredible control and consistency.

**BACKROOM RECEIVING AND PREPARATION PROCEDURES**

Like all produce, oranges will display better and last longer if the temperature is properly maintained. They are a relatively

hearty piece of fruit, so they can be easily displayed on a dry table but should be refrigerated whenever possible.

**CROSS-MERCHANDISING OPPORTUNITIES**

There are lots of opportunities to cross-merchandise oranges with other items. A display of oranges with electric or manual juicers will drive the sales of both. How about a display in the beer aisle near the Blue Moon? A small display of oranges near the leaf items can suggest a citrus salad. In the meat or seafood department, fresh orange juice can be suggested as part of a fantastic glaze.

**Quick Tips**

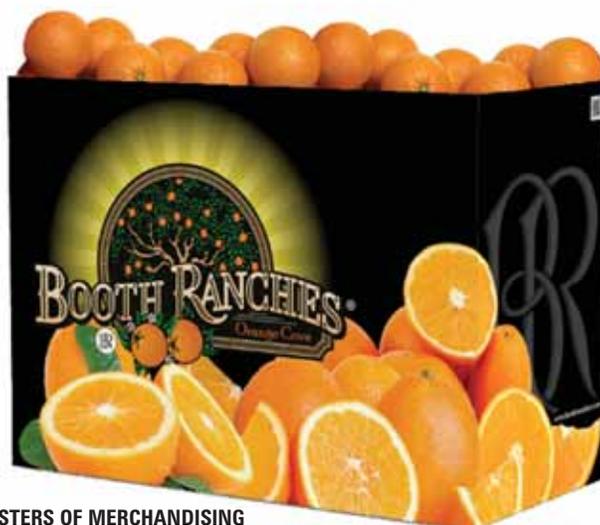
*At busy times of the day, oranges can move pretty fast so make sure displays are well filled and fresh.*

*Promote value of oranges.*

*Offer bagged as well as bulk.*

**Out-Of-The-Box Promotional Idea**

*Set up secondary displays in high traffic areas like near front registers or in the dairy department to encourage extra impulse sales!*



**BOOTH RANCHES LLC**

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☎ 559.626.7653

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🌐 boothranches.com

✉ info@boothranchesllc.com



Booth Ranches started in 1957 with 40 acres of citrus in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada's in Central California. Today we are still family owned and operated, farming 7500 acres from Orange Cove to Maricopa. We are a fully integrated company farming, packing and marketing only the product we grow ourselves. Booth Ranches has made the investment for a true sustainable future with 100% of our groves and packing facilities certified under the GlobalG.A.P. standard. We have enhanced our sustainability program and partnered with SureHarvest using the latest technology in the groves. Every box we pack is PTI compliant with full traceability. We take great pride in our Navels and Valencias. Booth Ranches consistently packs a box of oranges that are ready to eat and full of flavor. Only the best from our family to yours.



**Booth Ranches, LLC**  
Orange Cove, CA 93646  
559-626-7653  
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[www.boothranches.com](http://www.boothranches.com)



**THE LEADER IN FRESH-CUT VEGETABLES**

Apio is a category leader offering two of the strongest brands in fresh-cut vegetables. The GreenLine® brand leads sales of fresh-cut green beans within the U.S., and Eat Smart® is the leader in fresh-cut branded bag and tray sales. Together, Apio brands account for 12 percent of fresh-cut vegetable sales. Contact us to learn more.

**QUALITY ASSURANCE — FROM FIELD TO FORK**

Apio has implemented an extensive quality assurance and food safety program designed to minimize food safety risks and ensure top-of-our-field quality — from the farm to the consumer's table. A California Leafy Greens Agreement signatory, Apio utilizes post-harvest physiologists, an on-premises microbiological lab, and annual third-party food safety and quality audits. The company has also adopted a complete HACCP program, a vendor approval program, and both GAP and GMP/Food Safety Training Programs.

**RECEIVING AND PREPARATION PROCEDURES**

Fresh-cut vegetables should be received from adequately refrigerated trucks and transferred immediately into storage that is ideally cooled to 34 to 36 degrees F. Shelves should be well stocked and products culled with attention to code date.

**CAPITALIZING ON FRESH-CUT VEGETABLES' HOLIDAY POPULARITY**

Fresh-cut vegetable sales peak at various times throughout the year. Carrying adequate supply is essential during these weeks.

Cross-merchandising value-added vegetables with their bulk counterparts (e.g. fresh-cut broccoli merchandised next to bulk broccoli) can entice shoppers to trade up and lead to higher basket rings.

<u>Value-added Vegetable</u>	<u>Peak Sales Week</u>
Bagged Slaw .....	Fourth of July
Broccoli.....	Christmas
Cauliflower .....	St. Patrick's Day and Thanksgiving
Trays.....	Super Bowl, Easter, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving and Christmas

Given the greater appeal of trays throughout the year, holiday or event themed trays can provide a point of differentiation and catch the attention of additional shoppers.

**HOW DOES ITEM COUNT STACK UP?**

Nationally, an average of 32 unique fresh-cut vegetable items are carried per store, per week.

Side Dish .....	18	Snacking.....	5
Meal Prep .....	7	Trays.....	3

Specifically for trays, the ideal assortment includes one large tray (32-ounces or larger) and two small tray (8-ounces - 32-ounces) items.

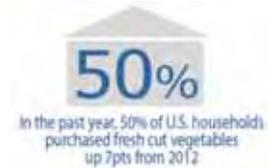


**THE FRESH-CUT VEGETABLE CONSUMER**

Fresh-cut vegetables appeal most to premium, healthy-living couples and families. These consumers tend to cook fresh home meals, but they value products that serve as meal starters. Apio's Steam in the Bag feature is ideal for these core consumers, as they can eat fresh vegetable side dishes at home with minimal preparation.



**FRESH-CUT VEGETABLE HOUSEHOLD PENETRATION**

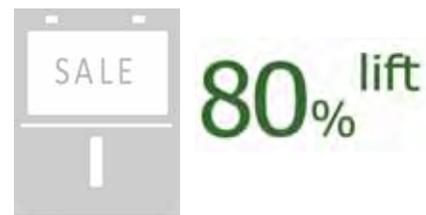


**AVERAGE FRESH-CUT VEGETABLE BASKET SIZE**



**AVERAGE VOLUME % LIFT ON PROMOTION**

When promoted, Fresh-cut vegetables' volume sales increase on average 80%. Promoting during their holiday peaks can help attract incremental sales.



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# APIO OFFERS YOU THE BEST IN FRESH-CUT.

Apio continues to invest in and build platforms for success with our retailer partners. Today we bring you two top selling brands from one company - Eat Smart® and GreenLine®. Our brands offer improved category leadership with innovative products and superior sourcing all with a national reach. Carrying the best in fresh-cut just got easier.



Eat Smart and GreenLine are registered trademarks of Apio, Inc.

Contact us today to learn more | [www.apioinc.com](http://www.apioinc.com) | Eat Smart - 800.454.1355 | GreenLine - 419.353.2328





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? Use garlic instead of salted butter anytime. The product family runs the gamut from staple to specialty items — red garlic, elephant garlic, peeled, packaged, braided and certified organic.

The category 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 be used to adorn holiday wreaths and other holiday decorations. Many items are sold in both bulk and consumer package sizes.

#### DISPLAY IDEAS

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. 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 sales directly relate to consumer use of recipes requiring garlic, so always have a recipe next to the garlic display. Also remember that a festive arrangement of garlic braids functions as great

signage to bring attention to the garlic display.

#### VARIETY AND AVAILABILITY

Garlic is available year-round with supplies coming from California and outside of the United States, including Argentina, Mexico, Chile and Spain. In recent years, Chinese-grown garlic has become prominent in the marketplace. 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. Therefore, 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 and serve it whole as a butter substitute. If the Super Bowl or another sporting event is coming up, promotions can focus on the use of fresh garlic to make salsa with a kick.

Salad dressing is another great garlic application. 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

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.

#### Quick Tips

Display and promote a full range of garlic items

Use jarred and fresh garlic, red, white, elephant and conventional garlic and garlic braids to make the section intriguing to consumers

Focus on increasing usage — the key to increasing sales long term

#### Out-Of-The-Box Promotional Ideas

Do a bakery demo in which roasted garlic is served with sliced French baguettes. The mild flavor will make it a favorite with many consumers and you can emphasize the health aspect — no fat or butter!

Educate customers about the taste benefits of rubbing the outside of their Easter lamb with cracked garlic prior to roasting.

Provide recipes encouraging customers 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!

Hold 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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Grower Pete's certified organic living butter lettuce provides a repeatable freshness experience with every package and is an improved category solution for innovative produce merchandisers across America.

With its extended shelf-life and a protective, interlocking, and easily merchandisable clamshell package, Grower Pete's organic living butter lettuce saves hours of merchandising labor and significantly reduces shrink while generating higher dollar rings that create increased gross margins for your butter lettuce category.

Grower Pete's certified organic living 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

### MERCHANDISING ADVANTAGES:

- USDA Certified Organic by CCOF
- Consistent uniform product quality all year-round
- Extended shelf-life and reduced shrink that helps you sell more units
- Attractive, see-through and easily merchandisable packaging
- Through harvesting with roots intact, the leaf remains fresher and more flavorful for days longer

### Out-Of-The-Box Promotional Ideas

Be the first in your region to offer a certified organic greenhouse-grown section in your produce department.

Merchandise certified organic greenhouse-grown lettuce, cucumbers, tomatoes, bell peppers and herbs in one central location.



than butter lettuce harvested in the field. Fresher lettuce means higher flavor profiles and greater nutritional value

- Naturally pest-free as we utilize NOP / OMRI approved pest control regimes

### PACKAGING INNOVATION

Our new source-reduced and freight-saving Grower Pete's clamshell package and accompanying harness style master carton allows for a 20% increase in units per pallets. Our clamshell package meets and exceeds merchandising, physical protection, food safety, sustainability and transportation packaging criteria. It provides a micro-environment around the lettuce helping it stay fresher longer, protects each delicate leaf from physical damage during handling, and acts as a food-safety barrier between the product and the consumer. The clamshell's interlocking feature aids 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.

### RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

Grower Pete's certified organic 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. Eye-level multiple facings that create attractive displays help generate increased sales velocity.

Our research suggests the prime location is directly next to other leafy greens in your organic produce display. However, the wet-rack mist system nozzle directly above our product display must be closed to eliminating unattractive water spots on the container.

Merchandising in the bagged salad case show be a last resort as it may lead to buyer confusion. The bagged salad shopper is looking for tear-and-pour convenience, and our product requires processing before use.

### CROSS-MERCHANDISING OPPORTUNITIES

Combine offers with other salad ingredients, from croutons to gourmet cheeses and salad dressings, to acquaint your shoppers with this uniquely fresh butter lettuce.

Promote private-label salad dressing in conjunction with our butter lettuce to generate increased velocity for both categories.

Interdepartmental cross-promotional offers, such as a BLT promotion offering 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 draw meat department shoppers into the produce section.

### HANDLING AND STORAGE 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. Place and reface frequently.

### Quick Tip

Place and reface frequently; with the clamshell package, daily trimming and product refreshing will be nominal.



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- 1 Superior product uniformity paired with an unsurpassed quality assurance program gives your customer a product they can count on.
- 1 Year-round availability and stable year-round pricing helps build your category sales with higher gross margins and increased category velocity.
- 1 Our unique mini-greenhouse packaging protects every leaf, extends shelf life, limits merchandiser inputs and merchandises attractively on your shelf while reducing shrink.
- 1 Sustainably and organically-grown in state-of-the-art greenhouses where we minimize, conserve, and recycle all agricultural inputs.

To find out more, please visit [www.growerpets.com](http://www.growerpets.com)

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### EXPERIENCE THE ZESPRI® DIFFERENCE

**Superior Taste, Quality and Commitment to Sustainable Practices**

Zespri® is the brand name for all kiwifruit grown in New Zealand. No ordinary kiwifruit can compare. Year after year, Zespri® Kiwifruit consistently outperforms the competition with superior taste and quality, a premium consumer experience and greater sales rates and profitability for you.

The unique "Zespri® System" ensures consistency in size, appearance and taste. This world class orchard-to-retail system delivers delicious fruit while a commitment to sustainability includes using environmentally considerate methods to grow, cultivate, store and ship the fruit — all reasons why Zespri® makes a big difference!

### HEALTH MESSAGING AT POINT OF PURCHASE

A recent study found that consumers are 59 percent more likely to buy more produce when there is health messaging at point of purchase. Use the following health messages at your displays or on packaging to help sell more Zespri® Kiwifruit!

