

# producebusiness

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## 25th ANNUAL MARKETING EXCELLENCE AWARDS

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### INSIDE:

THE PUNDIT LOOKS AT  
"MCDONALD'S STUDY" AND "NANNY-STATISM"  
NEWPORT AVENUE MARKET • TAILGATING  
WASHINGTON APPLES • CALIFORNIA GRAPES  
JUICES • ONIONS  
REGIONAL MARKET PROFILE: CHICAGO  
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**THIS MONTH'S WINNER**



**Jerry Frecon**  
**Consultant**  
**New Jersey Peach Promotion Council**  
 Clayton, NJ

Jerry Frecon was born and raised surrounded by produce on his family's farm, Frecon Fruit Farm in Boyertown, PA. Years later, Frecon remains an active member in the produce industry working as a consultant for the New Jersey Peach Promotion Council — a volunteer promotion organization for New Jersey peaches — and the Adams County Nursery. Frecon says, "Last time I counted, there were about 90 people in the state who work for the betterment of the peach administration."

In 1981, Frecon came to New Jersey and taught at Rutgers University. "I worked as an education advisor for the past 30 years as part the Rutgers' Cooperative Extension," says Frecon. "Today I continue to consult for the Council and promote peaches."

Frecon has been reading *PRODUCE BUSINESS* for quite some time during his tenure with the industry. "It was a little, thin magazine when I started reading it," says Frecon. He enjoys reading Jim Prevor's "Perishable Pundit" as well as articles on peaches and New Jersey produce.

**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 October 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 AUGUST ISSUE**

- 1) Which company's apples are "Crunch-i-licious!?" \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) What is the street address for Anthony Marano Company? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) Avocados from Mexico is partnering with which famous chef? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) What is the website address for Sunlight International Sales? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) In what year did Sun-Maid start "Serving American Families & the World"? \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) What is the slogan for Taylor Farms? \_\_\_\_\_

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

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# IMMIGRATION REFORM CLAIMS VICTORY IN SENATE AND TARGETS THE HOUSE

By Robert Guenther,  
United Fresh Senior Vice President of Public Policy

**O**n June 27, the Senate took a major step toward enacting comprehensive immigration reform when it passed the Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act with a strong bipartisan vote of 68 to 32. Immigration reform remains a highly sensitive, complex and controversial issue. But when United Fresh put out action alerts to call, e-mail and write Congress to let them know how critical the proposed guest worker program is to the survival of the fresh produce industry, many raised their voices and urged their senators to support the bill. It's this engagement that will continue to drive the comprehensive immigration reform forward, though many more challenges await.

Unfortunately, the outlook for the House is uncertain. The political and legislative hurdles in the House are very different from the Senate, and a victory in one chamber does not assure victory in the other. However, the spotlight on immigration reform is intense; the pressure for action is tremendous, and this issue is confronting every member of the House of Representatives. The goal remains for the House to pass immigration reform. Once passed, the bill will go to a conference between the two bodies where any differences are reconciled. The eventual signing of comprehensive immigration reform into law is within reach.

The bill passed by the Senate includes agriculture workforce provisions that were negotiated by the Agriculture Workforce Coalition (AWC) and the United Farm Workers (UFW). The agreement reached between representatives of agriculture employers and agricultural labor lays the foundation for a path forward providing a legal and stable workforce — which will ensure that fresh produce reaches the shelves in a timely, cost-effective manner. The new agriculture guest-worker program differs from the current H2-A program, which by

**THE EVENTUAL SIGNING OF COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM INTO LAW IS WITHIN REACH.**

many accounts is flawed.

The goal for a new agriculture guest-worker program has always been two-fold: create an adjustment to maintain current experienced, unauthorized agricultural workers, and to provide access to a legal, stable workforce into the future.

Under the Senate's proposed system, current undocumented farm workers will be eligible to obtain legal status through a new Blue Card program if they choose to remain working in agriculture. This option will be available to workers who can prove they have been working in agriculture for a minimum of 100 workdays or 575 hours prior to December 31, 2012. After a minimum of five years, workers who fulfill their Blue Card work requirements in U.S. agriculture will become eligible to apply for a Green Card — providing they pay a fee and have no outstanding taxes or convictions.

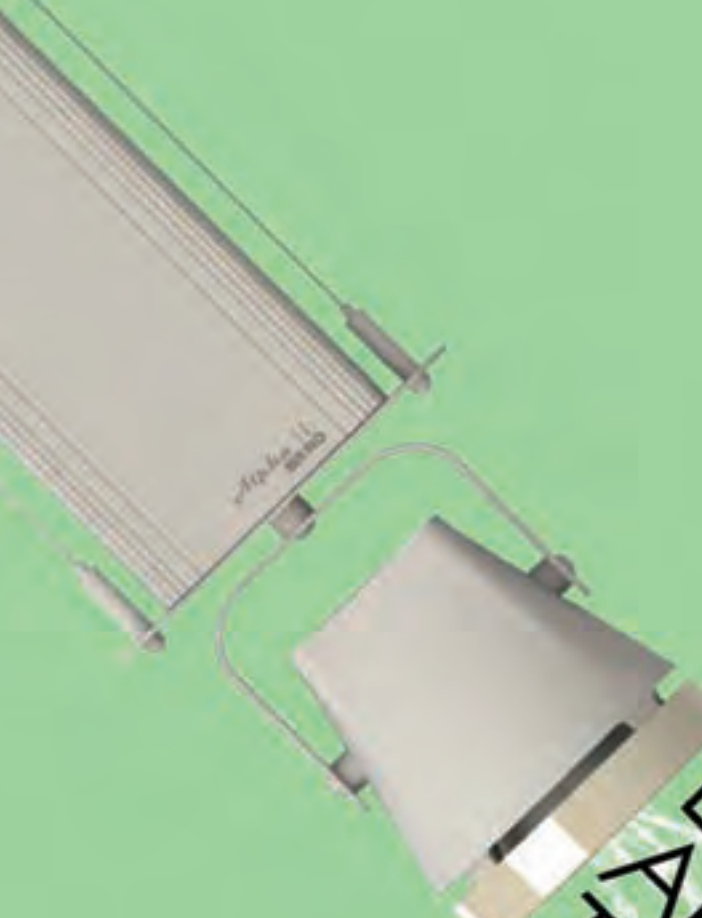
To secure a work force for the coming seasons, a new agricultural guest-worker program will be established. Responsibility for administering the program will shift from the Department of Labor to the Department of Agriculture. While the Department of Labor will still be involved in the enforcement of the program, many advocates of the move agreed that the Department of Agriculture has a better understanding of the intricacies of the agriculture labor market.

The program will have two work options. The "At-Will" option will allow workers to

enter the country to accept a specific job offer from an authorized agricultural employer. Employees will then be able to move within the country, working "at-will" for any other authorized agricultural employer during that time. Employers must provide housing or a housing allowance to these workers. The second is a "Contract-Based" option allowing workers to enter the country to accept a specific contract for a specific amount of work from an authorized employer. Under both of these scenarios, the employees will be admitted under a three-year visa, and the employer will be required to provide housing or a housing allowance. All guest workers will be paid an agreed-upon wage under the terms of this agreement.

With the Department of Agriculture at the helm of the program, the Secretary of Agriculture will have the authority to monitor and adjust the visa cap for the Blue Card program. Following a prescribed set of criteria; the Secretary will also be able to raise the cap, if needed, to address labor shortages.

This new guest-worker program will only be enacted if we, as an industry, continue to speak out vigorously and repeatedly. It is essential that members of the House of Representatives hear over and over again that reform is urgently needed, and that your business — and the many jobs and local economies you support — must have comprehensive immigration reform. To take action, please visit [unitedfresh.org/labor](http://unitedfresh.org/labor).



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# SYSCO'S SAN FRANCISCO FOOD SAFETY FAILURE REFLECTS ON INDUSTRY'S BROADER PROBLEM WITH KPI'S

By James Prevor  
President & Editor-in-Chief



**W**hen Sysco of San Francisco was caught using 14 unrefrigerated outdoor public storage units as jerry-rigged warehouses for all kinds of products – including raw meat, milk and produce – it gave the industry a black eye. Everyone well knows this is unacceptable. In fact, anyone who knows Sysco, its food safety people, its produce people, its corporate culture... knows that it was a rogue operation going on in the

City by the Bay. There is no possibility that the top executives at Sysco ordered it, knew about it or countenanced it in any way.

Yet that doesn't mean Sysco was not culpable. In the obvious sense, merely having corporate policies is not enough. Top enterprises, and Sysco clearly counts among these, do not merely promulgate policies but have audit and verification procedures in place specifically to catch non-compliance by their own staffers. If nothing else, the existence of this rogue operation indicates that those auditing procedures were inadequate.

Yet there is more to it than that. And more in a way that implicates the whole industry. Some years ago, there was a meeting in which food safety was discussed and there was a panel of important retailers who, one after another, waxed on about their deep commitment to food safety. Karen Caplan, president/CEO of Frieda's Inc., raised her hand and, like the little boy who said the Emperor had no clothes, asked the crucial question: In light of the high priority that retailers now had on food safety, how had they changed their KPIs – Key Performance Indicators – to reflect these priorities?

KPIs are typically used as a basis for compensation and promotion, so if a KPI is a sales increase of least 20 percent, or attaining margin of 35 percent, or getting an ROI of 18 percent, those executives who meet or exceed these goals can expect bonuses and promotions. If they do not meet these KPIs, they can expect no bonus, no promotion and, perhaps, to be placed on probation or have their employment terminated.

At that meeting, none of the panel members reported changing their KPIs to accommodate the high priority they claimed to be placing on food safety. We don't know of many who have made changes since.

We will probably never know precisely how this policy of renting sub-standard facilities started or why this policy was maintained over the years. Simultaneous with the revelations, it was announced that Bruce Leong, who had been president of Sysco San Francisco, left the company. But whether he was a sacrificial lamb or was actually found to have been implicated in the matter was not announced.

Still, someone implemented this policy, and dozens of Sysco execu-

tives had to be aware of it. None of them picked up the phone and called the Quality Assurance Director in Houston. This columnist has had the privilege of addressing Sysco's annual produce event in which it brings in executives from all over the country to educate, and we feel completely confident in saying no one ever picked up the phone and told Rich Dachman, vice president of produce at Sysco, or any of many other Sysco executives who could have and would have reacted.

The management question is why did no one call?

The best answer to this question is that despite the sincere commitment of Sysco to food safety, it has not — as virtually all the industry has not — been able to incorporate safety into its KPIs in a meaningful way. To put it another way, imagine that a new CEO of Sysco San Francisco, let us call him George, had come in. Imagine he noted this practice and decided to not rock any boats. As a result, sales and profits in the division increased 20 percent this year.

Now imagine a new CEO coming in, let us call her Lydia. She started work, noted the problem and decided it had to stop immediately. She ordered the dumping of any product stored in those facilities, recalled any product that might have been stored in those facilities in the past, reported Sysco to the rele-

vant regulatory authorities and publicly apologized for Sysco's transgression. She fired all Sysco personnel who had known about this problem and hadn't acted to stop it.