- Zespri® Kiwifruit is one of the world's most nutrient dense fruits. It's a nutrition powerhouse!
- Zespri® Kiwifruit is a scientifically recognized superfood.
- Zespri® Kiwifruit is high in vitamin C.
- Zespri® Kiwifruit is a good source of folate, fiber and potassium.

### Out-Of-The-Box Promotional Idea

Consumers are 71% more likely to make a purchase based on social media referrals. Connect Zespri® with your corporate social media team. Zespri® has loads of ready to use content to educate consumers about Zespri® Kiwifruit.



### RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

– **Show Zespri® off!**

Increase sales up to 60 percent by displaying Zespri® Kiwifruit prominently in the front of the department using Zespri's point of sale material or an eye-catching Zespri® display shipper.

– **Beauty sells!** Displaying Zespri® Kiwifruit cut in half allows customers to see their beautiful inner colors and textures, and is a great way to increase sales.

– **The bigger, the better!** A top West Coast Retailer increased its Zespri® display space and increased sales by 34 percent versus the industry standard of 14 percent.

### CROSS-MERCHANDISING OPPORTUNITIES

– **Berries:** Kiwifruit's bright green and gold colors are a great complement to many different varieties of berries, especially strawberries. Display cut kiwifruit next to the berries with a delicious fruit salad recipe.

– **Chips And Kiwi Salsa:** Display chips and kiwi salsa ingredients together in the produce department accompanied by our delicious

kiwi salsa recipe!

– **Summer BBQ's:** Green kiwifruit is a natural meat tenderizer. Place a basket of kiwifruit near the meat counter along with some educational signage and you're sure to move more kiwifruit.

### EATING KIWIFRUIT IS EASY – CUT, SCOOP AND ENJOY

Many customers perceive kiwifruit as inconvenient to eat because they think you have to peel it, to eat it. Remind your consumers through display signage how easy it is to eat kiwifruit. All they need is a knife and spoon.

### LOOK AT PACKAGING OPTIONS

– Per Pound versus Per Piece Pricing: It's been proven by several retailers, when Zespri® is sold by the pound and near other produce with similar pricing strategies, sales have increased.

– Zespri® offers different packaging options for retailers. Whether it is a clamshell, bag, bulk or environmentally sensitive packaging, Zespri® can provide informative, visually appealing packaging for any of your needs.

### Quick Tips

Promote how easy it is to eat kiwifruit. Consumers can cut and scoop with a just a spoon and knife!

Promote the nutritional value of Zespri® Kiwifruit with Zespri's 10 Reasons to Eat Brochures.

Let your customers know that a ready-to-eat Zespri® Kiwifruit should give to slight pressure.

Don't throw away culled kiwifruit. Use it in prepared foods, salad bars, or cut-fruit operations.

Lengthen the shelf life of ethylene sensitive kiwifruit by displaying next to tree fruit, grapes and citrus.

Display and encourage use of Zespri's POS materials & displays.

Use Zespri's shelf-ready boxes to display your kiwifruit, offering brand recognition and ease of merchandising.



**ZESPRI® KIWIFRUIT**  
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Contact a Zespri Kiwifruit Representative to learn more.



The Vision Companies have established global grower partnerships to provide the highest quality products and service to our customers. These direct grower-relationships make our companies unique and allow us to deliver the highest quality produce at fair market price. Every one of our grower partners offer top quality fruit and are held to the highest food safety standards/certifications. Our customers receive timely information on product availability, market price points, trends, weather and other variables that influence our commodities.

**RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS**

All consumers use limes; they cannot be overlooked. Limes cross over all cultures and cuisines. Make your displays prominent, and be aggressive. Although limes in the U.S. have been displayed as a tropical/ethnic item in the past, they are now mainstream! Utilize the shipping boxes, and show off the labels to increase consumer confidence in your quality.

**POINT OF PURCHASE USAGE IDEAS**

Limes should be displayed with recipes. Limes in particular have the unique ability to adapt to most anything a consumer is preparing. They are used as: marinades; the zest is often used



in desserts; a squeeze of lime serves as a condiment to boost flavor of meats, chicken or fish; fresh lime juice enhances beverages from Lime-aid to Mojitos. With a little direction, your customers can be using limes every day of the week! For printable recipes email us at [info@visionimportgroup.com](mailto:info@visionimportgroup.com)

**VARIETY AND AVAILABILITY GUIDE**

Seedless lime varieties include Persian, and Bearss. Seeded varieties include West Indian, Mexican, and Key. Persian Limes grown in Mexico have set the highest standard and are the most desirable.

**Availability:** Historically, there is lighter volume out of Mexico in January through March, creating higher pricing than the rest of the year. Through the Vision Companies positive grower relationships we are able to carry limes 52 weeks of the year from Mexico. When needed, we utilize our offshore relationships for additional sourcing.

**The Vision Companies Sizing/Packs:**

- 1-, 2-, and 5-pound bag limes
- 40-pound box ranging from 110 to 250 size (PLU sticker optional)
- 10-pound place-packed and stickered (packed by hand, highest grade and color level)
- Ability to pack loose 10-pound

**PROMOTIONAL/ ADVERTISING IDEAS**

All holidays and special occasions are an opportunity to sell limes. Any occasion for home entertaining (Super Bowl, Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's Eve, Cinco de Mayo) utilizes limes. Limes are crucial in the summer months for barbeques, family picnics and social gatherings. Every month there is an event or holiday where limes play a role. Check your calendar and don't miss any opportunities.

**DISPLAY CARE AND HANDLING**

Clean and neat displays do wonders for lime sales. Undesirable fruit left on the stand becomes a negative focus, so ensure those few are removed so the beautiful product stands out. Limes should not be an item your customers need to pick through — quality fruit is available all year. Keep limes at 48°F; fresh limes can be held for up to four weeks after picking as long as they are picked and stored at optimal conditions. To maintain optimal quality for an extended period, be conscious of the storage temperature in your warehouse and back rooms in addition to retail displays. Optimum is 48°F to 50°F. Remember: good limes sell more!

**CROSS-MERCHANDISING OPPORTUNITIES**

Limes are extremely versatile. Place in the butcher section and/or seafood department with recipe recommendations. Place in a basket in beverage aisle with a reminder: "Don't forget the limes!" The possibilities continue in the produce department, incremental sales and positioning will bring limes to a top-grossing produce item.

**Did You Know?**

A little lime juice and water can prevent cut fruit or vegetables (like potatoes and apples) from getting discolored.

Limes contain unique flavonoid compounds that have antioxidant, antibiotic, and anti-cancer properties.

Allow a lime to come to room temperature before squeezing — it will release more juice.

Use limes as a healthy condiment on meats, fish and chicken — just a squeeze of lime can change or accentuate the flavor.

Fresh lime in drinks and cocktails can take a moment of relaxation to the next level.



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**Out-Of-The-Box Promotional Ideas**

Host a "Going Green" day at your store or restaurant as an opportunity to increase environmental awareness while selling product and having fun. The Vision Companies are very conscience of environmental impacts as our livelihood comes from the land.

Retail stores can raise awareness by promoting environmentally friendly products. To keep with the theme, do a play on words and promote all of your green fruits and vegetables including limes.

Restaurants can increase community connection and fun with a "green" fundraiser or awareness event — promoting locally sourced foods and serving Mojitos made with Mojito™ limes and fresh mint. Everyone will enjoy "Going Green."

For more information on how Food Service and Retail companies can start or increase their lime sales simply send an email to [Info@visionimportgroup.com](mailto:Info@visionimportgroup.com)

# The Vision Companies

Unified National Distribution



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There is plenty of growth potential in the mango category. Improved awareness of the fruit, including information on how to select and prepare mangos, has played a key role in increasing demand. Changing consumer preferences, year-round availability and shifts in U.S. demographics will also continue to drive growing demand. Below are some great tips to help you grow the category.

**FOCUS ON QUALITY**

Perhaps the single most important thing a retailer can do to sell more mangos is to hold them at the right temperature. You don't want mangos to get too cold otherwise you risk offsetting the flavor and appearance of the fruit; this is unattractive to consumers and not conducive to driving sales.

You can ensure better quality and flavor by sourcing from shippers who are knowledgeable and consistent in their holding temperatures. A great way to do this is to buy in load-volume. This is an effective way to help fruit ripen on the way to the DCs, especially in times of promotions.



**MAKE ROOM FOR MANGOS**

To propel repeat purchases, keep customers satisfied with great quality in prominent displays.

- Let mangos command a presence. Go for big displays to increase visibility and foot traffic.
- Promote in multiples or display-ready packs like unit cases or clamshells.
- Always have ripe fruit on display. Soft, mature mangos are great for those who have an immediate need to consume them whereas hard, unripe mangos are best for those who will consume later.
- Arrange mangos by ripeness stage to make it easier for customers to select fruit.



- Feature multiple varieties and highlight their differences with POS signage.
- Display mangos at room temperature, not on the cold rack.

**PROMOTIONAL OPPORTUNITIES & AVAILABILITY**

Plenty of promotional opportunities abound with mangos. In fact, retailers who promote early and maintain steady supplies sell more mangos than those who wait until peak times to start promoting. The key is to communicate with your supplier to understand production peaks and gaps and to ensure your orders are covered.

The best time of year to promote mangos is between June and July. Supplies from Mexico are abundant during this time, and the temperature is warm, guaranteeing retailers get ripe and ready to eat fruit. Mexico is the leading mango supplier, but they are available in the U.S. all year long with off-shore fruit, chiefly from Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, Guatemala and Haiti.

**CONSUMER EDUCATION IS KEY**

Because many consumers have not tried the fruit, it is important to educate them about proper selection, handling, and health benefits of eating mangos. The resources used to educate consumers can be an effective catalyst in driving sales.

POS signage is great because you can vary it up with information such as selection tips or nutrition claims. You can also leave recipe cards near displays with QR codes linking



the tech-savvy consumer to a content-rich page, whether it's on your website or social media page.

Another great way to educate the consumer is to provide in-store sampling. Cutting demos are a very effective way to engage the consumer but staff should be adequately prepped and trained to answer questions, including how to tell when a mango is ripe, how to cut it, and how to prepare it.

**MANGO FACTS**

- Mangos contain over 20 different vitamins and minerals, including vitamins A, C and folate.
- Mangos can be enjoyed in countless ways; as snacks, in entrees or even dessert.
- Not all varieties change color as they mature, so gauge ripeness by squeezing gently rather than by color. Soft mangos are ripe and ready to eat while rock-hard mangos are immature.
- Customers can speed up the ripening process by placing mangos in a sealed paper or plastic bag at room temperature.

**BACK-ROOM HANDLING**

- Store mangos between 52°-55°F to hold color.
- Store mangos between 56°-65°F to bring on color.
- Prolonged storage below 50°F will lead to chilling injury.
- Store mangos away from ethylene-sensitive products.

VARIETY	AVAILABILITY*	SPECIAL QUALITIES
 <p><b>ATAULFO</b></p>	Feb – Aug	<p><b>Shape:</b> Smaller, kidney-shaped</p> <p><b>Flavor:</b> Exceptionally sweet and velvety due to minimal fibers.</p> <p><b>Key Traits:</b> The finest Ataulfos are marketed under the Champagne® mango label. These mangos have a very small seed and their green skin changes to a bright yellow when fully ripe.</p>
 <p><b>HADEN</b></p>	Feb – Jun	<p><b>Shape:</b> Medium to large rounded-oval shape</p> <p><b>Flavor:</b> Very rich and sweet with aromatic flesh that is moderately fibrous.</p> <p><b>Key Traits:</b> Known for their sweet, fruity smell, Hadens have green and rosy skin that turns red with yellow overtones as it matures.</p>
 <p><b>TOMMY ATKINS</b></p>	Mar – Jul	<p><b>Shape:</b> Medium to large with a round, oblong shape</p> <p><b>Flavor:</b> Sweet yet firm with a more fibrous texture.</p> <p><b>Key Traits:</b> Tommy mangos have vibrant green skin with red overtones. This is the most widely available, year-round variety in the U.S.</p>
 <p><b>KENT</b></p>	Jun – Sep	<p><b>Shape:</b> Very large and round</p> <p><b>Flavor:</b> Remarkably sweet and juicy with a soft texture and few fibers.</p> <p><b>Key Traits:</b> One of the most popular varieties due to its exceptional eating quality. Kent mangos have minimal fibers and smooth, green skin that shows a slight blush when ripe.</p>
 <p><b>KEITT</b></p>	Jul – Oct	<p><b>Shape:</b> Large, slightly elongated oval</p> <p><b>Flavor:</b> Rich and mildly citrusy with a smooth, slightly fibrous texture.</p> <p><b>Key Traits:</b> Keitts have predominantly green skin that may show an occasional rosy blush when ripe. They flourish in Mexico as the season for other varieties fades away.</p>

\*FROM MEXICO  
Variety photos used by permission of the National Mango Board. All rights reserved, © 2011 National Mango Board



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# HONEYMOON™ MELONS INTRODUCED BY FRESH QUEST “LOVE AT FIRST BITE!”



## VARIETY AND HANDLING INFORMATION

*HONEYMOON* is ripe and ready to eat the moment it is harvested. The recommended storage temperature is 42°F. The variety, like all melons, is both an ethylene-producer and is ethylene-sensitive. So take care to store and display correctly. *HONEYMOON* should be eaten at room temperature to maximize its sweet and aromatic qualities.

The *HONEYMOON* is a winter melon with summertime flavor. The exterior shell color is golden straw. The dense and juicy light green flesh is an exquisite honey-pear flavor guaranteed to delight your senses. *HONEYMOON* is available December through April exclusively from Fresh Quest. Each fruit on average weighs 2.5 – 3.5 lbs. Packed 9ct, 11ct, 12ct and 13ct in a high graphic tray.

## POINT OF PURCHASE/ SIGNAGE

High graphics retail display tray boxes, posters, signage display cards and recipe booklets are all available upon request. Custom point-of-purchase floor displays to be used as secondary displays such as in deli and dairy departments outside of the produce section will help spur impulse sales. These customized point-of-purchase programs can support general marketing efforts and/or specific promotional opportunities.



## RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

Fresh Quest is one of the largest producers of Cantaloupe, Honeydew and Watermelon. Adding *HONEYMOON* adds a vibrant splash of golden color that will draw consumers to your melon display. *HONEYMOON* is a relatively hardy melon variety that holds up well on display. In-Store pre-cut melons are a great way to market to consumers in the single serving market and smaller households.



FRESH QUEST, INC.

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Email: [fq-info@freshquest.net](mailto:fq-info@freshquest.net)

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### RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

A dedicated mushroom section including all varieties located next to the salad section (the No. 1 use of fresh mushrooms) will increase sales up to 40 percent versus separating items by use. Demographics are important in determining space allocation.

- Exceptional departments allocate 32 linear feet in the multi-deck case.
- Larger departments allocate 24 to 28 linear feet.
- Smaller departments, with lower income shoppers, allocate 16 linear feet.
- Small departments and higher income shoppers allocate 20 to 24 linear feet.



### SECONDARY DISPLAYS

On-going secondary displays in the salad and the meat cases will generate 12 percent growth in category sales. Seasonal displays can feature eggs, potatoes, rice, pasta, tortillas, cheese, onions and other cooking vegetables. Flexitarian, natural, and diet solutions are effective with mushrooms.

### POINT OF PURCHASE/SIGNAGE

Attention through use of section signage, recipe cards, shelf talkers will drive sales. Mushroom consumption grows when consumers become more educated on the flexibility, nutrition, and weight management benefits. Educational packaging is most effective.

### CROSS-MERCHANDISING OPPORTUNITIES

Achieve year-round meal solutions by cross-promoting sliced mushrooms with bagged salads and capitalizing on grilling opportunities with steaks, stir-frys and shish kabobs on the grill. Steak-Mate thick sliced mushrooms are outstanding displayed in the meat section, as are Portabellas during grilling season. Mushrooms are an ideal item to utilize as a flavor enhancer, meat replacement or a complementary ingredient in pastas, soups, eggs, rice, casseroles or pizza.

### VARIETY AND AVAILABILITY GUIDE

Practice maximum assortment, including a variety of whole and sliced, Portabellas, Organics, Baby Pearls and value-added, specialty mushrooms, dried and bulk. Look for new varieties, such as Monterey's Grill-A-Bella®, and

sliced whites and browns that provide vitamin D benefits for the consumer.

### PROMOTIONAL/ADVERTISING IDEAS

Mushrooms need promotional activity to help bring shoppers to the category. However, they are not price sensitive, so deep discounts are not necessary. On average, promotions should be utilized 6 to 8 times per quarter to maximize overall sales. Discounts should generally be between 15 to 30 percent. Three for \$5, two for \$4, or multiple pricing, tends to be the most effective method of promoting mushrooms.

### PRICING RECOMMENDATION

Consumers have shown they appreciate added value from sliced, brown, and specialty varieties. In the current national pricing range, there is little price sensitivity in changing purchase decisions. Therefore, consumers do expect to see the following:

- 10% premium in retail for sliced product over whole
- 10% premium for crimini over white
- 50% premium for ports over crimini
- 80% premium for exotics over ports
- 30% premium for organics over similar conventional item

### DISPLAY CARE AND HANDLING

Think, "eggs and ice cream." Handle mushrooms gently like breakable eggs. Never stack anything on top of them. Also, never let them sit on the unrefrigerated dock. Like ice cream, get them in the cooler immediately and maintain the cold chain.

### RECEIVING, STORAGE AND HANDLING TIPS

Carry minimal overstock. To cut your current shrink numbers in half, reduce your holding cooler inventory to a 24 hour supply after each delivery. Most stores get delivery every other day. Fill your displays after each delivery and inventory only enough to refill before next delivery. Plan accordingly for promotions. Refrigerate

mushrooms immediately. Additionally, store mushrooms off moist floors, away from warm doorways, out of direct airflow and away from odorous perishable items.

### Quick Tips

Keep mushrooms refrigerated and dry.

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.

Utilize multi-item advertising highlighting all category segments.

Merchandise based on department sales and consumer demographics. Emphasize versatility, nutrition, and weight management. Definitely add a second display of sliced mushroom packages in the salad section. Cross merchandise with complementary items.

Promote larger pack sizes and exotics. Use promotions to build consumer awareness of specialty varieties and trade them up.

### Out-Of-The-Box Promotional Ideas

Promote and merchandise Monterey's Grill-A-Bella® mushrooms in the high profile biodegradable tray. They provide 100% daily requirement of vitamin D per serving for consumer health benefits.

Sell bulk Portabellas by the pound — sales increase up to 300%.

Merchandise Monterey's Sliced Mushrooms with 100% vitamin D in the new biodegradable package. The earth friendly package highlights versatile usage ideas and recipes as well as nutritional benefits.

Pictures of recipes onpack as shown on Monterey's Bag products and on new labels, or displayed in the section get the consumer thinking immediately, "What's for dinner?" Serving suggestions and healthy recipes are on every package.



MONTEREY MUSHROOMS, INC.

260 Westgate Drive, Watsonville, CA 95076

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🌐 montereymushrooms.com

# Doing Things Right

Sustainable Packaging with Valuable Tips for Consumers

## MONTEREY<sup>®</sup> MUSHROOMS



Innovation as Natural as Our Mushrooms



### RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

USA Onions, homegrown in Idaho-Eastern Oregon, are versatile onions that may be used at any meal or in any favorite onion recipe. The appeal of USA 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. "Buy All-American Winners, USA Onions — homegrown in Idaho and eastern Oregon."

In addition, good signage that distinguishes the different varieties and versatility of onions and onions grown in the USA will go a long way in increasing sales.

### 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-E. Oregon Onion QR Code that, when scanned, launches consumers to the Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onion website (USAOnions.com) for sizing and onion variety information. For example, large-size onions reduce preparation time while their firm flesh makes them ideal for blooms, ringing, slicing and dicing.

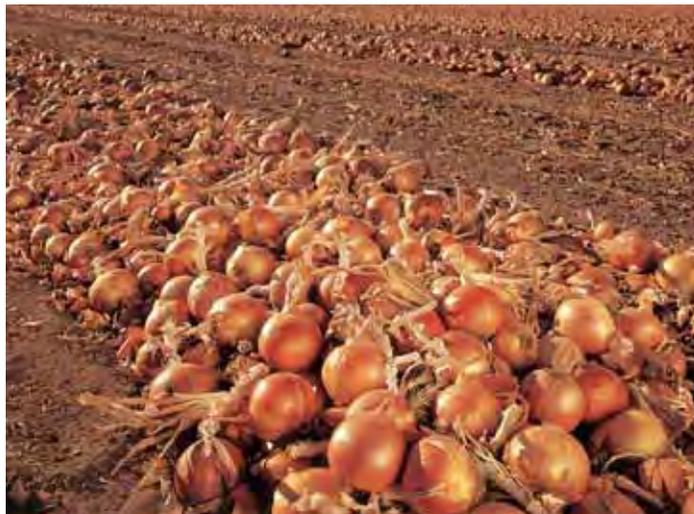
### VARIETY AND AVAILABILITY GUIDE

USA Onions, homegrown in Idaho-Eastern Oregon, 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 approximately 30 percent of the bulb onions consumed in the United States.

### PROMOTIONAL/ADVERTISING IDEAS

In-store sampling and co-op advertising drive retail sales and product awareness. The aroma of onion rings sampled



## Healthy & Homegrown in Idaho and Eastern Oregon

in the produce department is sure to draw a crowd. Contact the Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onion Committee (Idaho-E) office to learn about the promotional opportunities for your store.

Funds are also available to retail outlets that wish to increase the promotion of Idaho-E. Oregon onions through creative media advertising.

Plus, the Idaho-E. Oregon Onion Committee has an attractive label available that will be sure to draw customers to a display of consumer packs

and 10-pound bags. Many shippers carry the label, so ask for it on your next order!

### DISPLAY CARE AND HANDLING

USA 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 1 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°F 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

USA Onions has a special alliance with Weber-Stephen LLC and has focused on healthy grilling over the past year. The grilling theme has proven very effective in marketing and something worth trying. This promotion effort is great for cross-merchandising onions in the meat department. USA 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.



**USA ONIONS**  
IDAHO-E OREGON ONION COMMITTEE  
PO Box 909, Parma, ID 83660

☎ 208.722.5111  
📠 208.772.6582  
🌐 www.USAOnions.com

# USA Onions

*Homegrown in Idaho and Eastern Oregon*

Beautiful yellow, red, and white Spanish Sweet Onions



Scan this code for a complete Shippers' List  
and order your supply today!

[www.USAOnions.com](http://www.USAOnions.com)

208-722-5111



Caribbean Red papayas are versatile with a sweet taste and aroma. Cut in half, enjoy with every spoonful. Team this fruit with other melons or berries for a great fruit salad. Any salad — be it coleslaw, kale, and even seafood salad — will sparkle with chopped Caribbean Red papaya.

This maradol-like papaya usually weighs between 2 and 5 pounds. Caribbean Red papayas are non-GMO.

### RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

Display papayas as whole fruit as well as cut in half and shrink-wrapped. Use both methods simultaneously for increased sales.

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.

Caribbean Reds won't disappoint when displayed by the melons. These papayas form gorgeous skirts around cantaloupes and honeydews.

Set up "biggest bang for your buck" displays with Caribbean Red papayas front and center. These fruit bring a whole lot of gorgeous red fruit to your customer's bargain hunting delights.



Cutting a ripe papaya lengthwise shows customers that it might have some 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.

Keep an eye on your papaya display. Be quick to sort out any fruit that is less than cosmetically appealing. This fruit is still great tasting, so chop it up to add a tropical taste to prepared fruit salads or blend

into fabulous smoothies or, as Hispanics call them, batidos.



### VARIETY AND AVAILABILITY GUIDE

Brooks Tropicals is the exclusive grower of Caribbean Red papayas. Brooks grows, packs and ships these papayas year-round with food safety audited fields, harvesting crews and facilities in Belize, Central America.

### RIPENESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Caribbean Red 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 papayas can be stored at 42° F to 58° F to minimize ripening. Storing them at higher temperatures will speed the ripening process. Storing at 40° F 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 with uneven bottoms and sides, provide a layer of protection between the wicker and the fruit. Do not mist papayas. Keep them at room temperature. Caribbean Red papayas have a shelf-life of two to five days depending on ripeness; if possible, display papayas with the larger more colorful end up.

*Caribbean Red and the Brooks Tropicals logo are registered trademarks of Brooks Tropicals, LLC.*

## Out-Of-The-Box Promotional Ideas

Caribbean Reds won't disappoint when displayed by the melons. These papayas form gorgeous skirts around cantaloupes and honeydews.

Set up "the biggest bang for your buck" displays with Caribbean Red papayas bringing a whole lot of gorgeous red fruit to your customer's bargain hunting delights.

Don't fence these papayas in. Display them outside the tropical produce section with groups of other popular recipe ingredients, such as salsas or fruit salads.