Of course, under Lydia, Sysco had to give up some customers until new facilities could be leased, new employees hired and trained, etc., and as a result of the reputational and operational damage, sales fell 30 percent this year and operations slipped into a loss. A few national accounts left Sysco, thus depressing business nationally.

Now ask this question: Whose salary and bonus is likely to be higher for the year? George, because he made money for the company, or Lydia, because she defended the corporate priority on food safety?

Now ask this: In your own company, if a similar choice had to be made, what would the financial incentives produce?

We all hope, of course, for virtuous people who will do the right thing and sacrifice short term profits for long term safety. But to some extent companies get out of their employees what they pay for, and it is perhaps the biggest food safety issue in the industry that few companies have found a way to incent for food safety, even if it reduces sales and profits in the short run.

The associations and the industry institutions treat food safety as principally a research and technical matter — that is why all the food safety people have PhDs in technical subjects. But situations such as this tell us that food safety is just as much a managerial issue — and one the industry is still not certain how to manage well.

pb

**It is perhaps the biggest food safety issue in the industry that few companies have found a way to incent for food safety, even if it reduces sales and profits in the short run.**



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\*Waste Prevention Group Fact Facts Total US 12 weeks ending 03/05/10. Recyclable (PET) container recycling rate is at 29% (Association of Plastics Recyclers).



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## TRANSITIONS



### THE GIUMARRA COMPANIES LOS ANGELES, CA

Giumarra announces the addition of **Kellee Harris** to its marketing team. Harris joins the company as western region business manager. She comes to Giumarra from Package Containers, Inc., where her responsibilities included business development and account management for the California, Utah, and Colorado regions.

### PRO\*ACT MONTEREY, CA

PRO\*ACT, a leading distributor of fresh produce, promotes **Anthony Molinaro** to vice president of client services. Molinaro served as client services director at PRO\*ACT since January 2010. In his new role, Molinaro will lead the client services team and work to develop programs that deliver even more value and benefits to PRO\*ACT customers.



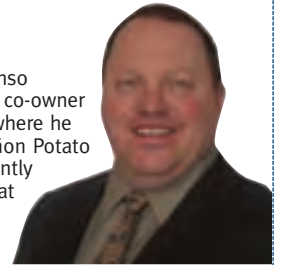
### DOLE PACKAGED FOODS WESTLAKE VILLAGE, CA

Dole Packaged Foods, LLC announces the addition of **Keith Weiner** as foodservice national account manager to its foodservice / industrial division. Weiner is working directly with major restaurant chains and onsite foodservice companies to place Dole products on menus. Weiner comes to Dole from Stratas Foods, where he worked with Applebee's, IHOP and Jack In The Box.



### RPE BANCROFT, WI

**David Tonso** joins the sales team at RPE. Tonso comes to RPE after most recently serving as co-owner and acting CEO of Cañon Potato Company, where he has been employed for almost 30 years. Cañon Potato Company recently announced that it was closing its doors.



Completing RPE-Colorado's sales team, **Matt Glowczewski** also comes from Cañon Potato Company, where he spent the past 18 years in the sales department. Previously, he worked for a wholesale company in Pueblo, CO, where he worked in every part of the operation over the course of 10 years.

### LIPMAN FARMING IMMOKALEE, FL

Lipman Farming, one of North America's largest open field tomato growers, elects **Jeff Gargiulo** to its board of directors. A produce industry veteran, Gargiulo currently owns and operates Gargiulo Vineyards, a Napa Valley Winery, and is the chairman of GreenLeaf Produce, a produce foodservice distributor in San Francisco.



## ANNOUNCEMENTS



### FRESH VALLEY PARTNERS WITH A.J. LETIZIO

Fresh Valley Foods Corp. of Haverhill, MA, announces its retail brokerage partnership with A.J. Letizio Sales & Marketing Inc., of Windham, NH. Under this new agreement, A.J. Letizio will become Fresh Valley Food's exclusive retail broker in New England and New York for the processor's full line of fresh-cut fruit and vegetables.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### MANN PACKING HEATS UP SUMMER SALES

Mann Packing, Salinas, CA, is heating up the grill and serving summer salads with its Annual Summer Slaw Spectacular promotion. IRCs are applied to packages of Mann's Broccoli Cole Slaw and Rainbow Salad and are available to shoppers nationwide. Consumers can save \$1 with the purchase of any two of these items.



### PERUVIAN ASPARAGUS CATEGORY MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Peruvian Asparagus Importer's Association (PAIA) of Miami, FL, releases its 2013 / 2014 Category Management Plan. Outline for fresh Peruvian asparagus. The outline reports that fresh asparagus continues to be a high volume U.S. import, over 413 million pounds imported / consumed throughout the United States, according to the Department of Commerce. The Plan Outline also specifically includes statistics relating to market summaries, trends, nutritional facts and consumer positioning.



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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### TESTA MODIFIES FLEET WITH "GREEN" ENERGY

Testa Produce, Chicago, IL, is adding 10 new trucks that run on clean-burning, low-cost domestic compressed natural gas (CNG) to its delivery fleet. The new 24-foot refrigerated CNG trucks will replace existing biodiesel trucks in Testa's fleet, helping the foodservice distributor lower its carbon footprint even more.



### CRUNCH PAK REDESIGNS CONSUMER WEBSITE

Crunch Pak, Cashmere, WA, redesigned its website for consumers with new recipes, product information and a store locator. To spread the word about the new site, the URL is included on most product packages and through Crunch Pak's social media outlets. Crunch Pak's new web platform allows consumers to explore the site easily and encourages viewers to engage with its social media.



### APIO'S WHITE HOUSE "BROCCOLIGATE" IS OVER

Apio, Inc., of Guadalupe, CA, received worldwide exposure in 1990 when President George H. W. Bush banned broccoli from Air Force One. Apio responded by sending a truck of broccoli to the White House for the President to reconsider his decision. The vegetable is back in favor since President Obama proclaimed it his favorite food at the White House's Kids' State Dinner.



### TASTI LEE RECEIVES AHA HEART-CHECK MARK

Bejo Seeds, Inc., Oceano, CA, announces that its Tasti Lee tomatoes are now certified as part of the American Heart Association's (AHA) Heart-Check Food Certification. The Heart-Check mark helps consumers easily identify foods in retail stores that meet the nutritional standards of the American Heart Association to promote healthy eating habits.



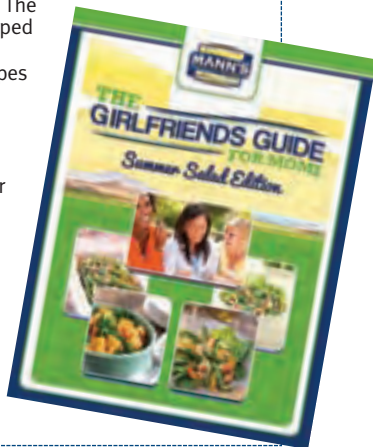
### GEORGIA BLUEBERRY RECIPE CONTEST WINNER

In celebration of Georgia Blueberry Month, the Georgia Blueberry Commission held its first-ever recipe contest. Ayesha Awan of Fords, NJ, is the winner of its inaugural "Sweet Georgia Blues Recipe Contest." Awan received over 1,000 votes, the most received of all contestants, for her Blueberry Slush Smoothie recipe.



### MANN PACKING CREATES "GIRLFRIEND'S GUIDE FOR MOMS"

Mann Packing Company of Salinas, CA, creates the "Girlfriends Guide for Moms" electronic brochure for distribution this summer. The guide was developed to provide moms with summer recipes in one printable brochure so they can serve a great meal and enjoy summer with their families at the same time.



### SOUTHERN SPECIALTIES CELEBRATES ARTICHOKE ANNIVERSARY

Southern Specialties, Inc., Pompano Beach, FL, announces the start of the third season that the company began marketing medium-sized premium artichokes to retailers and foodservice distributors nationwide. Regal artichokes are shipped in clear four-count bags that incorporate performance technology. The high graphic label has nutritional callouts and cooking instructions in both English and French.



### ORGANIC CENTER LAUNCHES CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Organic Center (TOC), an independent non-profit 501(c)(3) research and education organization operating under the administration of the Organic Trade Association, Washington, DC, launches a project this summer to prevent a potential catastrophe with organic apple and pear production in the U.S. The Center works to provide the farming

community critically needed information on how to prevent a condition from decimating apple and pear orchards.

### LET THE MICHIGAN BLUEBERRY HARVEST SEASON COMMENCE

The Michigan blueberry harvest is in full swing. Local growers are working long hours to ensure that blueberries are picked, packed and distributed to retailers, restaurants and consumers throughout the country. Bob Hawk, president and chief executive officer of the grower-owned Michigan Blueberry Growers cooperative (MBG) — founding partner of Naturipe Farms, which manages the sales, marketing and distribution of the co-op's blueberries — supported the ceremonial first-picked fruit with Bob Burr, mayor of South Haven, MI, and local blueberry grower, Tom Bodtke.



# **CPS** CENTER *for* **PRODUCE SAFETY**

## **CAMPAIGN FOR RESEARCH**

The Center for Produce Safety (CPS) was established in the wake of the 2006 E. coli contamination of spinach to reduce the risk of foodborne illness in produce. Established by public and private partnership at the University of California, Davis, initial funding for CPS was provided by the California Department of Agriculture, the University of California, Produce Marketing Association and Taylor Farms.

Today, CPS has grown into a collaborative partnership which funds both domestic and international research. To date, CPS has compiled an impressive five-year body of work, awarding \$10.6 million and funding 69 one- and two-year research projects at 22 universities and organizations.

However, based on unanswered produce safety questions, our industry still needs to:

- *Greatly increase the output of quality, industry-focused research*
- *Broaden the scope of the research both geographically and throughout the supply chain*
- *Continue educational offerings to further translate research into immediate application*

## **SUPPORT THE CAMPAIGN**

With increased funding, CPS can address these questions. CPS is calling for your support of the CPS Campaign for Research. As an industry leader, we ask you to consider a financial pledge to the Center for Produce Safety. Your monetary gift is an investment in your business and your industry.

The ability to work together to safeguard public health and increase consumer confidence gives testimony to the commitment of the fresh produce industry and its partners. To discuss a donation to CPS, please contact Bonnie Fernandez-Fenaroli, Executive Director at (530) 757-5777 or bfernandez@cps.ucdavis.edu.

## **CAMPAIGN FOR RESEARCH CONTRIBUTORS** *(as of July 10, 2013)*

**Thank you** to those who already support the CPS Campaign for Research and its mission to provide and share ready-to-use, science-based solutions that prevent or minimize global produce safety vulnerabilities.