A bucket of limes by the Caribbean Reds makes a great combination. Display a cut-in-half papaya with lime wedges and a plastic spoon both in the produce section and the meals-to-go section.

### POINT-OF-PURCHASE/SIGNAGE

Ripening charts help your customers know when Caribbean Reds are ready to eat. They may not realize, they can start enjoying the fruit at about 50 percent color. Ask your Brooks Tropicals sales representative for copies of artwork to use in your produce aisles.

Brooks Tropicals can provide other placards and tear-off pads for your produce department. The placards provide details on the papaya's origin, taste, color, availability, size and quality, as well as preparation and storage tips and nutritional information.



### BROOKS TROPICALS

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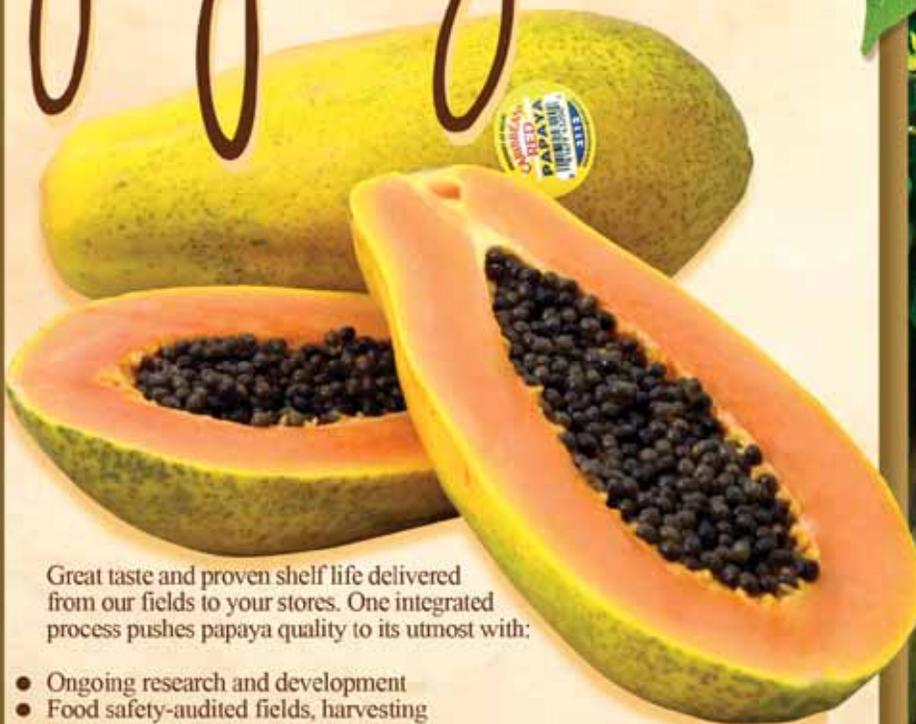
🌐 brookstropicals.com

✉ info@brookstropicals.com

FROM OUR  
PAPAYA FIELDS  
TO YOUR STORES

CARIBBEAN RED®

# Papayas



Great taste and proven shelf life delivered from our fields to your stores. One integrated process pushes papaya quality to its utmost with:

- Ongoing research and development
- Food safety-audited fields, harvesting crews, packing and shipping facilities
- State-of-the-art packing house
- Papaya ripening rooms
- Quality control team
- Continuous Cold Chain® from our fields to your stores



when food safety counts

Call Brooks today to get Caribbean Red papayas coming your way.



**BROOKS  
TROPICALS**

GROWER • PACKER • SHIPPER

800.327.4833 • Fax: 305.246.5827

[www.brookstropicals.com](http://www.brookstropicals.com)



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This pear-shaped fruit with bright orange flesh, generally weighs about 1 pound and yellows as it ripens. Brooks grows and packs these papayas in Brazil and ships them via Florida to the U.S. and Canada. Solo papayas are ready to eat starting when they're about 50 percent yellow.

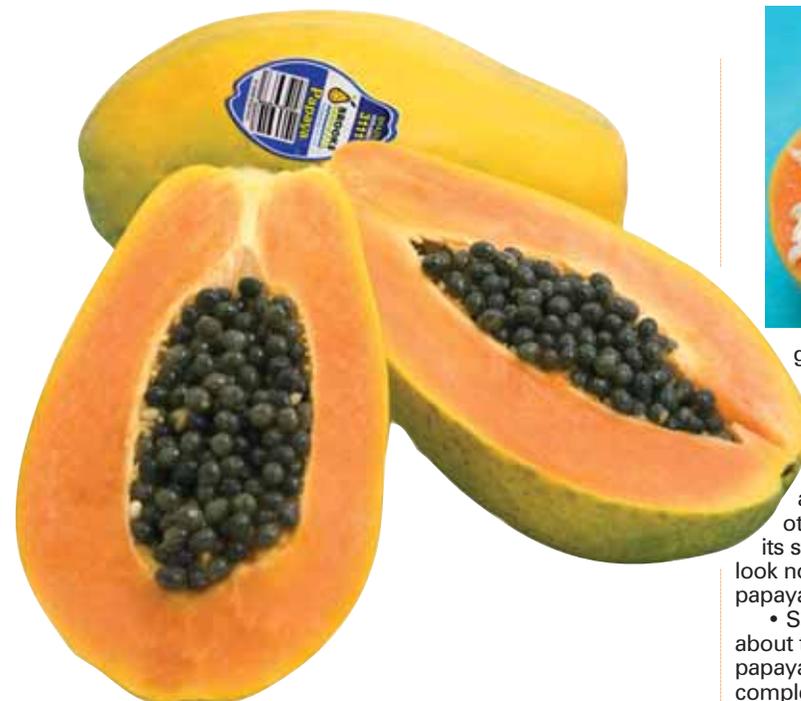
This fruit answers the call for great fruit taste any time of the day, as a breakfast favorite, refreshing snack or dessert treat. Brooks Solo papayas also make a tasty bowl when cut in half and filled with other fruits, a salad or a seafood salad entrée.

Fitting perfectly in the hand, this fruit is perfect for singles or for work lunches. You don't need a reason or recipe in mind to enjoy Solo papayas. They belong in the kitchen fruit bowl, ready to grab.

Brooks' Solo papayas are non-GMO.

### DISPLAY

• Move over melons, Solo papaya demand is growing, and it needs more room. Plunk down a basket of the golden color fruit (with protection between the basket and the soft-skinned fruit) in the midst of



your cantaloupe displays to grab attention that'll motivate impulse buys.

• Solo papayas do well beyond the tropicals aisle. They provide both a delicious and striking background as berry bowls. Show your customer the

way with some ready-to-eat fruit wrapped with a couple of berries in the seed cavity, along with a spoon and a slice of lime.

• Thinking of a salad-ingredients display? Include Solo papayas, and suggest chopping some of the Solo to



go into the coleslaw and the rest of the fruit to serve as a bowl for this side dish.

• Your customers want to eat more kale, and they're looking for other fruits to complement its striking taste. Make them look no further than a Solo papaya display nearby.

• Salsa is no longer just about tomatoes. A Solo papaya's flavor nicely complements the tomato's acidic flavors. Make sure this fruit is a part of any salsa display.

### KEY POINTS

**Taste:** Similar to a melon in flavor, it is juicy and sweet, and provides a fragrant aroma.

**Selection:** Solo papayas yield to gentle pressure when ripe. Their skin should be smooth and unblemished.

**Ripening:** Keep fruit between 70°F and 80°F until it reaches at least 50 percent color.

**Ethylene Production & Sensitivity:** High

**Shelf Life:** Once ripe, the papaya should be used within two to three days.

**Brooks Availability:** Year round

**Brooks Origin:** Brazil  
**Storage Temperature:** 50°F to 55°F. Solo papayas won't ripen if kept too cold.

**Storage Humidity:** 85 percent to 95 percent

## Out-Of-The-Box Promotional Ideas

No need to go to a lot of effort. Just wrap up a Solo papaya half with a slice of lime, a slice of starfruit and a spoon for a quick meal on the go.

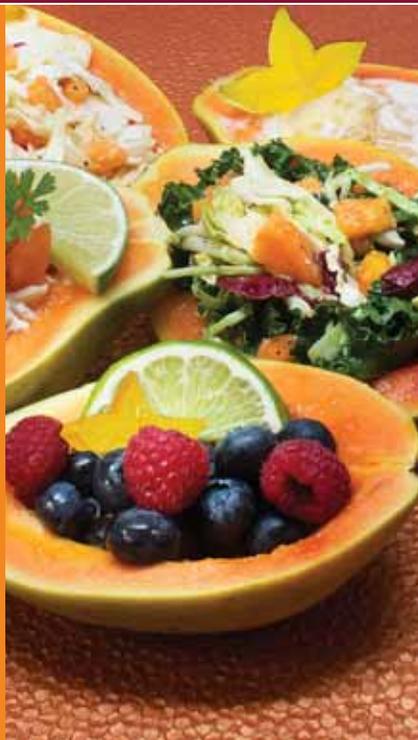
Add blueberries to a scooped-out Solo papaya to make a striking fruit salad in the ready-to-eat section. Honeydew, strawberries and other berries have the same effect.

And it doesn't have to be a fruit salad. Grow coleslaw-to-go sales using one half of the Solo as a bowl. Make a deeper bowl by chopping up some of the Solo half to go into the coleslaw.

Try a display near the seafood counter with a tantalizing photo of a seafood salad nestled in a Solo bowl.

Many in-store cooking demonstrations gain festive proportions if the dish is garnished with a slice of a Solo papaya. The demonstration gains rave reviews if the Solo papaya acts as the demo's dish.

Yogurt looks like a dessert when served in a Solo papaya half. Add a display of this fruit and starfruit near the yogurt. Have a wrapped, ready-to-go Solo papaya half filled with yogurt and topped with a slice of starfruit nearby.



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FROM OUR BRAZILIAN  
PAPAYA FIELDS  
TO YOUR STORES

# SOLO Papayas



Great taste delivered from our fields in Brazil to your stores. Perfect for individual salads, breakfast bowls and dessert cups. These solos are backed with:

- Ongoing research and development
- Food safety audited fields, harvesting crews, packing and shipping facilities
- Quality control team

All that hard work delivers quality — Solo papayas with great taste and proven shelf life. Call Brooks today to get Brazilian Solo papayas coming your way.



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[www.brookstropicals.com](http://www.brookstropicals.com)





Marie's Refrigerated Produce Dressing offers additional opportunity to add incremental profit to the produce department. Combine this high dollar margin with ease of handling and minimal shrink and you have a product that will help you improve your overall produce department margins.

Effective promotion is less about straight discounting and more about merchandising the product directly adjacent to or in partnership with fresh produce. Help the consumer recognize the easy ways to transform your produce into an extraordinary meal!

**MERCHANDISING DRESSING WITH PRODUCE**

The best promotions enable consumers to easily create a great tasting meal or side dish. That means getting consumers to pick up a jar or bottle of Marie's with every produce purchase. Refrigerated Produce Dressing presents a host of cross-merchandising opportunities. Their location right in the produce department gives produce personnel easy access to utilizing them in a variety of cross-promotions.

**RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS**

Use point-of-sale to create a strong linkage that not only

**Out-Of-The-Box Promotional Ideas**

Yogurt Dressing is driving Refrigerated Produce Dressing category growth. Marie's Yogurt Dressing is naturally low in fat and calories, helping you reach health-conscious consumers. They are premium-positioned items that trade consumers up, driving additional profits to your bottom line. Make sure to merchandise Yogurt Dressing with produce as you would any dressing.



delivers consumer benefit but also assists in driving increased sales and profits.

Attaching a coupon or recipe will assist the consumer in deciding how to transform a commodity into a meal, but it also helps create a link between fresh produce and the fresh, homemade dressings.

Cross-merchandise fresh produce with produce dressing to increase the sales of both:

- Coleslaw Dressing with cabbage
- Chunky Blue Cheese with celery
- Creamy Ranch with baby carrots
- Lemon Herb Vinaigrette with kale

**POINT OF PURCHASE SIGNAGE**

POS materials and signage are an effective way to get consumers to link the use of dressings and fresh produce with serving suggestions and recipes. Marie's has a variety of point-of-sale items designed to complement our Refrigerated Produce Dressing. Our proprietary recipes feature both traditional and innovative uses for a wide range of produce items.

**VARIETY AND INNOVATION**

The Refrigerated Produce Dressing category delivers delicious homemade flavor, fresh taste and product variety. With our category-leading Chunky Blue Cheese Dressing, innovative vinaigrettes such as Basil Pesto & Lemon Herb, and on-trend Yogurt Dressing, Marie's is committed to the growth of Refrigerated Produce Dressing. Looking forward, Marie's will continue to deliver

new products that enable consumers to turn produce into extraordinary meals.

**TASTE AND NUTRITION**

Refrigerated Produce Dressing presents a healthier, more wholesome dressing alternative for consumers — attributes which can be promoted and are particularly applicable to the produce department.

The Marie's line of Refrigerated Salad Dressing is made the old fashioned way, which means:

- Gluten-Free
- No Artificial Preservatives
- No High Fructose Corn Syrup
- No Modified Food Starch
- No Artificial Flavors

Ensure your entire category is made this way and then take advantage in promoting this fact to your fresh-minded produce consumers.

**USAGE SUGGESTIONS**

Suggesting particular usage ideas to consumers will help increase sales:

- Marie's makes any ordinary produce item into an extraordinary meal.
- Marie's Chunky Blue Cheese works great as a dip.
- Marie's Creamy Yogurt Dressing can be substituted for regular dressing for a healthier lifestyle.



**Quick Tips**

- Merchandise next to refrigerated fresh vegetables for an increased produce ring
- Cross-merchandise with slower moving products for double the benefit
- Use POS throughout the department to remind customers to check out the dressings



MARIE'S®  
 40 Pointe Drive, Brea, CA 92821  
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 maries.com  
 mmiddleton@venturafoods.com

• TRY AS A MARINADE! •

BASIL

PESTO



BASIL

PESTO

Made with  
Extra  
Virgin  
Olive Oil



Real, Premium  
Ingredients

Marie's

New! BASIL PESTO  
VINAIGRETTE

DRESSING & MARINADE  
NO PRESERVATIVES  
GLUTEN FREE

ADD SOME *green* TO YOUR PRODUCE SECTION

# BASIL PESTO VINAIGRETTE

OFFERED EXCLUSIVELY BY MARIE'S®



Everyone's favorite refrigerated dressing brand introduces a bold new flavor. Marie's Basil Pesto Vinaigrette abounds with Basil, garlic, parmesan cheese and extra virgin olive oil. This unique taste is a perfect accompaniment for salads and a delicious marinade for meats and vegetables. Stock up and watch it fly off the shelf.

Marie's

Makes the ordinary... EXTRAORDINARY!™

maries.com



Starfruit gets its name because of its star-shaped appearance when you cut it. Starfruit, or carambola, is a sweet and tangy fruit that varies in size from three to six inches in length. Its edible skin has a waxy sheen and turns from green to yellow during the maturation process. It's a good source of vitamins A and C. Brooks Tropicals grows its starfruit on its coastal farm in southwest Florida.

Brooks Tropicals is the largest grower and shipper of domestic starfruit. This fruit is grown in food safety-audited fields, picked by audited crews, and packed and distributed in audited facilities. Brooks' starfruit is non-GMO.

*Health Note: Those with kidney problems should check with their doctor before eating starfruit.*

### DISPLAY

Displaying starfruit in a basket with points sticking out gives consumers instant recognition of the fruit's sliced appearance. Don't limit those baskets to the tropicals aisle.

Break up the greens of your avocado displays with these bright fruits. Use them to separate avocado varieties.

Give in-house fruit salads the star treatment with starfruit slices tossed in and, of course,



strategically placed on top and around the container's sides. Your customers will get it; star appeal can be added to almost any dish. Have a small starfruit display nearby for impulse additions for dinner that night.

Berries and slices of starfruit are the cook's way of making a dish special. A basket of starfruit near the berries display sets up an add-on sale.

Just as you'd add a couple of berries as garnish to cut fruit, go for some diversity and add stars to the mix. Slices of melons and papayas look even more appetizing with starfruit slices.

Add a slice of starfruit and lime with a spoon, and that cut-in half Solo papaya will be hard to pass by.

Your customers want suggestions on how to eat more produce. Set up fruit salad displays with this fruit making its star appearance. Include wrapped and ready-to-eat fruit with starfruit slices, and your customers will get the idea. Attractive photos of starfruit and its slices can also do the trick.

Add starfruit to salsa displays, fruits for chocolate dipping and snackable fruits or fruits eaten out of hand.

### BACKROOM AND HANDLING TIPS

Keep storage temperatures between 48°F to 55°F.

When adding to fruit salads, take a vegetable peeler and remove the brown tips of the starfruit. Slice the fruit and punch out seeds, and it's ready to go.

As starfruit turns yellow, it becomes sweeter. Display starfruit with varying degrees of ripeness.

### KEY POINTS

**Taste:** Similar to that of a tart apple when green, starfruit sweetens when it becomes yellow.

**Selection:** Choose a firm, crisp fruit. Browning on the edges is a sign of ripeness.

**Ripening:** Store fruit at room temperature until most traces of green have disappeared and ribs turn brown.

**Ethylene Production And Sensitivity:** Low



### Shelf Life:

One week, depending on temperature and humidity. Once fully ripe, it should be eaten within two to three days.

**Brooks Availability:** July to April

**Brooks Origin:** Florida  
**Storage Temperature:** 48°F to 55°F

**Storage Humidity:** 88 percent to 90 percent

Starfruit is also available in clamshells called StarPac®

StarPac prevents bruising during transport and customer handling; stacks easily, reduces shrinkage by controlling humidity; tracks and scans more easily with UPC coding; and enhances ripening.



### BROOKS TROPICALS

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## Out-Of-The-Box Promotional Ideas

Back-to-school displays can use some star appeal. Starfruit is lunchbox-friendly and makes a nice sandwich topper for lunchmeat sandwiches. Starfruit also makes a nutritious and fun after-school snack.

Barbecuing, grilling and tailgating displays include tips and ideas for side dishes. Starfruit can play starring roles in its own recipes or a supporting role topping almost any salad, fruit or vegetable dish.

Almost any in-store cooking demonstration can add to sales. A starfruit slice makes an eye-catching garnish for many sample dishes. This includes many drinks. Starfruit can be squeezed just like a lime for a great citrus flavor to add to tea, carbonated drinks, even fine wines.

Summer holidays (especially the Fourth of July) are all about the stars and stripes. Starfruit has the stars part covered. Make sure your customers know it.

FROM OUR  
STARFRUIT FIELDS  
TO YOUR STORES

FLORIDA

Starfruit



## Leading Food Safety

First with starfruit that's food safety-certified across the board: groves, harvesting crews, packinghouse and storage facility.

Grown by Brooks for over fifty years, this Florida-grown starfruit has a refreshing, sweet-tart, crisp taste ready for your customers' dining tables. Available in bulk or StarPac clamshell packaging and with double-stack barcode labels.

Brooks Tropicals' high-scoring starfruit audits join the roster of other successful audits for Caribbean Red papayas, SlimCado avocados and more.



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View our  
mobile  
website



**Primus Labs**

Groves  
Harvesting Crews  
Packinghouse  
Storage Facility



Sweet onions present an opportunity for incremental produce sales. The health and flavor benefits are an easy sell for consumers looking to cook tasteful food without salt and cholesterol. Sweet onions also offer ample opportunity for promotion and cross-merchandising with a variety of products in and out of the department.

Onions are the most consumed produce item in the world. Average annual onion per capita consumption in the United States is 21 pounds — a tremendous opportunity for consistent sales.

### RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

GO BIG! Capitalize on one of today's hottest trends — fresh produce. It's healthy, 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!

### Out-Of-The-Box Promotional Ideas



- Schedule a chef demo to show consumers new ways to use healthy onions to infuse flavor into recipes.

- Develop a "Recipe Kit" promotion which cross-merchandises all the ingredients, including sweet onions, to make an easy meal.

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.

### FLAVOR AND NUTRITION DIFFERENTIATION

Product differentiation gives consumers reasons to buy with confidence. Emphasizing the quality, flavor, and nutrition differences of Authentic 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.

### AVAILABILITY: YEAR ROUND OPPORTUNITY

Being able to ensure a consistent sweet onion flavor profile is an important element for repeat and consistent sales. Retailers can now ensure their consumers an enjoyable eating experience every time! Authentic Sweet onions are available 365 days a year.

Consistently purchasing the highest quality sweet onion 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. Use regional freshness as an educational vehicle to educate consumers on uniqueness of recognized sweet onion growing districts.

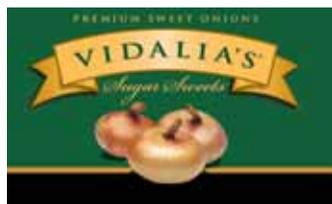
As consumers increase interest in buying local and knowing the grower, stores can capitalize on the fantastic regional information available for the various sweet onion regions. Creating brand awareness translates to consumer loyalty and repeat sales.

Authentic Sweet onions include:

- Sugar Sweets® available spring and summer

- Walla Walla River® available summer and fall

- Mayan Sweets® available fall, winter and early spring



Thirty percent of consumers say they would buy and eat more fruits and vegetables if they knew how to use them, so go ahead and help them. Stores can take advantage of various websites such as Keystone's Kitchen Website, the Vidalia® Onion Association's site, and the Walla Walla® Sweet Onion Committee site to provide additional information and resources for customers and to seek out new and creative promotional ideas.

Demos add excitement as well as an educational component. A good demo can not only spur sales that day but build consistent sales on a regular basis.

Emphasize Authentic Sweet onion's nutritional benefits and variety of uses. Promote as an ingredient for holiday or party entertaining, including Superbowl, Cinco de Mayo, and summer barbecues.

### CROSS-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! Sweet onions are an excellent ingredient added to any dish. Especially in guacamole, as part of salads, on hamburgers, in Kabobs, or with steaks.

### Quick Tips

Sell "A Healthy Way to Add Flavor"! Onions are highly recommended for those trying to prevent cardiovascular disease, cancer and infections. Also, sweet onions are fat- and cholesterol-free, and contain very little sodium.

Ensure your sweet onions are SWEET! Get them from a reliable, authentic source.

Educate Store Personnel: Ensure store-level personnel are aware of how to store and handle the product, the difference in sweet onions versus other varieties, and usage ideas. They are the front line in helping to promote the product and provide information to customers.

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SUMMER

# SWEET ONIONS

AUTUMN

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### POINT OF PURCHASE SIGNAGE

**FLAVOR is the purchase driver!**

With so many different sizes, shapes, colors, and varieties of tomatoes available to consumers, it can be overwhelming. POS should focus not only on variety name, growing method, and country of origin, but should include a flavor descriptor to help with purchasing decisions. Adding signage to include “sweet,” “savory,” “juicy” or other taste adjectives will help the consumer zero in on their choice more quickly.

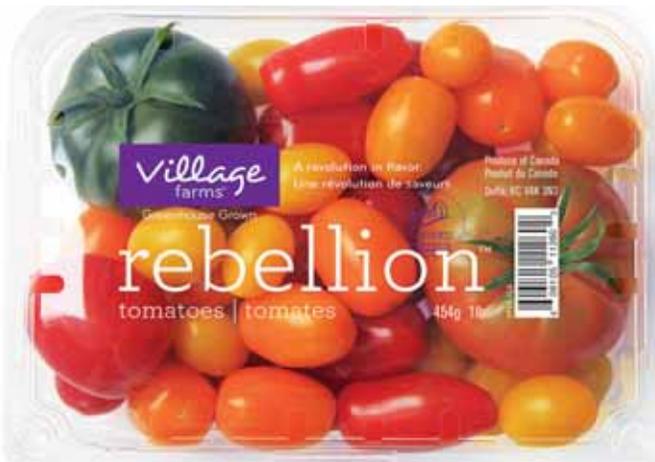
### Focus on Health Benefits of Tomatoes!

We know tomatoes are high in Lycopene, and vitamins A and K, but what exactly does that mean? Signage should be “outcome” focused: for example, heart healthy, cholesterol reducing, improves vision, and reduces hypertension. Tomatoes are an overall health elixir.

### MERCHANDISING AND DISPLAY

Always display tomatoes at room temperature. This will ensure best flavor.

Quick Meal Solutions enhanced with grab-n-go recipe



cards add interest and appeal to tomato displays.

Create an inviting display of tomatoes with mozzarella, basil, and olive oil for a healthy salad option.

Pair tomatoes with sweet bell peppers for a colorful eye-catching display; add garlic and boxed pasta for quick-ready meal solutions.

### SOCIAL MEDIA

Partner with Village Farms on Facebook and Twitter to communicate with targeted audiences on specials and regional programs.