### **\$2 million**

Produce Marketing Association  
Taylor Farms

### **\$250,000 - \$499,999**

Georgia-Pacific Packaging  
Taylor Farms  
Wegman Family Charitable Foundation

### **\$100,000 - \$249,999**

Castellini Group of Companies  
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Markon Cooperative  
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The Packer / Produce Retailer

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Website: [midwestproduceexpo.com](http://midwestproduceexpo.com)

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Conference Management: U.S. Apple Association, Vienna, VA  
Phone: (703) 442-8850 • Fax: (703) 790-0845  
E-mail: [lstephens@usapple.org](mailto:lstephens@usapple.org)  
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E-mail: [diana@floridatomatoes.org](mailto:diana@floridatomatoes.org)  
Website: [floridatomatoes.org](http://floridatomatoes.org)

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E-mail: [info@easternproduceCouncil.com](mailto:info@easternproduceCouncil.com)  
Website: [easternproduceCouncil.com](http://easternproduceCouncil.com)

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# Cargill Study Shows Family Approach To Buying Healthier Foods

**A** proprietary Cargill survey of more than 1,000 consumers investigated parents' attitudes and drivers of food and beverage purchases for their children. Key findings of the Cargill Gatekeeper Purchase Drivers Study included:

- Parents are more likely to seek foods and beverages that appeal to the whole family rather than products and meals that are just for kids.
- Parents are unsatisfied with the healthfulness of current options across key categories of foods and beverages popular with kids.
- Parents tend to seek positive attributes such as whole grains and fiber rather than avoiding the things they perceive to be unhealthy, such as fat, sugar and sodium.

"We know it's important to meet the nutrition and budget expectations of parents, while also satisfying kids on the taste dimension," said DeeAnn Roullier, marketing research manager, Cargill, Minneapolis, MN. "Our research provides a more specific understanding of gatekeeper purchase drivers in categories heavily consumed by kids."

This research was conducted as part of Cargill's childhood nutrition initiative, which aims to help food and beverage manufacturers and foodservice operators formulate products that improve the nutrition profile of products targeted to children.

## Family-Friendly Versus Kid-Centric

Today's parents are more likely to take a family approach to food rather than seek products and meals that are just for kids. This means parents apply greater scrutiny to both taste and nutrition for a broader set of foods and beverages that the entire family consumes. According to the survey, only one-third of parents said they often prepare separate meals for adults and kids. Eighty-one percent of parents said it's important for the foods they purchase to appeal to the entire family.

When determining whether it was the kids or the parents who compromise on the kinds of foods they eat, it was the kids: 89

percent of parents said they ask their kids to broaden their tastes, and 69 percent said they ask their kids to try more adult food.

Importantly, parents of the Millennial generation (ages 18 - 32) are more likely to say family appeal is important compared to older parents, which suggests that young consumers moving into parenthood are likely to adopt a family approach.

## Satisfaction Versus Purchase Intent

The study looked across nine food and beverage categories (cereal, cookies, crackers, bread / rolls, snack bars, fruit juice / drinks, frozen pizza, ice cream and carbonated soft drinks) that are popular with children to determine the key attributes that resonate most with parents. Compared to the general population, parents show a low level of satisfaction with the healthfulness of most of these categories. This low satisfaction drives high purchase intent for healthier products. Cargill's results indicated a high level of intent to purchase healthier products in eight of nine categories and highlights opportunity gaps for each category. The biggest opportunity for a healthier product was with cookies, which showed a purchase intent satisfaction gap of 24 points.

## Seeking Versus Avoiding

Parents are more likely to seek positive attributes in food and beverage products than to avoid what they perceive to be unhealthy. A majority of parents (76 percent) say they check the nutrition information on unfamiliar products.

When compared to the general public, contrary to popular belief, the Cargill survey revealed that parents are actually less likely than the general population to check the nutrition facts panel (65 percent versus 71 percent), but more likely to say they check

nutrition highlights on the front of the package (65 percent versus 55 percent). Perhaps the busy lifestyles of parents keep them from studying the back of the package, but make them more likely to review the front.

"Seeking" is about positive nutrition, including nutrient density, inherent benefits, and foods and beverages that are naturally rich in nutrients like fruits and vegetables, as well as foods that include whole grains and balanced energy. "Seeking" was a key driver in many categories: cookies, bread/rolls, snack bars, crackers, cereal and fruit juice/drinks.

"Avoiding" is about reducing the attributes consumers perceive to be unhealthy, such as fat, sodium, calories or sugar. "Avoiding" was the top purchase driver in only one category — frozen pizza.

"Pressures on food and beverage companies to formulate more nutritious products for kids are coming from all angles — consumers, NGOs, the government, as well as many customers' own internal nutrition targets," said Roullier. "Those pressures are typically focused on limiting nutrients that are perceived to be less healthy, especially fat, sodium and sugar. Our research suggests that consumers are largely interested in positive nutrition."

## About This Survey:

Cargill's marketing research group conducted this online survey of more than 1,000 people fielded in November 2012. The sample consisted of general population consumers and parents of children ages 2 to 12 so that parents could be compared versus non-parents / general population. More than two-thirds of the respondents were parents. Parents were asked about food and beverage purchases for their child(ren), while the general population was asked about purchases for their household.



Cargill is an international producer and marketer of food, agricultural, financial and industrial products and services. Founded in 1865, the privately held company employs 142,000 people in 65 countries. Cargill helps customers succeed through collaboration and innovation, and is committed to applying its global knowledge and experience to help meet economic, environmental and social challenges wherever it does business. More information on the company's childhood nutrition initiative can be found at: [childhood-nutrition.com](http://childhood-nutrition.com)



# Let Them 'Seek' Produce!

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

**S**o what can the produce industry learn from this Cargill study?

First, the various efforts to use cartoon characters to sell fresh produce have never gained much traction. Why is this so? Well, one reason may be found in this Cargill study. Consumers look for food appealing to the whole family, rather than looking to maintain separate pantries and create separate menus for children and the rest of the clan.

Second, produce marketers should take heart. This study, which was done not of produce but of many traditional snack categories, finds that parents are not happy with the healthfulness of these foods, which means they should be open to alternatives — although those alternatives still have to meet many criteria, including tastiness, convenience and economy.

Third, when marketing an item, this study finds it is better to accentuate the positive rather than eliminate the negative. In other words, market an item as high in fiber, rich in a vitamin, or "fresh," rather than promoting the item as fat free or low in sugar.

\* \* \* \* \*

It is a challenge to know precisely what to make of this study. For example, the idea of a perspective in which shoppers are focused on items that appeal to the whole family would seem to marginalize specialty items. But the fact that 89 percent of parents say they are asking children to broaden their palates, and 69 percent of parents are asking their children to try adult food, implies that parents will buy what they enjoy and try to "sell it" to their children — theoretically encouraging sales of specialty items.

Tangible opportunities can be explored with this behavior. The study claims that parents want to buy healthier cookies, but find the choices to be unsatisfactory, so there is a big shortfall in satisfaction on these purchases. The question for the produce industry is to ask whether we can get into the heads of these parents and get them to broaden their snack options so

they skip the cookie aisle entirely and buy produce as a snack instead.

This is an area for better research and one has to suspect that Fresh will struggle. So often, cookies, chips and other snacks are bought without a usage occasion in mind — things you just put in the pantry for some moment when using them seems right. Some friends come over unexpectedly so you make coffee and put out some cookies. It snows so you make the kids and their friends hot chocolate served with vanilla wafers, etc.

Perhaps some fresh and frozen fruit could be used in this way. Whip up smoothies for the neighbors? And surely some of the use of produce is predictable, such as replacing cookies in a lunch box with an apple or a couple Clementines. The study starts the mind rolling on an area for more in-depth research — how to move people into produce from other snack categories.

On the marketing end, this whole idea of "seeking" seems powerful. The notion that consumers are seeking positive attributes in their foods rather than wanting to focus on downer stuff — less fat, less sugar, less salt — plays into much this columnist has written about regarding the necessity of avoiding marketing produce as a medicine. The idea of consumers as "seekers" might be a happy compromise. The industry can still market based on health, but in a positive manner.

What actually drives purchase decisions is a well studied mystery. Many of these types of products mentioned in the Cargill study are impulse items. A good promotion or a new flavor can lead to different outcomes than what would have been predicted by any survey of consumers.

It is also problematic that all these product categories are on consumer shopping lists even though we all know perfectly well that more healthful alternatives are available. It likely means that the produce industry has to do more than emphasize healthfulness.

When low carb diets were the rage,

**The question for the produce industry is to ask whether we can get into the heads of these parents and get them to broaden their snack options so they skip the cookie aisle entirely and buy produce as a snack instead.**

many hamburger chains started offering burgers on lettuce leaves to meet consumer demand for low carb options. So something — be it vanity, medical issues, a search for healthfulness — led lots of consumers to change their diets to pursue the goals they had set for themselves. The challenge is to help consumers set goals of the sort that keep them out of the cookie aisle all together. Then the consumers will be looking for other snack items, and produce has a fair chance of picking up a lot of business.

Consumers establish the life they intend to lead long before they walk in the store. If their life goal isn't aligned with the world of produce, these consumers will spend their shopping trips seeking healthy cookies and frozen pizza. They will always be disappointed, which means there is always an opportunity for the produce industry to try again next time.

**pb**



# Do Consumers Eat More When Given Calorie Recommendations At Restaurants?

## 'McDonald's Study' Demonstrates Nanny-Statism May Have Unintended Consequences

FROM JIM PREVOR'S PERISHABLE PUNDIT 07.22.2013

**A**lmost four years ago, in a piece we wrote for *National Review* as the health care law was being debated, we revealed that mandatory calorie counts had been slipped into the bill. We asked, "When Did Restaurant Regulation Creep into the Health-Care Bill?" In that article, we pointed out that calorie counts mandated by the law were of dubious utility and that the issue had not even been debated on a national level.

The specific problem is that there is not the slightest scintilla of evidence that making such information available changes behavior. California has health warnings so ubiquitous that everyone seems to ignore them. In 2002, the government mandated that private companies make substantial expenditures to ensure that fresh foods have country-of-origin labeling on them. This was done at the behest of U.S. producers who thought such labeling would swing business to them. Yet there is no evidence that consumers have changed purchasing habits.

Because the cost of executing this new nutritional-labeling requirement is paid by the private sector, it doesn't show up when the Congressional Budget Office scores the cost of the bill — but a cost it is. Since we have no reason to think there is any effect to this new labeling requirement, we can presume that lots of money will wind up being spent with little or no effect.

Besides, what if some people would prefer to simply enjoy an occasional indulgence without being reminded of the caloric intake involved in a vichyssoise? Is that really behavior so beyond the pale that it should be made illegal in restaurant chains? Look ahead and suppose the very likely result: disclosure and education don't produce the desired outcome. How long until the Feds will outright ban high-calorie foods?

When did we have the national debate that disclosures with our tuna-salad sandwiches from the supermarket deli are urgently required? When did we discuss that diverting resources to pastrami-on-pumpernickel is prudent — and if the health-care bill deals with such minutiae, what else is hidden in its pages? And how could any "leader" worthy of the name risk voting for it before we know what is even in the bill?

It is a conceit of societal elites to believe that they know what is right for most people and that if other people are not doing what said elites would prefer, it must be due to ignorance, and the ignorant need to be enlightened.

Yet, time and again, people exhibit their own preferences for their own reasons, so what was previously not supported by evidence is now actually refuted by evidence. It turns out that posting calorie counts at McDonald's does not lead people to buy lower calorie items even when supplemented with caloric recommendations. That

is the lesson to be learned from a new study published in the *American Journal of Public Health* titled, "Supplementing Menu Labeling With Calorie Recommendations to Test for Facilitation Effects":

**Objectives.** We examined the effect on food purchases of adding recommended calorie intake per day or per meal to the mandated calorie information posted on chain restaurant menus.