### SNACKING TOMATO VARIETIES RULE WITH CONSUMERS

#### Encourage Healthy Eating!

A recent study by the Hartman Group shows snacking accounts for more than half of adult eating occasions. Close to one third of adults who eat alone do so to “savor a high quality food experience.” Make sure you are carrying a full variety of snacking tomatoes including Village Farms Heavenly Villagio Marzano® — packed in

convenient grab-n-go bags — it is the perfect snacking variety. Sinfuilly Sweet Campari®, Lip-Smackn’ Grapes®, and Mini Sensation Cherries® are all part of Village Farms Garden Fresh Flavor™ Collection. Tomatoes do not need to be refrigerated, so opportunities for creating eye catching displays within the produce section and other areas of the store are abound!

### VARIETY AND AVAILABILITY

**Not all tomatoes are created equal!**

Soiless Greenhouse grown varieties:

- Have the benefit of being available 365 days a year.
- Are vine ripened in a controlled climate achieving a more flavorful and consistent quality tomato.
- Do not use soil and are grown in an enclosed environment mitigating the risk of contaminants achieving a higher level of food safety.
- Learn more at the website [certifiedgreen-housefarmers.com](http://certifiedgreen-housefarmers.com).

### Out-Of-The-Box Promotional Ideas

Tomatoes, The Healthy Snack: Position a display of grab-n-go pouch bags like Heavenly Villagio Marzano near check-out or in the snack aisle.



**Quick Tip**

Locally Grown is hot. Use POS to promote product grown locally. Village Farms new packaging for Texas features Texas Grown on every product.



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Turbana Tropicals appeal to two very different target audiences — mainstream and ethnic. We suggest retailers use a variety of means to reach out to them both to boost business and improve loyalty.

### KNOW YOUR CUSTOMER

Success in any retail business is all about knowing your customer. Also giving focus to the customer's experience is a measure of growing importance. Turbana Tropicals are a value-added product line, offering ethnic customers a centralized option for the fresh vegetables they demand while giving mainstream customers a new option to incorporate fusion ingredients to their meals.

### EDUCATE YOUR STAFF

Turbana offers retailers different tools to educate their merchandisers, produce managers and their consumers. One of these tools is a mobile app available for Produce Managers to learn about ethnic tropical products and help them manage the category. This app also allows them to understand the demographics that surround their stores in order to customize their assortment to the specific needs of their market, as well as to be informed of upcoming holidays in order to promote tropicals accordingly.

### VARIETIES

- Aloe Vera
- Avocado
- Aji Cachucha
- Batata
- Calabaza
- Chayote
- Dry & Groovy Coconut
- Eddo
- Ginger
- Habanero Pepper
- Malanga Amarilla
- Malanga Blanca
- Malanga Coco
- Malanga Lila
- Name
- Sour Orange
- Yellow Yam
- Yuca

### PRICE BY UNIT

Weekly market pricing will dictate price points at the retail level. Like plantains, tropicals should be sold by the "each" versus by the pound.



Aloe Vera



Batata



Calabaza



Chayote



Yuca

### TAILOR POINT-OF-PURCHASE AND SIGNAGE

Retailers have to craft an overarching platform that works for both audiences and tailor messaging to each. For the mainstream audience, education is key. Showcase ripeness instructions, storage tips, have inspirational food samplings available in the produce area and hand out recipes. For the ethnic groups, labeling the tropicals and using signage in their native language as well as in English is key. Also adding staff representatives of each of your customers' demographic that are knowledgeable about the tropicals establishes credibility and makes these customers comfortable to shop in your stores.

### TARGET PROMOTION AND ADVERTISING

Due to continuous growth of minority population, the U.S. bears a resemblance to a "salad bowl" where all the ingredients come together, but each one retains its original form and flavor. Retailers should embrace this idea when thinking of promotional ideas. For example, promoting malangas during Thanksgiving and Christmas is a must, as the majority of Cubans and Puerto Ricans enjoy them puréed with garlic and lime during the holiday season.

### CHANGE DISPLAYS TO KEEP IT FRESH

New displays and new products are appealing to potential shoppers, so adding our Turbana Tropicals is a must! Additionally, the fact that these items are available 52 weeks per year, we believe alternating them around monthly or seasonally is a key tool to keep displays appealing.

### CROSS-MERCHANDISE WITH CREATIVITY

Tropicals lend themselves to some creative cross-merchandising ideas because they can be incorporated into an array of menu options. Understanding this, cross-merchandising displays should cater to a variety of palate

options. Some like savory and spicy, while others like sweet and tart together. For example, why not showcase chayote and squash next to one another? They make for an amazing side dish. Maybe Yuca with bread and crackers to show how easy stuffed Yuca balls can be made?

### Quick Tips

We encourage retailers to educate their produce managers and tailor the assortment of tropicals to the demographics of each store.

Invest strategically in younger customers, who are not only early adopters of social media and mobile device use, but are now translating their super-user status into trendsetters



### TURBANA

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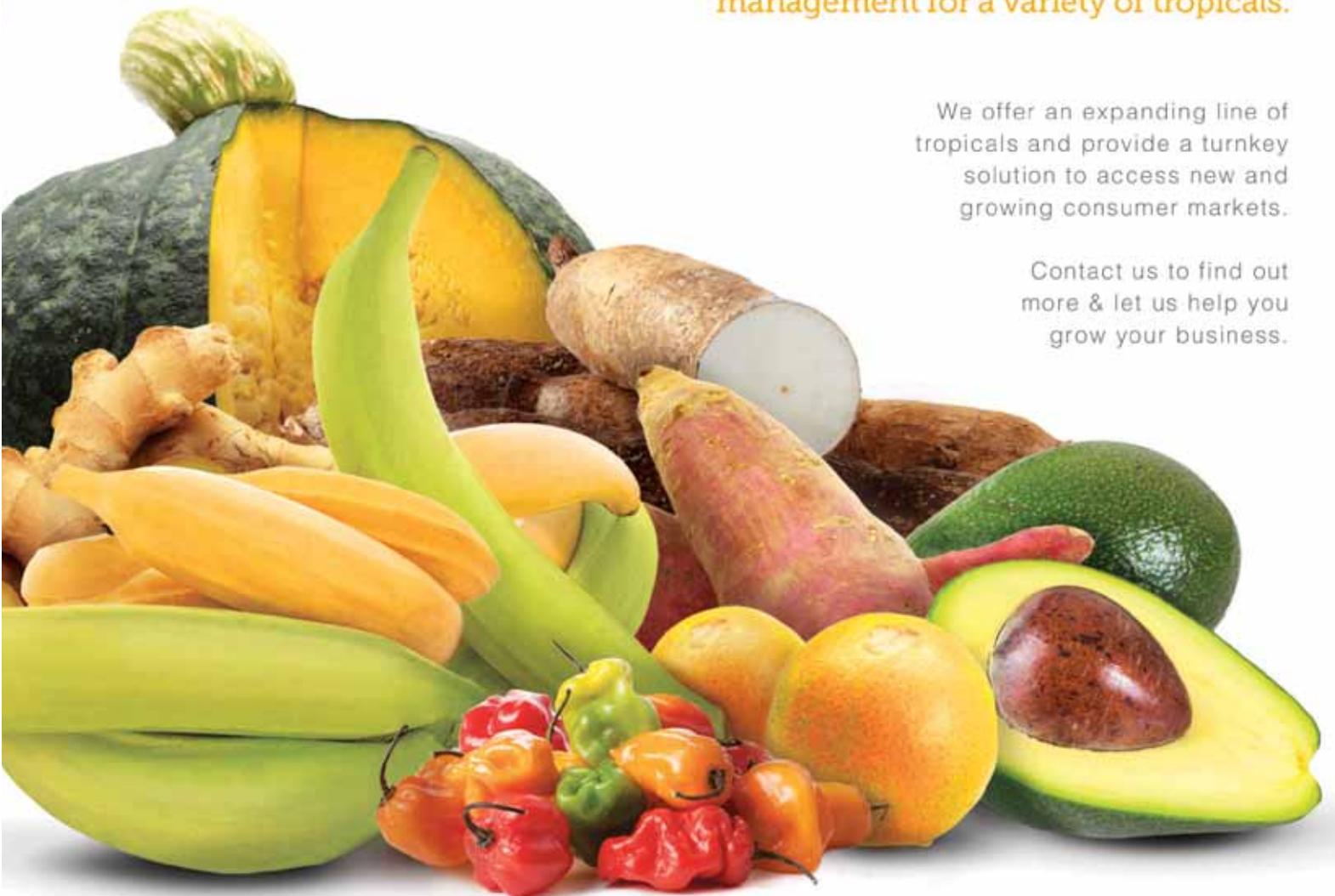


# MULTIPLE TROPICALS ONE STOP

Turbana offers one stop shopping & category management for a variety of tropicals.

We offer an expanding line of tropicals and provide a turnkey solution to access new and growing consumer markets.

Contact us to find out more & let us help you grow your business.





Mann continues to lead the charge in producing the freshest **Vegetable Trays** in the marketplace with different veggie and dip configurations, as well as in-and-out seasonal packaging options that retailers are utilizing to generate buzz and drive sales.

### SUPERIOR TECHNOLOGY

Mann's fresh Vegetable Trays feature micro-perforation (micro-perf) technology, which allows each individual vegetable in the tray to maintain its own atmosphere. Each ingredient is covered in its own cell by film with a perforation pattern ideally suited for its respiration rate. Most trays on the market provide only one atmosphere for multiple ingredients with different needs. Micro perforations provide better quality by keeping veggies fresher, longer.

The micro-perf film also seals each cell individually, which holds veggies in place and prevents product migration within the tray.

### SUSTAINABILITY —

saving the planet one big piece of black plastic at a time!

In 2012, Mann conducted research into what consumers wanted in fresh item packaging, and they found that 92 percent of consumers polled said they

did not use the black tray (lids) for serving, per the package design. So they redesigned the vegetable platter/tray and removed the black plastic "lid" of the package.

Mann's new large tray has **38% less** packaging material than the old tray (small trays have **43% less**) — and 50% less packaging than other trays on the market, thus reducing 1.4 million pounds of plastic from landfills annually. Additionally, removing the bottom tray allows consumers a bigger viewing window to the products. So it's a win/win!

### CARE & HANDLING

- Receive your fresh Veggie Trays into refrigeration
- Never break the cold chain during receiving/storing/merchandising trays
- Keep displays fresh and plentiful — remember eye appeal is buy appeal
- Rotate trays — first in, first out
- Practicing good cold chain management will ensure the 16-day shelf life of Mann's fresh Veggie Trays



### PACKAGING

- Veg Meat & Cheese Tray (36oz)
  - Vegetable Trays (18oz & 40oz)\*
  - Organic Veg Tray (18oz)\*
- \*Also available in bilingual packaging



### MANN PACKING COMPANY

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veggiesmadeeasy.com

lori.bigras@manningpacking.com

### Out-Of-The-Box Promotional Ideas

Great in-and-out opportunities with promotional trays that will keep category fresh and exciting with unique seasonal graphics.



Mann Holiday Tray 2013/14

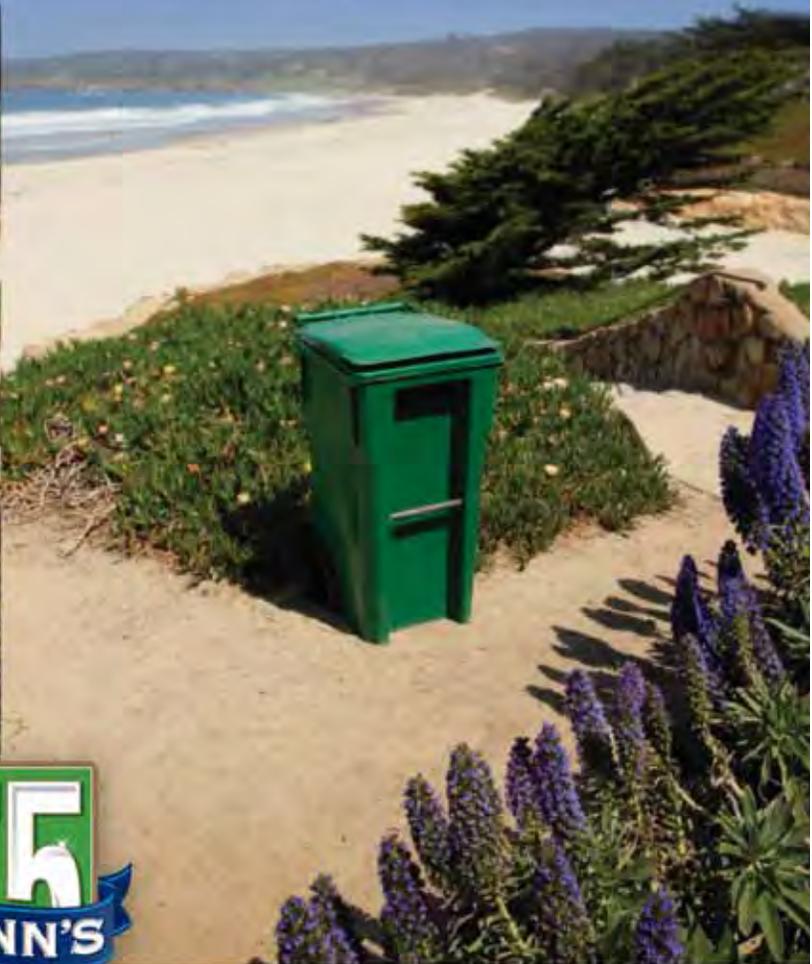


Also available in bilingual packaging

# Saving the planet one big piece of black plastic at a time.

Beach parties then

Beach parties now

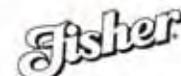


Removing the black plastic from our fresh vegetable party trays—which consumers told us they didn't use anyway—saves **1.4 tons** of plastic from our landfills each year. Now that's cause for a party!





# Thank You!



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Apples	Hydroponic Lettuce
Artichokes	Kiwi
Asian Pears, Pluots & White Flesh Fruit	Kosher Fruit
Asparagus	Leafy Greens
Avocado	Leaves
Avocado - Lightskin	Lettuce
Bananas	Lighting
Bell Peppers	Limes
Berries - Conventional	Mangos
Berries - organic	Melons
Beverages	Mushrooms
Cantaloupe	Nuts
Carrots	Onions
Celery	Organic Fruit
Cherries	Organic Vegetables
Chestnuts	Papaya
Chili Pepper	Party Vegetable Trays
Citrus	Pears
Collard Greens, Kale, Mustard & Turnip	Peppers
Greens	Pineapples
Corn	Plantain
Cucumbers	Potatoes
Dates	Pre-Conditioned Fruit
Dips	Radishes
Dried Fruit	Retail Merchandising
Dried Fruit & Nuts	Salad Dressing
Dried Plums	Salsa Chips
Eggplant	Specialty Bananas
Figs	Spinach
Fresh Cut Meal Solutions	Steam Veggies
Fresh Cut Vegetables	Strawberries
Fresh-cut fruit	Sun Dried Tomatoes
Garlic	Sweet Onions
Grapes	Sweet Potatoes
Green Beans	Tomatoes
Green Onions	Tree Fruit
Greenhouse Tomatoes	Tree Fruit - Pre-conditioned
Greenhouse Vegetables	Tropicals
Guacamole	Veggie Kits
Herbs	Veggie Snacks
Hydroponically Grown Living Lettuce	Whole Leaf Lettuce
Hydroponic Butter Lettuce	

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to promote healthy choices during March and beyond.



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Jamie Carawan,  
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& Innovation,  
On the Border Mexican Grill



David Groll,  
Corporate Executive Chef,  
McAlister's Deli Corporation



Jessica Foust,  
Chef/RDN Manager of  
Nutrition & Culinary,  
McDonald's Corporation

## Produce First! Spotlights Fruits and Vegetables

Program targets America's menus and corporate chefs to spark innovation and increased consumption.

The Produce First! American Menus Initiative recently was embraced wholeheartedly by some of the retail and foodservice industry's most prominent corporate chefs. The one-day event, which followed The Culinary Institute of America's and Harvard School of Public Health's *Worlds of Healthy Flavors Invitational Leadership Retreat*,

was presented by the CIA and PRODUCE BUSINESS magazine.

Held at the CIA's Greystone campus, which is located in the lush Napa Valley, the program took direct aim at America's menus by "seeking to spark the imagination of chefs and foodservice operators in bringing fruits and vegetables in all forms (fresh, frozen,

canned, dried, and juiced) front and center in new menu development."

With a healthy mix of lively discussions, hands-on menu development and keynote speakers, chefs came away with a plethora of inspiration and business intelligence to use in their kitchens.

Chefs from such iconic brands as Kroger,



**Tod Kawachi,**  
Chef Instructor  
Culinary Institute of America



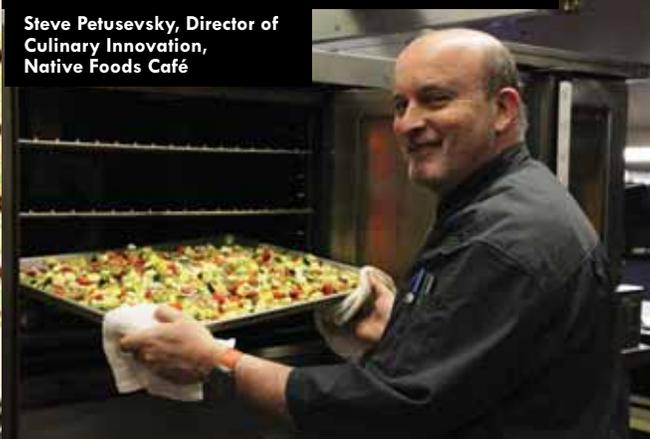
**Dr. Christine Rosenbloom, PhD,**  
RDN, Professor Emerita,  
Georgia State University



**Matthew Harding,**  
Corporate Executive Chef,  
Bravo/Brio Restaurant Group



**Steve Petusevsky, Director of  
Culinary Innovation,  
Native Foods Café**



**Suvir Saran,**  
Top Chef Master,  
Author and Restaurateur

McDonald's Corp., Yale Dining, The Cheesecake Factory, Panda Express, Dunkin' Brands and Brinker International were told that "In order for the foodservice industry to contribute its proportional share to increasing produce consumption among customers for optimal health, the industry needs to more than double the amount of produce (in all forms) it buys,

prepares and serves to customers."

To that end, the nearly 45 chefs were broken into five teams, given market baskets and challenged with preparing produce-centric dishes in the allotted time of an hour and a half.

To conclude the jam-packed agenda, Jim Prevor, president and editor-in-chief of PRODUCE BUSINESS, led a lively discussion,

"From Seeds to Shipping: How Decisions are Made in Produce and How Foodservice Professionals Can Influence These Decisions," which featured Diane Barrett from the University of California; Ray Schmitt, farmer and board member of the Pear Bureau Northwest; and Maeve Webster from Datassential, a menu trends research firm.

# Considering Bulk Nuts

Marketers and growers discuss the category and how it works for retailers. **BY MICHELE SOTALLARO**

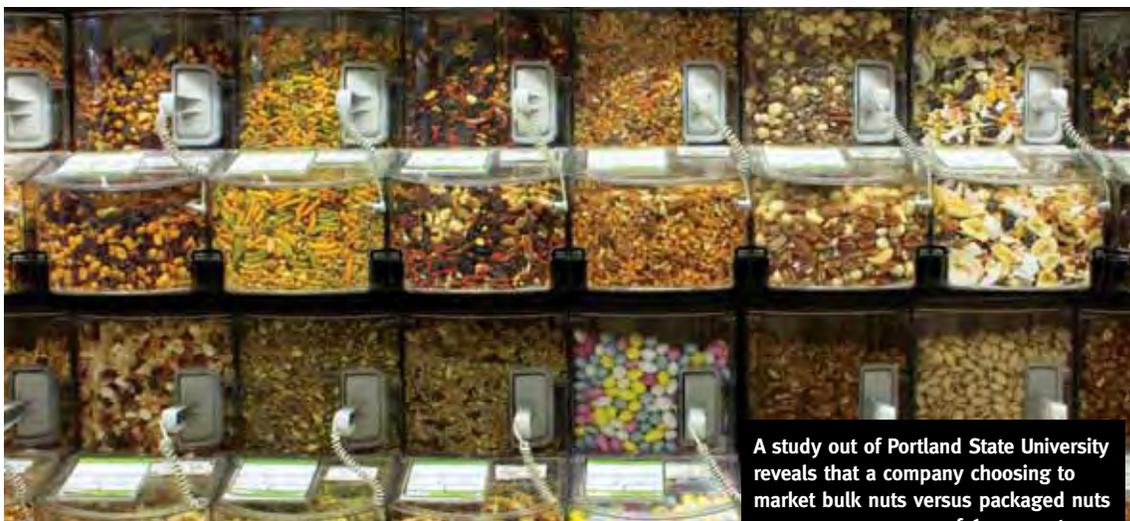


PHOTO COURTESY OF BERGIN FRUIT AND NUT COMPANY

**A study out of Portland State University reveals that a company choosing to market bulk nuts versus packaged nuts can save an average of 62 percent on material and delivery costs.**

**P**aper or plastic; bulk or packaged; to be, or not to be — that is the question. Just like consumers, retailers are faced with a choice when it comes to nuts in Produce. There is a variety of reasons to offer bulk, packaged or both formats when selling nuts in Produce. Experts agree that the choice for bulk can be appealing because of its wholesome persona, display options and pricing flexibility.

## The Perception of Bulk

A study out of Portland State University's Food Industry Leadership Center for the Bulk is Green Council (a bulk industry trade group based in Portland, OR) discovered that consumers' decisions to buy bulk were mainly weighed by their perception of the nuts' freshness. Consumers buy in bulk for the ability to purchase what they need, save money, and to cut down on packaging and waste, according to the findings.

Joseph Setton, vice president of domestic sales and marketing for Setton International Foods Inc. in Commack, NY, echoes the results from the Portland State study. "Bulk products have historically been one way to show the end-consumer in produce that nuts are an agricultural farm-fresh product."

The study, which included 12 stores in the Portland, OR, area, from co-ops to national supermarket chains, also revealed that a

company choosing to market bulk nuts versus packaged nuts can save an average of 62 percent on material and delivery costs.

National Public Radio's blog, *The Salt*, conducted a similar study in Washington D.C. and found that the No. 1 item people buy in bulk is nuts and/or seeds.

Terry Williams, national sales manager with SACHS Peanuts based in Clarkton, NC, also agrees with highlighting the nutritional benefits of nuts to entice shoppers. "Peanuts are still seen as a value-added item. It's a healthy alternative item, with no cholesterol, and considered a heart-healthy snack," says Williams. "Use those benefits to help increase the number of sales. They are also an impulse item. If you are able to place them in high traffic areas, then that helps to increase sales."

Corey O'Connell handles marketing and product development for Bergin Fruit and Nut Company, a manufacturer and distributor of dried fruit and nuts located in St. Paul, MN. He says customer feedback is a big part of how the company decides to create the mixes. "If there is a trend moving toward a healthier nut that's becoming popular, then we'll take advantage of that and create a mix around it," says O'Connell. "One of our biggest mixes is called the Antioxidant Mix, and it's a variety of nuts and dried fruit, which are high in antioxidant content. We also have a Healthy Heart Mix. We're constantly adding variety to the category."

## Merchandising Bulk

In addition to the consumers' perceptions of the category, it's important the visual aesthetic command attention without being intimidating.

"Every retailer has its own way of display, so we try to customize display bins or bulk bins by the retailer's needs or build around holidays or events — whether that be March Madness for basketball, Super Bowl or Nascar events," says SACHS' Williams. "We also work through our broker network and sales personnel to service accounts in-store."

O'Connell says Bergin also provides a service for retailers to maintain displays. "The sales team manages the accounts and advises the retailers. The sales reps actually go into the store and help set up the original casing unit or bins. We do offer a service program so retailers can take advantage of this extra help with cleaning and merchandisers to assist with stock. The retailers usually have an idea of what they are looking for, but we help with recommendations. We do a lot of gravity bins (bulk dispensers) and scoop bins as well. Some retailers have requested the scoop bins on top and the gravity bins below.

"We feel it's important to do demos or provide instructions on the display set," adds O'Connell. "Anything to make shoppers less intimidated by the bulk section. If consumers know how to use the display unit, then it helps

them to purchase more. O’Connell believes that this approach to bulk displays not only encourages consumers to shop but also combats shrink by maintaining strong sales.

Setton from Setton Farms explains that some retailers take a semi-packaged perspective to the bulk category. “Some produce departments pack the bulk nuts in plastic fruit containers to help keep the nuts fresh and display them alongside their fruits and vegetables. This repackaging can lead to a significant amount of shrink through spillage

and spoilage.”

As a response to this tactic, Setton Farms created “Produce Tubs.” “We help produce departments achieve the ‘farm fresh’ look for nuts without all the shrink. The ‘Produce Tub’ is completely packed by Setton in a traditional non-branded plain fruit container, mimicking the packaging made popular by produce departments. Additionally, the Tubs come packed in a plain cardboard tray — very similar to what you would typically see from other produce products.”