**Methods.** Before and after New York City implemented calorie posting on chain restaurant menus in 2008, we provided daily, per-meal, or no calorie recommendations to randomized subsets of adult lunchtime customers (n=1121) entering two McDonald's restaurants, in Manhattan and Brooklyn, and collected receipts and survey responses as they exited. In linear and logistic regressions, with adjustment for gender, race, age, and day, we tested for simple differences in calories consumed and interactions between variables.

**Results.** Posting calorie benchmarks had no direct impact, nor did it moderate the impact of calorie labels on food purchases. The recommendation appeared to promote a slight increase in calorie intake, attributable to increased purchases of higher-calorie entrées.

**Conclusions.** These results do not support the introduction of calorie recommendations as a means of enhancing the impact of posted calorie information or reducing the contribution of restaurant dining to the obesity epidemic.

The consumer press picked up on the study, as in this *Los Angeles Times* piece by Karen Kaplan (not the one from Frieda's, whose last name begins with a C), which is titled, "Attempt to Steer McDonald's Diners toward Smaller Meals Backfires":

You might think that customers buying their lunch at McDonald's would order meals with fewer calories if someone handed them a slip of paper reminding them that women should eat no more than 650 calories at lunchtime and men should not exceed 800 calories. But you would be wrong.

Instead, researchers found that diners who received these supposedly helpful reminders actually purchased more calories than those who didn't, according to a new study in the *American Journal of Public Health*.

The study authors — from the Department of Social and Decision Sciences at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh and Cornell University's Department of Applied Economics and Management — stood outside two McDonald's restaurants in Manhattan and Brooklyn. They

**The specific problem is that there is not the slightest scintilla of evidence that making such information available changes behavior.**

# Fertile Ground for Retail Success



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approached diners on their way in and asked them to save their receipts and conduct a short interview after they ate their lunch.

In addition, some diners were handed information on the number of calories men and women should eat at lunch, and some were given information on the total number of calories men and women should eat in an entire day. A control group was not given any advice on the calorie front.

When they had finished their meals, diners were asked to estimate how many calories they had consumed. Those estimates were compared with the actual calories purchased, according to the receipts. The researchers also collected demographic information like age, gender, ZIP Code of residence and height and weight (to calculate each person's body mass index).

Among the 1,094 diners included in the study analysis, the women who ate lunch (not just a drink or dessert) purchased an average of 824 calories and the men purchased 890 calories. Assuming they ate and drank everything they bought, the men consumed 11% more calories than they should have, on average. The women splurged even more — they downed 27% more calories than recommended, on average.

The researchers expected that the diners who got slips of papers with calorie advice to order lower-calorie meals than the diners who got no such guidance. Instead, they found that the recommendations had no effect on the way customers used the calorie information posted on menus.

Even worse, diners who got the slips of papers ordered higher-calorie entrees than diners who didn't — 49 more calories, on average. The difference wasn't great enough to be statistically significant, but it was close, according to the study.

It's not exactly shocking that giving people the information they needed to order the right amount of food didn't work. After all, it's hard for anyone to stick to the rules when confronted with the aroma of McDonald's French fries. But how did this seemingly sensible idea wind up making things worse?

The study authors have a theory. Perhaps their plan backfired because people compared the calorie count of their entree to the calorie information on their slip of paper and got "a false sense of staying within the calorie allowance," they wrote. That, in turn, may have made them feel safe ordering a bigger soda or to supersize their fries. A Big Mac packs 550 calories, which doesn't sound so bad, until you add in 500 calories for large fries and 280 calories for a large Coke.

**Maybe the reason calorie consumption went up when the recommendations were given is that it focused attention on the calorie counts and people felt that more was better, that in the refueling mission of grabbing a meal at McDonald's, they wanted more calories or perceived a higher calorie meal as a better deal.**

A previous study that tested the value of posting calorie information on menus found that it did steer diners toward lower-calorie meals. But in that study, conducted at a Subway sandwich shop, it only worked for customers who had a healthy BMI, not those who were overweight.

The authors of the new study speculated that they got different results because Subway and McDonald's "have different reputations for healthful fare, and, as a result, may attract different clientele."

But that hardly made them optimistic that their approach would work better under different circumstances. "The results provide little hope that calorie recommendations will salvage the apparent weak or nonexistent effect of menu labeling," they concluded.

We would say that consumers are actually behaving completely rationally. There is no evidence that reducing caloric intake in one particular meal has any effect at all on health or longevity. So, as an isolated action, to respond to a flyer by depriving oneself of something one wants is irrational since one is undergoing a deprivation for no known benefit.

Now, of course, deciding to transform one's lifestyle to live healthier may indeed have benefits — although quantifying that isn't as easy as it sounds — but that is a big decision to make while walking into McDonald's for lunch.

So is it a good law? Well, some would argue that even if it is not effective overall, certain individuals who have decided to reduce caloric intake benefit as their making decisions is facilitated by the law. Indeed, one reason it might not be effective at McDonald's is that people looking to reduce caloric intake don't gravitate there.

Of course, others would argue that it is supposed to be a free country. If a chain doesn't want to reveal its calorie count, nobody makes consumers go eat there;

that the whole issue is a kind of "nanny state" approach that has no business in a nation of free people.

We keep thinking of Marks & Spencer's efforts to discourage people from buying air-freighted produce with its associated carbon footprint. M&S stickered each item with a jet plane as a kind of warning. Our focus groups, however, indicated that consumers saw the jet plane as a signal that the produce was "jet fresh" and were more favorably inclined to purchase it.

Maybe the reason calorie consumption went up when the recommendations were given is that it focused attention on the calorie counts and, when focused, people felt that more was better, that in the refueling mission of grabbing a meal at McDonald's, they wanted more calories or perceived a higher calorie meal as a better deal.

Alas, ineffectiveness is not considered a good reason to repeal a law. Thus country-of-origin labeling proceeds, and the attendant costs are incurred, without any evidence that having such information impacts consumer purchase decisions at all.



# 25th Annual Marketing Excellence Awards

Congratulations to the following campaigns that won PRODUCE BUSINESS' 25th Annual Marketing Excellence Awards! These 12 entrants are recognized for their outstanding creativity, comprehensive strategy and successful execution.

**Avocados from Mexico**  
*Costa Mesa, CA*

**Concord Foods**  
*Brockton, MA*

**Network for a Healthy California**  
*Sacramento, CA*

**Awe Sum Organics**  
*Capitola, CA*

**Idaho Potato Commission**  
*Eagle, ID*

**Ocean Mist Farms**  
*Castroville, CA*

**California Avocado Commission**  
*Irvine, CA*

**Mann Packing Company, Inc.**  
*Salinas, CA*

**Sunkist Growers**  
*Sherman Oaks, CA*

**Columbia Marketing International**  
*Wenatchee, WA*

**National Mango Board**  
*Orlando, FL*

**University of Massachusetts Amherst**  
*Amherst, MA*

## Avocados from Mexico

Costa Mesa, CA

### Spookamole Sweepstakes

**OBJECTIVE:** The overarching goal was to increase consumption of Avocados from Mexico for Halloween (or *Día de los Muertos* in Spanish cultures). The company promoted fun party recipes and meal ideas aimed at generating at least 40,000 visits to the Avocado from Mexico website. Another component was to educate consumers about why they should prefer Avocados from Mexico by establishing an online presence achieving 15 million impressions, and to increase connectivity with consumers through a Halloween-themed sweepstakes exceeding a benchmark of 20,000 entries and 12.1 million print impressions.

**CAMPAIGN:** Avocados from Mexico worked with communications agency, Integrated MarketingWorks (IMW), to execute a variety of traditional and nontraditional tactics in Spanish and English for October. Online ads and consumer e-blasts were implemented. The sweepstakes was hosted on the Avocados from Mexico website where entrants could receive a chance to win one of over 500 prizes. The brand's online "Avocado Dress Up Game" was updated and re-launched to include new Halloween / *Día de los Muertos*-themed costumes and backgrounds.

**RESULTS:** The Avocado from Mexico website received 69,098 visits during the time of the campaign — 73 percent higher versus the goal of 40,000 entries. The campaign's objective to educate consumers by advertising and social media engagement was successful. A total of 37,745,038 impressions were achieved — 151 percent higher than the goal of 15 million impressions. Connectivity with consumers via sweepstakes was achieved by receiving over 27,000 entries — 35 percent more than the goal of 20,000.



## Awe Sum Organics

Capitola, CA

### Awe Sum Organics Branding Campaign

**OBJECTIVE:** Awe Sum Organics sought to increase brand recognition, build mainstream identity and increase market share through education and awareness.

**CAMPAIGN:** In 2012 Awe Sum Organics established a new marketing platform that reflected and promoted its long-standing company values of doing what is right for humankind and the environment as a whole. The new, user-friendly website presented sales and industry-related tools, as well as offered education about the nutritional content of its fruit. Packaging featured QR codes that directed shoppers to learn more on the website and social media outlets (Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter and YouTube). Other marketing efforts focused on industry and consumer initiatives, which offered enticing fruit recipes, inspiring imagery, wellness tips, as well as branded Chico bags, lip balm and pens.

**RESULTS:** Still in the midst of the marketing and branding efforts, Awe Sum Organics is already proving excellent outcomes. The number of Facebook followers increased from 70 to over 8,000 "Likes" within six months. The new website has at least 26,151 page views and 6,000 unique visitors and continues to climb. Awe Sum Organics is also receiving positive feedback on its new packaging designs, and its organic commodities are selling out.



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- Created new packaging format to introduce this exciting new category for maximum trial and awareness.

TASTE THE DIFFERENCE



\*Across all outlets total U.S. includes Taylor Farms brand and private label

# California Avocado Commission

Irvine, CA

## July 4th / American Summer Holiday Promotion and Downtown Disney Event

**OBJECTIVE:** The July 4th promotion aimed to increase the perception that California avocados are perfect for the holiday's celebrations. Another goal was to set the foundation for people to include California Avocados in their July 4th and summer holiday menus with the hopes of making Independence Day the second largest avocado consumption event of the year — behind Super Bowl Sunday. Also, during California Avocado Week, the Commission partnered with Downtown Disney to host an event introducing avocados in 4th of July recipes to patrons.

**CAMPAIGN:** The promotions included an integrated marketing program with national print and online advertising, regionally targeted television and radio, retailer support (including merchandising materials) and registered dietitian outreach, along with online, e-mail and social media activity. In Downtown Disney, chefs created and demonstrated avocado recipes, and restaurants featured avocado dishes on menus.

**RESULTS:** The Commission surpassed its July 4th promotion objectives. Some of the result highlights included 187-plus million consumer advertising impressions (combined TV, print, radio, in-store and transit ad impressions), 2.1 million Downtown Disney event blogger impressions, and 95 percent of retail chains in core markets (California, Phoenix, Seattle, Portland, Denver, and Salt Lake City) merchandised California avocados.



# Columbia Marketing International

Wenatchee, WA

## Ambrosia Branding Program

**OBJECTIVE:** Columbia Marketing International created a new look and message for its Ambrosia apple with the tagline, "The secret is in the seeds." All new materials were developed to appeal to the retail segment, as well as to entice consumers to try the new apples. From packaging, to retail signage, to recipe cards, to jewelry for branded tote bags, to brand-wrapped trucks, all efforts strived to catch the eyes of consumers wherever Ambrosia apples were merchandised.

**CAMPAIGN:** Highly durable packaging and point-of-sale materials such as shippers, tote bags, pouch bags, poly bags and boxes were created. In-store contests were conducted with the materials and awards included an iPad3, surfboards, bikes and other exciting prizes.

**RESULTS:** Retailer and consumer response in-store and online was overwhelming. The bright and eye-catching promotional efforts highlight the notable qualities of the Ambrosia apple and establish a clear brand identity with consumers.





## Concord Foods

Brockton, MA

### 'Get Hooked' on Guacamole Sweepstakes

**OBJECTIVE:** As an effort to increase sales of Concord Foods Guacamole and Salsa Seasoning Mix, the company partnered with Disney to support the home entertainment Blu-ray Combo Pack release of Disney's Peter Pan.

**CAMPAIGN:** To support the release of the Disney classic film, the partnership spawned the Get Hooked on Guacamole promotion. A \$5 mail-in rebate was offered to consumers purchasing Disney's Peter Pan on Blu-ray Combo Pack and two Concord Foods' Guacamole or Salsa Seasoning Mixes. Additionally, Concord Foods promoted the rebate through point-of-sale displays, Facebook, e-mail blasts and a widely distributed press release. In honor of the promotion, child-friendly recipes, such as tiny guacamole sandwiches and grilled chicken and guacamole spirals, were made available on Concord Foods' website and Facebook page.

**RESULTS:** The in-store merchandising and digital efforts resulted in over 2.4 million impressions for the Get Hooked on Guacamole promotion. Concord Foods' website was visited by 33,629 visitors during the campaign, which is a 28 percent increase over 2012. During the campaign period, there was a 9 percent increase in Guacamole and Salsa Seasoning Mix sales (2013 versus 2012).



## Idaho Potato Commission

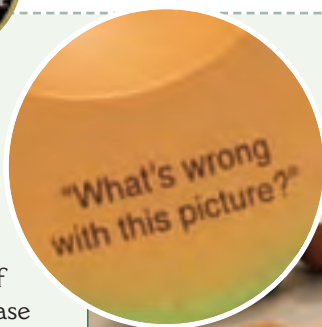
Eagle, ID

### What's Wrong With This Picture?

**OBJECTIVE:** To reinforce and grow the reputation of Idaho Potatoes as "America's highest quality" and to increase retailer support for Idaho Potatoes, the company took a simple concept that engaged an audience and introduced it through a different lens with each ad.

**CAMPAIGN:** The "What's Wrong With This Picture?" campaign cleverly applied the well known "Grown in Idaho" logo to other exotic fruits and vegetables, letting the reader answer the question posed by the headline. To generate visibility, the fruits were featured in online banner ads in various sizes and ran on key trade publication websites during the peak potato-buying season (October 2012 through May 2013). Following the release of the first print ad, "Olives," the Idaho Potato Commission designed custom olive jars with the "What's Wrong With This Picture?" label and a corresponding playful riddle. These olive jars — as well as a series of stress balls shaped as fruit with the Idaho Potato logo on one side and the "What's Wrong" phrase on the other — were delivered to retailers to reinforce campaign recall and bring the ads to life.

**RESULTS:** Both as individual elements and as a campaign, "What's Wrong With This Picture" has won many awards for excellence and innovation in marketing communications. Through industry organizations and beyond, the campaign received widespread recognition for its humor and powerful approach.





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## Mann Packing Company, Inc.

Salinas, CA

### Racers Embrace Power of the Pea!

**OBJECTIVE:** Using grassroots marketing efforts to generate awareness for Mann Packing's Sugar Snap Peas and drive sales in key U.S. markets, Mann Packing partnered with the world's largest running series to reach its target market and to support a charity.

**CAMPAIGN:** Mann's partnership with the Rock 'n' Roll Marathon Series featured its award-winning Stringless Sugar Snap Peas at the Virginia Beach and San Antonio race events in 2012 along with the Phoenix and San Francisco race events in 2013. In addition to Sugar Snap Pea sampling at the health and fitness expos in each city, Mann distributed coupons to more than 35,000 attendees per market, ran print ads, and partnered with local retailers by displaying logos at each race.

**RESULTS:** The running series was an ideal venue for Mann Packing to reach health-conscious consumers with product. More than 68,500 Mann packages were distributed, and coupon redemption continues to climb. The partnership was such a success that Mann Packing will participate in more runs with the series throughout 2013.



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## National Mango Board

Orlando, FL

### Red Mango, Foodservice Branded Chain Promotion

**OBJECTIVE:** For the month of May 2013, the National Mango Board (NMB) partnered with large frozen yogurt chain, Red Mango, to feature mango as the chain's topping and flavor of the month. In addition to brand recognition, marketing efforts focused on educating consumers about mango nutrition.

**CAMPAIGN:** Red Mango featured an all-natural nonfat mango frozen yogurt with fresh-diced mangos during May. NMB branded point-of-sale materials to educate Red Mango customers about the fruit by focusing on the nutrition message. The chain also offered \$1 coupons with the mango yogurt and fruit combination. Red Mango spread the nutrition messages to its customers through its social media channels, including e-blasts, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

**RESULTS:** The promotion impacted a total of 150 Red Mango locations nationwide. Point-of-sale materials included the NMB logo in photography, danglers, door clings, e-mail blasts, coupons and counter signs in addition to the social media elements.



## Network for a Healthy California

Sacramento, CA

### Fruit and Veggie Fest - San Diego and Marin County



**OBJECTIVE:** California's grocers are on the frontlines of the obesity epidemic. This concern is why the Network for a Healthy California — which is affiliated with the California Department of Public Health to create partnerships that influence low-income Californians to increase produce consumption, physical activity, and food security — works with more than 700 stores to reach shoppers at the point of sale. Over the course of a month, Network's Fruit and Veggie Fest partnered with retailers to take special advantage of the impact promotions can have, and used in-store events and displays to promote the health, the taste and the value of fruits and vegetables.

**CAMPAIGN:** In San Diego, the fest was held at the Northgate Market in the Barrio Logan neighborhood. The day included several activities, all encouraging healthy food choices and physical activity. Giveaways included copies of Network's cookbook, *Flavors of My Kitchen*, recipe cards, and goodie bags featuring California grown avocados and educational pamphlets.

Shoppers in California's San Francisco Bay Area celebrated at the Mi Pueblo Food Center in Mountain View. Visitors took part in store tours, which highlighted tips and ideas on healthy and affordable food options. These tours were courtesy of the Network's "Children's Power Play!" campaign, which inspires children to eat three to five cups of fruits and vegetables and get at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day.

**RESULTS:** Over 300 visitors took part in the festivities in San Diego and over 700 took part in the celebration in Marin. Many visitors included groups of students, teachers and parents from Perkins and Balboa Elementary School. Local news affiliates such as NBC, KUSI, KPBS, and Univision also attended to spread the word of the day's activities. Local media outlets drew many shoppers to each event due to the pre-event and live radio coverage.

## Ocean Mist Farms

Castroville, CA



### Just in Time for the Holiday

**OBJECTIVE:** This joint marketing venture promoted Ocean Mist Farms fresh vegetables with its fairly new customer, Marc's (an independent retailer with more than 60 grocery stores in Ohio), as well as aimed to generate higher FOB sales volume during the week after Thanksgiving — which is traditionally low for sales. To achieve the objective, Ocean Mist Farms designed a consumer promotion that would build brand awareness for Ocean Mist Farms, create content for Marc's marketing department (for use on its website and social media outlets), and create excitement in-store with displays and point of sale.

**CAMPAIGN:** Shoppers had to purchase any one of 30 fresh Ocean Mist Farms vegetable items sold at Marc's, take a photo of their sales receipt, and submit the picture via e-mail or to Ocean Mist Farm's mobile site. The picture, as proof of purchase, was required to win the grand prize of \$1,000 Marc's gift card. Both companies promoted the sweepstakes digitally through their websites and social media outlets. Additionally, Marc's ran a full-page ad in its weekly circular featuring all of the marketing collateral that produce managers could use to promote the sweepstakes.

**RESULTS:** Ocean Mist Farms received more than 160 qualifying entries during the campaign. The promotion generated higher FOB sales volume than the week of Thanksgiving — making it a true success and achieving the objective.



# Sunkist Growers

Sherman Oaks, CA



## Not Your Mother's Grapefruit Campaign

**OBJECTIVE:** Grapefruit has long been popular with mature consumers, but Sunkist and its nutrition PR and marketing agency, Integrated MarketingWorks (IMW), wanted to develop and execute a strategic communication program to highlight the health and nutrition benefits of grapefruit for women in the 18 to 40 demographics, secure positive media exposure, and position Sunkist as a trusted resource for citrus nutrition information and news.

**CAMPAIGN:** The mammoth-sized campaign included: a 12-week study with participants eating grapefruit during each meal, creating an educational brochure using nutrition and health data, and participating as an exhibitor at the Health & Nutrition Editor Showcase introducing the campaign to numerous members of print, broadcast and online media. But media coverage did not stop at the showcase. A 10-city co-op media tour commenced in addition to promotion on Sunkist's website, e-newsletter and social media.

**RESULTS:** The program leveraged compelling scientific research, which was shared with influential members of the media community and ultimately resulted in over 22 million media impressions. By positioning grapefruit as a superfood, the fruit was recognized by a younger, health-conscious audience.



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# University of Massachusetts Amherst

Amherst, MA

## Fresh Chilean Fruit Week



**OBJECTIVE:** The Chilean Fresh Fruit Week served as a fun platform for engaging college students. The event focused on prompting “small plate, big flavor” philosophy, Nutritional Benefits of Fresh Chilean Fruit, and Interactive Education. The goals were to serve healthy and flavorful meals to students, feature world cuisine in a sustainable manner, and interact with students in an amusing way.

**CAMPAIGN:** Held during March 25 through 29, The Chilean Fresh Fruit Week featured many different recipes for students to eat and promotional entertainment during their meals. Executive Director of UMass Dining, Ken Toong, promoted the “small plate, big flavor,” philosophy by emphasizing the importance of student health through portion size reduction. The promotion also included an interactive and educational bingo game based on information about the fruits. In each dining commons, UMass staged an eight-foot tall photo board with the Chilean Fresh Fruit logo and personalized fruit images during the daily dinner service, which students used in personalized photos.

**RESULTS:** Over 100,000 customers were served in the dining commons during Chilean Fresh Fruit Week thanks to promotional efforts. Most importantly, the five most popular dishes served during the promotion were added to the University’s regular menu cycle.