Setton explains that this form of bulk/packaging allows for Setton Farms product to blend in with other self-packed produce items at store level. The Tubs are available in pistachios, cashews, almonds, mixed nuts and cranberries.

Beth Sequeira, sales and marketing representative for the Kettleman City, CA-based Keenan Farms says the company also decided to work with containers of sorts. “We found tremendous success with our display shippers. Their relevant themes and eye-catching design draws consumers to our healthy and tasty snack. The bins also give us valuable space to communicate the positive health message associated with pistachios.”

SACHS’ Williams emphasizes no matter what the display set-up, it’s important to protect customers as they shop for bulk. “I think the main issue [with bulk] is the allergens that are involved — especially with peanuts. You always want to make sure that the peanuts are covered in some way to protect the public against any allergies. Keeping the peanuts covered also helps control any shrink issues.

“We like to see people who are interested in bulk peanuts actually trying one or two peanuts, it usually leads them to make a purchase. Sometimes that free sample acts as your friend and not your enemy,” says Williams.

### Maintaining A Fair Price

Since some bulk items have the tendency to be a bit higher in price, because of seasonality and uniqueness, bulk purchasing can inherit a bad reputation. “Our goal is to continue to work closely with our retail partners to market pistachios competitively and fairly,” says Keenan’s Sequeira. “The most recent vehicle to get multiple purchases and increase the ring at the cash register is to offer ‘2 for’ deals to consumers.”

“Based on the market, and the fact that peanuts are a once-a-year harvest, 99 cents a pound is strong pricing,” says SACHS’ Williams. “Staying below a \$1 per pound for a short-term key event — your turn is much better.”

“On the manufacturing side, we try to do deals on bulk items during the holidays,” says Bergin’s O’Connell. “A lot of times, our promotions coincide with seasonal demand — for instance, in the summer, people want more sunflower nuts.

“It’s always good to try and line price whenever possible. For example, take similar types of foods and offer them all at the same price, even though they have a slightly different cost — we’re looking at the overall margin rather than the individual. Shoppers can buy a few different things at the same price.”

pb

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# CATEGORY (MIS)MANAGEMENT



**C**ategory Management is a process that was developed for Grocery to determine what items to sell and how much space each item deserves. It was very successful in Grocery and other “hard” goods departments, so management assumed it would be good for Produce.

Given that most senior managers have Grocery backgrounds, they pressed the Produce group to adopt the same process

and use it to run the department. But we all know that Produce doesn’t work the same way, and the principles used by Grocery do not apply.

I spent much time and effort trying to convince management that the classic category management model is not applicable in Produce. Unfortunately, management continues to press for compliance — because they just don’t get it!

In the world of Produce, category management has a completely different use that can be utilized by both sides of the sales equation. The more proper term for category management in Produce would be category development. Instead of using the process to determine what to carry and how much space to allocate to it, category development looks at the opportunities to grow the category and drive sales.

This result is far more impactful and beneficial to the operation than simply determining product mix and space allocation. Category development benefits both sides of the selling equation and can be used by both to increase sales volume and profitability.

For produce retail, the use of category development measures the effectiveness of promotional plans and strategic initiatives to move the category forward to the next level. Measurements of share-of-category versus share-of-market, along with price relationships to the rest of the market and other measurements, provide clear insight into how well the category strategy is working.

For example, comparing your overall produce share of the market to your share of the category benchmarks it against the competition, and by comparing your price per pound against the average in the marketplace provides a measure of competitiveness in that category.

Conventional wisdom might show that an operation is losing business to competitors. Closer examination of the category and its analysis, however, indicates it is not necessarily losing market share to the competition, but rather not selling as much in the category compared to your competition.

This finding shows an opportunity within the operation to further

drive sales in the category. All of the measurements available utilizing category data can be analyzed to provide key insights into how to further develop and grow the category.

Additionally, an operation can analyze which of the particular commodity labels are performing better than the others. A buyer can make more informed decisions based on the performance of one brand versus another. Successful retailers are beginning to use this information to fine-tune the performance of suppliers as well as all promotional activity.

The supply side can also utilize this data to measure the performance of an individual item or brand within the category. Customer, region, market, and national standing can divide this analysis. Category development can be used to measure performance against other brands in each area or to determine opportunities for the brand in various areas.

By analyzing the price-per-pound data, suppliers can determine whether a pricing strategy is allowing them to be competitive or lag behind the competition. Further examination will uncover opportuni-

ties for increasing sales in various areas by taking advantage of weaknesses observed in other brands. Included in this information are the retail prices per pound in each of the areas.

In examining this area, it can be determined if pricing strategy combined with promotional activity is effective in driving sales and volume. This information can substantially affect overall promo-

tional and pricing strategy for the supplier who uses it correctly.

The one major drawback to the use of this information is the cost. The data itself is expensive, even for one category, and suppliers with many categories face a substantial capital outlay each year for data alone.

Retailers have the advantage of not necessarily purchasing the data. Quite often, retailers will encourage suppliers to supply and analyze the data for them. A good retailer will look at the advantages of certain key categories versus the cost to purchase all the data. The fact remains that without the data, the benefits, opportunities, and ability to fine-tune a promotional strategy and drive sales from category development cannot be realized.

Each operation, both in retail and supply, will have to evaluate the benefits and opportunities provided by the proper use of the data in an aggressive category development program. Those who used this approach realized the benefits of such analysis and utilized these insights to formulate effective and successful promotional and sales strategies. In the ever-changing world of information and technology, ignoring these opportunities and not exploring them is shortsighted, and it runs the risk of being at a disadvantage versus the competition.

**pb**

**For produce retail, the use of category development measures the effectiveness of promotional plans and strategic initiatives to move the category forward to the next level.**

**By Don Harris**

Don Harris is a 40-year veteran of the produce industry, with most of that time spent in retail. He has worked in every aspect of the industry, from “field-to-fork” in both the conventional and organic arenas. Harris is presently consulting on all subjects of retail, category development and sales strategies, among others. Comments can be directed to [editor@producebusiness.com](mailto:editor@producebusiness.com)

# A CONVERSATION WITH BERRY GARDENS' NICHOLAS MARSTON

By Steven Maxwell



**B**ritish soft fruit marketer Berry Gardens has worked as the exclusive marketer of Driscoll's berry varieties in the U.K. for the past 13 years. However, with the grower group now placing more emphasis on production within the U.K. — and to a certain extent on exports to continental Europe — *PRODUCE BUSINESS* asked Berry Gardens' managing director Nicholas Marston whether there was still a future

for U.S. soft fruit imports in the U.K. and European markets.

**Q. Could you describe the connection that Berry Gardens has with Driscoll's and how that relationship has developed over the years?**

A. We do a very limited amount of berry imports from the U.S. now, although we still have an exclusive, long-term marketing agreement with Driscoll's, which began in 2001.

We used to import quite significant volumes during the summer season; but in more recent years, that has become more limited because we are growing far greater volumes of Driscoll's berries in the U.K.. The size of the business opportunity for U.S. fruit is considerably smaller than it was in previous years.

Saying that, there are still opportunities for products that fill gaps in the U.K. production and cannot be sourced from here, such as long-stem strawberries in the spring, which are only really available from Driscoll's in the U.S.

**Q. What have been the principal reasons behind Berry Gardens' move away from U.S. imports to concentrate largely on production in the U.K.?**

A. There used to be gaps in the U.K. season, with strawberry production decreasing in July and the raspberry season having periods of shortage in both late May and August, but U.K. growers have become much more adept at manipulating that production. The U.K. strawberry and raspberry seasons now begin between late March and early May, respectively, and run through to October — providing fruit during all the summer months.

However, Driscoll's provides support through its European division Demea (Driscoll's Middle East, Europe and Africa), so if there are any gaps in the U.K. market, they can help us to fill them.

**Q. What are the main challenges facing U.S. fresh produce exporters that are seeking to increase their business in Europe?**

A. The challenge facing U.S. exporters really depends on the product. In the case of berries, they have to be transported by airfreight because of the shorter shelf life, which is a less desirable activity than by sea freight — if that's possible — or by road transportation from a relatively

nearby source.

Driscoll's long-term strategy is to replace airfreight with production of Driscoll's varieties in areas closer to the markets. For this reason, production of Driscoll's varieties for the counter season is increasing in areas such as Morocco, Spain and Portugal, where European markets can be reached by road or in the case of Morocco after a short ferry ride.

There's a huge emphasis from Driscoll's on research and development in all their markets.

**Q. What, in your view, are the main difficulties with airfreight, particularly in terms of berries?**

A. The principal problem with airfreight is the costs, and there are also constraints on volumes.

**Q. Do you believe the recent harmonization of the U.S. and European Union organics rules will lead to any increase in exports for American fresh produce companies?**

A. The change in the organics regulations may have some positive impacts for American exporters. I'm not an expert on that area, but I would guess that there would be some opportunities as a result of the changes.

**Q. Looking at things from the other perspective, do you believe there are any opportunities for European soft fruit exporters in the North American markets, particularly in terms of filling supply gaps?**

A. Most crops, including berries, that supply the U.S. and Canadian markets are being produced in either in the U.S. itself or, during the counter season in Mexico and Peru. For example, in big volumes where — especially in the case of Mexico — the U.S. market can be accessed by road.

**Q. Talking about Berry Gardens' own business in the U.K., do you see any opportunities for developing a berries brand in the country or marketing your soft fruit under the Driscoll's brand?**

A. There's always an opportunity for a brand. In the U.K., because private label is so strong, there's more limited potential than elsewhere in Europe. For example, Driscoll's berries are marketed under private label in U.K., but in the rest of Europe is under the Driscoll's global brand.

**Q. Do you export any volumes from the U.K. at the current time or is your business 100 percent focused on the domestic market?**

A. We export limited volumes of raspberries and strawberries to Europe for sale under the Driscoll's brand and that's an opportunity that we would definitely like to develop in conjunction with Driscoll's for their northern mainland European markets.

**There are still opportunities for products that fill gaps in the U.K. production and cannot be sourced from here, such as long-stem strawberries in the spring . . .**

Nicholas Marston held a range of positions within the fresh produce distribution sector for almost 40 years. He currently heads up Berry Gardens Ltd, the in-house marketing agent of U.K. production cooperative, Berry Gardens Growers. Berry Gardens is a specialist in the year-round marketing of fresh berries and has an annual turnover in excess of £200m (U.S. \$333 million), putting it among the U.K.'s top ten produce suppliers.

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## BANDING TOGETHER

**T**his year, Salinas, CA-based Mann Packing celebrates its 75th year in the fresh vegetable industry. In 1939, H.W. “Cy” Mann opened a fresh carrot packing operation called H.W. Mann — known today as Mann Packing.

Broccoli quickly became a signature character in the cast of fresh vegetables within the company. This photo, taken sometime during the late 1940s/early 1950s, shows the “bunching line” for broccoli.

The “bunching line” was predominantly comprised of women. “This was pre-rubber-band days, and the ladies used twist ties to bunch broccoli,” explains Lori Bigras, marketing manager for Mann Packing. “Once bunched, the broccoli continued down the line where the men were crating and icing the product. In those days the cartons were wooden and built by the men in the packing sheds. The cartons were also the main means of transporting fresh vegetables from the fields. Once packed and iced, the crates were prepped and loaded up for transport via rail.”

“By the late 1960s/early 1970s, the boxes went from wood crates to

corrugated wax cartons, which held up well against ice,” says Bigras. “Nowadays, hardly any products are ice-packed anymore.”

Bigras says that logistics improvements and refrigerated trucking have evolved so much that vegetable deliveries are oftentimes harvested and on a refrigerated truck within a day or two of harvest.

One of the most glaring differences today from the photo is the safety precautions used within the produce industry. “Nowadays there are far more stringent safety regulations in place with regard to how products are harvested, processed and packed,” says Bigras. “All Mann plant workers now wear hair/beard nets, smocks and rubber gloves, and field workers must also wear hair/beard nets and gloves when out in the field.”

Another way the family-owned and -operated company (mostly by women) implemented rigorous requirements is by growers adhering to the California Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement food safety standards. It also follows strict good agricultural practices that include third-party audits.

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We are happy to announce the renewal of the program with commitment from the European Union, the Italian Ministry of Agricultural Affairs and support from the Centro Servizi Ortofrutticoli.

The program will continue to promote the extraordinary quality of both fresh and processed produce grown in compliance with strict European directives -safeguarding the environment, health and safety of the consumers.

Together with you, we can look forward to continued growth and success in North America.