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# Newport Avenue Market

An independent grocer in Central Oregon thrives on community emphasis on wellness and healthy living. **BY OSCAR KATOV**



**T**alk about a challenge: Newport Avenue Market is a single-store operator that successfully operates near 15 competitors in a tight marketing area drawing customers from at least 30 miles away. “We have been in business as a single store since 1976, and most importantly, we learned that we can’t beat our competitors at the pricing game,” says Lauren Johnson, chief operating officer of the Newport Avenue Market in Bend, OR, and daughter of G.R. Johnson, the Market’s late founder. “But, what differentiates us in this very competitive marketplace is our merchandising skills, coupled with the sensory experiences in the store enjoyed by our customers.”

“What we created is an energetic atmosphere reflected in our 11 departments: bakery, beer/wine, deli, floral, gourmet cheese, grocery, housewares, meat/seafood, produce, specialty foods, and sushi,” explains Johnson, who cheerfully refers to herself as The Head Cheerleader. “I like to think that our slogan says it all, ‘Life Is Short; Eat Good Food.’”

“Fresh produce is a big deal and a huge draw for our customers,” comments Thomas “Spike” Bement, the market’s general manager. “The lifestyle here in central Oregon is what I call ‘outdoor life,’ with emphasis on nutrition and healthy living.”

“All year around, we have world-class athletes in the area, whether it’s skiing, cycling or hiking, and it’s a great resort area with visitors coming here to shop,” says Johnson. “We have become a popular grocery and specialty food destination for residents and tourists alike. Fresh produce is a key factor in our success, linked to our confidence

**“Our customers are knowledgeable and generally conscious of living a healthy lifestyle, and they seek our beautiful produce to fill their plates.”**

— Lauren Johnson, Newport Avenue Market

with United Salad Company in Portland, OR, as our principal supplier that provides 80 percent of our requirements — covering about 400 different items.”

“United has been a good partner for many years,” adds Johnson. “We request the highest quality in our fresh products, because our customers are very demanding. This reputation helps establish our own strong competitive position in the marketplace.”

**Produce In Sync With Lifestyle**

Organics represent about 13 percent of the Market’s produce sales, and the volume continues to grow — reflecting consumer interest in environmental issues and products that they believe fit their individual lifestyle objectives.

Although the bulk of the store’s produce needs are provided by United Salad — from a variety of leafy greens to apples, oranges, and strawberries — the store also looks to local farmers for a wide range of special items, such



Newport Avenue Market partners with the Life Skills Program, out of the local high school, to support students with learning and physical disabilities. Students are educated on how to take produce to market. They even help package basil for the store.

as pumpkins.

"For over 15 years, we have been getting all of our pumpkins from a small farm nearby called Me and More — basically a man and his wife," says Bement. "We get 16,000 pounds delivered (all at one time) and unloaded in front of the store beginning at 6 a.m., which requires the assistance of every person in our organization for the day. Families in the area know it's pumpkin time. They know the pumpkins are clean, have stems, are beautiful-looking, and ready for children to

do their design work. The farmer and his team treat the pumpkins with special care. It's a fun day when the pumpkins arrive — a big community affair."

Dealing with local and regional farmers means being sensitive to weather conditions. "We have a short growing season in central Oregon," says Johnson. "We can have a 50-degree temperature swing overnight, so we're very limited in what we can draw in." All of this results in produce from a scattering of small local farmers, from hot house tomatoes



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and artichokes to stone fruits such as peaches and nectarines.

"A very interesting supplier is our own high school and its Life Skills Program," says Bement. "Students with learning disabilities, and some with physical disabilities, are taught how to take a product to market." Students learn everything from growing to packaging right down to designing the label on the bottle. They even package basil for the Newport Avenue Market.

While Produce commands such attention as a store department, other departments are important "destinations." For example, the beer/wine section offers over 500 different beers. "We have a total of 89 associates in all the departments, many of whom have been with us 15 years or more," says Johnson.

"We like to believe that our most effective promotion activity is word-of-mouth," adds Johnson. "Our sales impact has come from customer emphasis on wellness and nutrition issues. Our customers are knowledgeable and generally conscious of living a healthy lifestyle, and they seek our beautiful produce to fill their plates. Without a strong community, we would not be a successful market. Our long relationship with Central Oregon goes far beyond providing quality groceries and service."

Newport Avenue Market is committed to enriching the community through non-profit activities and environmentally responsible practices, such as its new composting program. "It is our belief that a healthy community starts and ends with the strength of its people," says Johnson. **pb**



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PHOTO ON LEFT COURTESY OF HASS AVOCADO BOARD, PHOTO ON RIGHT COURTESY OF SPICE WORLD



With a vast range of products, retailers can get creative with tailgate merchandising.

# Preparing For Prime Time Tailgating Action

Produce has become the prevalent headliner at tailgate parties and other grilling events because of its versatility in recipes, simplicity in preparation, ease of portability and, of course, its fresh taste. **BY JONATHAN ZALMAN**

**T**he tailgate party is an American tradition. From the sizzling parking lots of Texas to the crowded streets that sprawl below the shadows of New York City skyscrapers, sports fans typically convene around a grill in order to celebrate their team allegiances through food and drinks.

The origin of tailgating, however, is debatable. Some trace aspects back to ancient Rome and Greece, as well as the Civil War, while others consider the first American football game ever played — a battle in 1869 between the College of New Jersey (now Princeton) and Rutgers, which Rutgers won 6 to 4 — to be the starting point.

What's unquestionable, however, is that tailgating has become a popular American tradition, and snacking on or cooking with fruits and vegetables has become a mainstay for tailgaters everywhere.

The presence of produce at tailgating events has grown in popularity because people are changing their eating habits. Popular media outlets took notice and followed suit, with celebrities manning their grills in advance of

tailgating season. Take President Obama, for example. He grilled corn and juicy rib eyes with *Food Network* star, Chef Bobby Flay, in the White House backyard for the Young Mens Barbeque held on Father's Day. Mario Batali, of *Iron Chef* fame, shared his recipe for grilled vegetable salad from his recent cookbook on *Good Morning America*. Rachael Ray shares a medley of grilled vegetable dishes with her fans via her website, cookbooks, and television show as well as FoodNetwork.com readers.

It's not just world-class chefs who promote grilling produce at tailgating events. The all-American grill manufacturer, Weber supports the trend. According to Mike Kempster, the chief marketing officer of Weber, based out of Palatine, IL, tailgate parties are not just about barbecuing meat anymore. "We do see trends that are favorable in terms of people grilling more vegetables," says Kempster, who authored several books on grilling techniques and recipes.

"Whoever is in charge [of the tailgate party] has to be mindful of the guests. Of 15 to 20 guests, there's probably going to be one or two who are flexitarian and more who are

committed to the vegetarian lifestyle. Why exclude them from the party?"

## Reaching The Customers' Attention

Roger Schroeder, vice president of produce at San Bernardino, CA-based Stater Bros. Markets, says his merchandising efforts focus on party-gathering and weekend barbecuing, in addition to tailgating — especially during hot weather months. "Right now it's pretty warm outside, so we try to incorporate appropriate produce for grilling in our ads that reflect the season — such as corn, squash or onions."

As the football season nears, Schroeder says his customers tend to grill a little less until the temperature outside cools; as a result, Stater Bros. focuses on party-gathering items. "Quite often, we'll advertise avocados because guacamole is a big deal on the West Coast, particularly southern California, along with tomatoes and onions," says Schroeder, adding that Stater Bros. will sometimes incorporate the use of a gatefold on the mailer at the store to promote meal combinations, such as meat and potatoes.

## Offer A Variety Of Vegetable And Fruit Trays

Schroeder also says that providing large fruit and vegetable trays can encourage the gatherings that occur ritually on weekends during the football season. “Party trays save customers prep time in the kitchen,” he adds.

Sean Ryden, assistant manager at Okie’s Thriftway Market in Ocean Park, WA, agrees that providing fruit and vegetable trays is important when marketing toward grilling events like tailgating. “Right now a lot of people like to get them,” says Ryden. “We have prepackaged trays from Del Monte with dip, as well as fruit bowls. We also take orders for 12- and 16-inch trays that we hand-make. Fruit bowls with mixed cantaloupe, honeydew, watermelon and grapes are pretty popular.”

“For tailgating parties, a bright, healthy, fresh vegetable selection is nearly impossible to beat and always one of the first snack items to be devoured,” says Cali Tanguay, director of marketing and technology for Guadalupe, CA-based Apio, Inc. She adds that customers have the ability to purchase trays that can offer a variety of sizes, as well as combine a number of fresh vegetables and dips — and have the tech-

nological assurance of freshness. Tanguay touts Apio’s patented BreatheWay technology, which, she says, “sets us apart with our loyal consumers who look for these items because of the naturally extended freshness of the vegetables.”

Apio’s Eat Smart fresh vegetable trays, which are available in 20-ounce and 37-ounce sizes, contain a variety of washed vegetables, including mini sweet peppers. These trays are “quick, self-contained, and easy to transport, making for open-and-serve appetizers,” says Tanguay. They can also come with dips like hummus or French Onion, which pair nicely with Apio’s “Just the Veggies” tray.

Apio also offers a 64-ounce “Celebrations” tray to feed even the most fervent tailgate parties that may include the entire cul-de-sac in the neighborhood. Because tailgate events often draw larger groups, Tanguay says Apio’s largest tray is intended to maximize fresh eating options by offering 16 servings of a selection of broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, tomatoes, mini sweet peppers, celery and creamy Litehouse Foods’ ranch dip.

Another company looking closely at vegetable tray packaging and usage is Mann Packing Co., based in Salinas, CA. According to vice president of retail sales, Greg Kurkjian, recent innovation with Mann’s vegetable-tray packaging is making the company’s products more environmentally friendly. Mann began by studying consumer behavior at events not unlike tailgate parties. “We studied the consumer through our research firm, and we found that 92 percent of consumers don’t use the tray for serving as intended,” says Kurkjian. “So we designed a package that eliminated that piece of plastic because only 8 percent of consumers were using it.”

Mann Packing developed a container design with a clear lid stock that, according to Kurkjian, provides a few advantages. “It eliminates the black lid. If everybody had this packaging design, we’d eliminate over 2 million pounds of plastic from going into the landfill every year,” he says. “And because it’s clear on top, the consumer gets a better viewing window.”

Kurkjian, who is keen on understanding consumer behavior, says that the persons who were a part of the focus group tended not to put the whole tray back into the refrigerator because there’s usually not a lot of food left and it takes up too much space. Speaking as a consumer, Kurkjian says, “I definitely don’t



PHOTO COURTESY OF MANN PACKING CO.

put the whole tray back into the refrigerator. That’s space I can’t afford. I may take some of the ingredients, put them in a Ziplock bag and store that in the ‘fridge.”

## Cross Merchandising Is King

For tailgating events, Okie’s Ryden says customers want the basics, such as tomatoes and lettuce, to accompany hamburgers. Produce is often combined with other items in the store that are on sale, especially during Super Bowl time. “We set up displays where we put beer, chips and avocados together,” says Ryden.

Gerald Cooper, assistant produce manager at the Fountainview location of Rice Epicurean Markets outside Houston, TX, says that involving other departments in the effort to sell produce items is an important retail tactic. “We do lots of cross merchandising within our meat departments by including tomatoes, potatoes and all the colored bell peppers,” says Cooper.

“Red and orange peppers are great on the grill.” To catch the customers’ attention, Rice Epicurean sets up displays combining steak and mushrooms; or in the beer aisle, the store will merchandise cherries and strawberries,” says Cooper.

Rice Epicurean’s creative marketing efforts have involved driving a truck in a location’s parking lot, putting the tailgate down, and merchandising directly off of the truck. “It’s suggestive-selling,” says Cooper. Promotional displays are often set up for whatever is in season at the time, says Cooper. “We tie produce items in with basketballs, footballs and goalposts,” says Cooper, who adds that the produce department often ties in themes with hats, shirts, and jerseys.

Jeff Cady, category manager of produce and floral at Tops Markets, located in Buffalo, NY, agrees that creating themed displays is important. It’s an opportunity for the entire store to get involved. “From a produce perspective, I would create a display and call it ‘the grilling destination’ or ‘the dipping destination,’ and



PHOTOS COURTESY OF APIO

look to tie in items like avocados, which move more for tailgating,” says Cady.

Tops has worked with commissions such as the California Avocado Commission — which provided attractive football-themed displays — as well as with pistachio companies and beer companies, like Labatt Brewing Company. “You name it, we’ve tied it in. Even football balloons in Floral. It’s a concerted effort,” says Cady.

### Get Creative And Challenge Customers To Buy Something New

Along with providing customers pre-packaged and store-made custom trays, Okie’s Ryden says sampling can expose shoppers to something new, such as a unique brand of apple — whereby a customer is more likely to make an impulse purchase.

“I think we challenge them,” says Tops’ Cady. “We put different things out there that aren’t directly related to tailgating but may be and, in our opinion, should be. Lots of fruits that are great on the grill, like peaches and pineapples, many people haven’t tried. But when they do, they will swear by it.”

During peak tailgating season, Rice Epicurean Markets touts soft fruit, such as peaches, plums, or nectarines. For tailgating,

**“We put different things out there that aren’t directly related to tailgating but may be and, in our opinion, should be. Lots of fruits that are great on the grill, like peaches and pineapples, many people haven’t tried. But when they do, they will swear by it.”**

— Jeff Cady, Tops Markets

Cooper says, “They fit right in — they’re an excellent healthy snack. You don’t have to cut them up; just eat them right out of your hand.”

One marketing challenge for tailgating is making sure retailers connect produce ingredients with other food associations that would encourage an impulse buy. “Because garlic is one of the first things that may go in a recipe, it can be cross-merchandised with tomatoes for salads, corn, pasta sauces, bread in the bakery department, or in the seafood department for shrimp scampi,” says Louis Hymel, director of purchasing and marketing for Orlando, FL-based Spice World. “When merchandisers look at garlic, they will realize that garlic doesn’t just need to be in the produce department in one place. It can

become an item that helps incremental sales.”

Garlic can be used in so many different ways, and it ties in especially well with tailgating and grilling, says Hymel. “You can take whole garlic bulbs and put them on the grill — roasted garlic is a wonderful thing. Or cook with our ready-to-use traditional minced garlic, which is a No. 1 seller in the marketplace. Our squeeze garlic products are easy to apply at any tailgating party.”

Hymel says that garlic spreads are becoming popular because they offer convenience, mobility and the consumer doesn’t have to peel garlic. “You just grab the bottle and squeeze it, just like ketchup,” says Hymel. “It’s turning garlic into more than just an ingredient, but into a condiment.”



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For the third year straight, Apio has added a football-themed label to attract the attention of sports enthusiasts. “Switching up the label helps make the connection with consumers allowing for an increase in impulse purchases,” says Tanguay. “Our products naturally have bright attention-grabbing colors, so displays near the entrance and promotions, like buy-one-get-one free, allow consumers to rediscover the category. Consumers are already looking to buy snacks for an event — now the produce industry just needs to capture their attention.”

### Timing Is Everything

Avocados are an enormous contribution to a number of celebrations, from summer picnics to fall tailgate parties. According to Irvine, CA-based Hass Avocado Board’s (HAB) *Usage and Attitudes Tracking Study* (Spring 2013), which was developed under the supervision of the USDA, barbecues and picnics are among the most frequent events for using Hass avocados.

Part of the reason avocados are so popular is their unique combination of portability, ease-of-use and versatility when it comes to how they’re eaten. “Fresh items, like avocados,

that don’t need refrigeration, can be easily transported to tailgating events,” says Emiliano Escobedo, executive director of the HAB. “Anyone can make guacamole by adding an avocado to salsa right on site. Ripe Hass avocados can also be served on top of burgers, hot dogs, sandwiches or salad.”

“To ensure that one-of-a-kind taste and quality, avocados need to be ripe on game day,” Escobedo says. “This is a challenge that HAB works hard to meet. Why would a consumer get the chips and other guacamole ingredients if avocados — the main ingredient — are not ready to eat? Hass avocados outsell unripe avocados anywhere from two-to-one or four-to-one depending on the market and time of year.”

Hass avocados cross-promote easily with other items typically at tailgate parties, like buns, chips or beverages. They offer customers a variety of price points and sizes, such as buying in bulk. This flexibility “generates



PHOTO COURTESY OF MISSION PRODUCE

greater rings at checkout,” says Escobedo.

Capitalizing on the timing of promotions from other produce partners, Bill Tarleton, director of marketing and communications at Oxnard, CA-based Mission Produce, uses a synergistic approach when reaching out to the company’s customer base. Mission has rolled out extensive tailgating promotional activities that involve partnering with retailers and other produce suppliers, such as Fresh Express out of Salinas, CA, Wegmans out of Rochester, NY, and Kroger out of Cincinnati,

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## PUSHING PERCEPTIONS WITH DESSERT ON THE 'CUE



PHOTO COURTESY OF DOLE FRESH FRUIT CO.

“It used to be the assumption that any fruits or vegetables served at a tailgate party were found in a salad or sandwich, but we’re seeing them take their rightful place as a tailgate staple all their own,” says Bil Goldfield, director, corporate communications, for Westlake Village, CA-based, Dole Fresh Fruit Co. As a result, Dole’s efforts have been focused on promoting a unique line of desserts that are ready to be “thrown on the pre-

game barbecue after the meat is done,” such as Grilled Dole Bananas and Grilled Dole S’mores.

Dole’s effort to push its banana-based products and recipes comes from a creative approach. The perceptions consumers may have about what can become popular at barbecues is malleable. Case-in-point: pineapples. “Certainly, grilled Dole pineapples are in the tailgating public mindset,” says Goldfield. “I don’t think it’s an exag-

snacking tomatoes and beefsteak tomatoes for burgers, in addition to grilling items, like baby eggplants and grilling peppers.”

While Pure Hothouse has yet to market directly toward tailgating, its products do connect with its demographic through labeling. “The backside of packaging is an opportunity to reach the consumer with a recipe or nutritional values,” says Mastronardi. “We even use the sidebar in front. Our stoplights — the three-packs of bell peppers — include stickers that give recipe suggestions.”

When it comes to tailgating, “most consumers are looking for something convenient,” says Sarah Pau, marketing assistant for Pure Hothouse. “Less work, easy to make, and minimal preparation.”

Pau also points to Pure Hothouse Foods’ web efforts where consumers can incorporate Pure Flavor’s quality produce with simple, yet creative recipes, some accompanied by video, that will make a splash at tailgate parties or barbecues. Among them are recipes for stuffed baby eggplants, salsa, Aurora Sweets (long peppers), beefsteak slicer tomatoes, a fresh guacamole kit, and cucumber mojitos.

generation to say that bananas are closer to being considered in the tailgate mainstream after the three years we’ve been positioning them as a pre-game option.”

Goldfield is working to change the impression that the inside of a banana turns black when it’s grilled. As a result, Dole started marketing bananas as a tailgate option. These efforts, which include a video series, are being packaged as an element of a summer-long “Peel The Love Tour,” in which the Dole Food Truck makes stops across the U.S., promoting its products and recipes, while educating the public about different approaches to preparing and eating (among other fruits) bananas.

Mike Kempster, chief marketing officer of Weber, is a believer in produce as a signature grilling option. “Frequently for our website’s ‘Recipe of the Week,’ we’ll recommend grilling pineapple,” he says. One of Kempster’s favorite fruits to grill is the banana. He offers a quick, simple recipe, “Take a banana, and slit the skin. Leave just one slit on the banana, and grill it. Then take the banana off, pull back the peel, and add ice cream, chocolate chips, or marshmallows — it becomes a little sundae. The kids love it.” **pb**

OH. “You buy the avocados, and you get a certain discount on chips or salads,” says Tarleton. Mission Produce also adds value to its avocado and asparagus products by offering consumers nutritional information and a number of recipes on its website — including access through a mobile app.

While Mission Produce utilizes the latest technology in marketing, Tarleton believes in the basics, or what he calls “standards” — selling a quality product with good pricing. “All of our customers — from a big retailer like Costco to foodservice — do a great job in marketing avocados now,” Tarleton says. “They know how to build the displays and associate it with other fruit, like tomatoes, limes, and onions.”

### Use Simple, Gourmet Recipes

One element connecting tailgate-heavy consumers with sales is the weather. According to Matt Mastronardi, vice president of sales and marketing for Pure Hothouse Foods in Leamington, ON, Canada, “When there’s nice weather, which corresponds with barbecuing or tailgating, you see upwards pressure in your

Mann Packing’s website offers visitors recipes on its homepage, categorized by meal of the day, season, and even age, as well as promotions like coupons. Kurkjian points out one recipe idea for a tailgate party in which a barbeque rub is applied to sugar snap peas, and then grilled.

In fact, it’s Mann Packing’s string-less sugar snap peas that Kurkjian is most passionate about. “We have a proprietary seed variety from Syngenta, and it’s the sweetest and most tender sugar snap pea on the market,” he says. Available in a variety of sizes, Kurkjian says that even though the string-less sugar snap peas are one of the ingredients in the company’s party trays, people are buying the bigger bags for snacking. “It’s become an item that stands on its own,” he says.

In addition, Kurkjian says that working with retailers to promote produce items is key. “We provide a full ensemble of channel strips, danglers and other signage for all products. What we try to do, most of all, is align promotional activity with the event that is happening — for example, the Stanley Cup playoffs or the Super Bowl.” **pb**

# In Memorium



Thomas Tramutola with his beloved father John.

## John Robert Tramutola Sr.

January 7, 1931 – July 23, 2013

John Tramutola Sr., Chairman of the Board of A & J Produce Corporation, was born into the produce industry. His father Thomas Tramutola, was president of Tom Tramutola Corp., a fruit and produce wholesaler at the Washington Street Market, NYC.

John played basketball in high school and went to Teacher's College in Connecticut. He served in the United States Army and was stationed in Germany during the Korean War.

After his tour of duty, he joined the New York City Police Department. During his off-hours, he continued to work as a jobber in the family business to help support his growing family. After 13 years as a civil servant, John took a risk by leaving the NYPD and his city pension to start his full-time career working at the newly established Hunts Point Terminal Market. His leap of faith and dedication enabled John to build a successful business over the next five decades.

In 1977, John, Al Weiler and the late Joe Levantino decided to form A & J Produce Corporation by purchasing three units at Hunts Point. Starting with Western vegetables, peaches and apples, the company grew to owning 12 units by 1987.

Operating a true family business, John and Al continued to grow by surrounding themselves with family members and good people. Today, A & J Produce Corp. owns 28 units at the Hunts Point, handling a full-line of fruit and vegetables.

"My father was a Gentle Giant, who was soft-spoken, never raising his voice and good-natured. All he truly cared about was his family, yet he was also proud that he and Al could build a successful business where today most of our family members continue to work side by side," said John's son, Thomas Tramutola.

He is survived by: his children, Joanne Bonomolo, Carole Lucido, Thomas, Jimmy, John Jr., and Margaret Hamdan, his 13 grandchildren, his 8 great-grandchildren and his sister, Angela Dellosso. John Tramutola was like a father to each of his daughters-in-law and sons-in-law.

John Tramutola Sr., had one mission in his life: to create a better world for his family. All his years of hard work, tenacity and devotion created a legacy that will live on forever.



New varieties out of Washington generate incremental sales beyond the basics.

# Washington Apple Industry Continues New Plantings

Exploring unique varieties on the horizon. BY CAROL BAREUTHER

Several years ago, retailers across the country asked their Washington apple grower partners to develop a new variety along the lines of the next Honeycrisp. Produce executives planned to purchase the entire crop and market these novel apples exclusively — differentiating themselves from the competition and gain a competitive advantage. Today, it’s apparent that many retailers made this same request to all major apple growers in the state for there has been an explosion of new varieties.

“There is tremendous excitement in the apple category right now,” says Suzanne Wolter, director of marketing for the Rainier Fruit Company, in Selah, WA. “It’s rare to see both dollar and volume increases in a category,

proving consumers are interested in new varieties and willing to pay for great tasting, high quality products.”

Rick Steigerwald, senior director of manufacturing and produce operations for Lund Food Holdings, Inc., a 22-store chain based in Edina, MN, agrees, “While there is some cannibalization, the net gain is positive. New varieties increased sales in the whole apple category.”

## Why Washington?

Washington is a leader in the apple category worldwide. “One major reason is that the state has one of the best microclimates in the world,” says Keith Mathews, chief executive officer of First Fruits Marketing of Washington, in Yakima, WA. “Cool fall nights mixed with warm days develop great

fruit color. The desert climate, with ample water supplied chiefly from canals hand-dug over a century ago, means few diseases and cosmetically clean apples.

Developing new techniques, funding serious research, applying that research, and doing the job well has

put the state in a unique position to grow great fruit.”

Washington’s synergistic apple-growing attributes lined up especially well in 2012 to produce a record 129 million bushels. This crop, which contributed over \$9 billion directly and indirectly to the state’s economy, shattered the previous record of 109 million bushels set in 2010, according to the Wenatchee, WA-headquartered Washington Apple Commission (WAC). Much of this volume was represented by nine varieties; however, there are over 25 varieties grown commercially in the state, including several that are new.

## What’s Hot, What’s Not

Honeycrisp is perhaps the most popular variety grown in Washington.

Wescott Orchards and Agricultural Products, in Elgin, MN, markets its Honeycrisp under the Honeybear brand and is one of the first Honeycrisp growers in Washington. Wescott’s president Fred Wescott says, “Honeycrisp production and marketing is growing at a record pace in Washington. The state produced 5 million cartons this year, and



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**“Red Delicious is still king in Washington. Export demand for Red Delicious has grown, while retailers in the United States are working more varieties and club varieties into the category.”**

— Chuck Sinks, Sage Fruit Company

next year I expect to be up by about 3 million. For Washington, Honeycrisp will probably be a 10 million-box crop in the next three to five years.”

Red Delicious is maintaining its eternal flame of popularity with 39 million cartons

grown and marketed last year.

Chuck Sinks, president of sales and marketing for the Sage Fruit Company, headquartered in Yakima, WA, says, “Red Delicious is still king in Washington. Export demand for Red Delicious has grown, while retailers

in the United States are working more varieties and club varieties into the category.”

“Gala production is increasing,” says Todd Fryhover, president of the WAC. “Gala is currently the No. 2 produced apple in Washington with 26 million bushels last year.

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However, with the increased acreage, it could be No. 1 in the next 10 years.”

“Classic varieties of Gala as well as Fuji are declining and being replaced by new hybrids,” explains Roger Pepperl, marketing director for Wenatchee, WA-headquartered, Stemilt Growers. “This upgrade creates premium pieces of fruit with less inconsistencies and keeps these varieties in strong demand by consumers.”

“What’s not as popular is Braeburn,” says Steve Wright, director of produce and floral for Tops Markets LLC, a 159-store chain based in Buffalo, NY. “It’s a tough sell. Golden Delicious and Jonagold are also dwindling in demand.”

Scott Marboe, director of marketing for Oneonta Starr Ranch Growers, in Wenatchee,

WA, adds, “The older varieties have suffered the most — for example, Winesaps and Red Romes. However, even varieties like Cameo have seen a big decline over the past few years as new varieties become more prevalent.”

Howard Nager, vice president of marketing for Yakima, WA-based Domex Superfresh Growers LLC, says, “Information from the state’s nurseries indicates that 40 percent of plantings last year were new varieties.”

### Varietal Profits

The potential profits of a new crop are so positive that retailers are keeping an eye on apple varietal development in Washington. According to the Nielsen Perishables Group, a Chicago, IL-based fresh food consulting firm, 129,600 bushels of apples were grown

and marketed out of Washington between September 1, 2012 and March 31, 2013. These apples were grouped into an “others” category, which is a group containing out-and-goers as well as up-and-comer varieties. The category experienced a 51 percent increase in dollar sales and 45 percent increase in volume sales over the year prior.

“Even if it’s a variety that is three to five years away from commercial production, we want to know about it, because we want to be the first to offer it,” explains Lund Food Holdings’ Steigerwald. “We’re in a good place to be able to do this. With just 22 stores, we can work with growers who have just a small volume of a new apple variety to get it in store, introduced to our shoppers with customized point-of-sale (POS), and quickly

## TIPS FOR INTRODUCING A NEW APPLE VARIETY

“**M**ainline apple varieties drive dollars,” says Howard Nager, vice president of marketing for Yakima, WA-based Domex Superfresh Growers LLC. “It’s the new varieties that generate incremental sales.”

To maximize these additional rings, it’s important to astutely introduce a new variety. One retailer that exemplifies this philosophy is the Lunds & Byerly’s stores of Lund Food Holdings, Inc. Rick Steigerwald is the senior director of manufacturing and produce operations for Lund Food Holdings. His approach is multifaceted and starts with a taste test by the chain’s executive staff. “If a variety meets this threshold — in other words, has unique eating attributes and something that really delights the taste — then we’ll introduce it to our produce managers. If feedback from the produce managers is positive, then we will introduce the apple to customers at each of our stores.”

This first introduction is announced not only by a high visibility and sizeable end-cap display, but also with a 22 by 28-inch sign that tells a story about the apple and its key selling points. At the same time, Lunds & Byerly’s will advertise the apple and talk it up on the chain’s website via blog posts and social media accounts (such as Facebook and Twitter) announcing that there’s something new in the produce department. Also, weekend manned demos are hosted as well as

passive sampling.

Steigerwald says, “We use a broad reach. Then, we look back at the category a few months later to see how the variety is performing and if it is meeting sales expectations before we decide whether to continue it or not.”

Lunds & Byerly’s has implemented this strategic marketing and merchandising plan with Opal, Lady Alice and Junami variety apples with success.

At minimum, retailers should maximize the three D’s — display, discount and demo — to give the best shot at test-marketing a new apple variety. They should also re-introduce the variety over consecutive seasons, especially if it’s a limited production boutique variety.

As for the apple display, Domex’s Nager explains, “In the past, produce managers would cut down on display space of popular apples such as Gala and Fuji to free up space for new varieties. This had two effects: lost sales on mainline apples and not enough sales on new varieties to make up the difference. Today, retailers are finding that secondary displays for new varieties can provide added space and highlight the variety without sacrificing sales for core category performers.”

The president of Columbia Marketing International, Inc. (CMI), in Wenatchee, WA, Bob Mast agrees. “Separate new varieties from the sea of 10 to 15 other

apples in the department with a secondary shipper displayed. Place these not only in produce, but throughout the store, such as near the registers or where a demo is taking place. Our shipper displays help to tell the story of our new apples. For example, they have QR codes linked to short videos where customers can learn more.”

“New varieties are inherently priced higher than mainline apples due to factors such as limited supply. But consumers are not apt to try something they don’t know if it’s priced too high,” explains Domex’s Nager. “It’s not essential to have a deep discount. However, if mainline varieties sell for \$1.49 per pound, put a new variety on ad for between \$1.99 and \$2.49.”

Finally, demos can be a good selling technique. Do consider that they can cost up to \$150 to \$200 per store per day and may not yield day after day dollar sales. To keep the momentum going, Rainier Fruit Company, of Selah, WA inserts a POS card in every box of its new varieties such as Junami and Lady Alice.

“Even if a retailer doesn’t want to post the card, it can be used as a communication tool with store personnel,” explains Suzanne Wolter, director of marketing for Rainier. “This way, when the demo is over, staff can still talk intelligently about the variety later with their customers and demo the apples spontaneously. Creativity is crucial.”



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## TOP TEN APPLE VARIETIES GROWN IN WASHINGTON

Variety	Volume in Boxes*
Red Delicious	39 million
Gala	26 million
Fuji	21 million
Granny Smith	14 million
Golden Delicious	12 million
Honeycrisp	5 million
Cripps Pink	3.5 million
Braeburn	2.5 million
Jonagold	1 million
Cameo	600,000

\*Numbers rounded.

Source: Washington Apple Commission, 2012

give the growers customer feedback.”

Tops' Wright agrees and adds another take on the importance of new varietal introduction: “If you look at the history of produce, there has always been a distinct seasonality. Today, many categories are available year-round. So when there is a unique opportunity to bring something in and enhance the varietal assortment, it's a great way to create

anticipation, excitement and have fun.”

There's a lot that goes into the development of a new apple variety. Domex's Nager says, “There are five things that we look at. First, does it have exceptional flavor? Second, is it grower-friendly? Third, can it pack without bruising? Fourth, does it have enough storability to get it through the holidays and into the first quarter? Fifth, can we grow it organically? If a grower isn't going to get an equal return or more than Honeycrisp, they aren't going to move forward with that variety.”

Likewise, Sage Fruit's Sinks adds, “Retailers have discovered that there is a market for the higher priced varietal and club varieties, and they are incorporating them into their apple category.”

### Newest Apple Varieties Out Of Washington

**Ambrosia.** Grown from a chance seeding that harvests in September/October, this bi-color apple is in its eighth year of commercial production. Volume hit the 600,000-carton mark last year and is expected to reach over 1 million cartons in the next 3 to 5 years. Columbia Marketing International, Inc. (CMI), in Wenatchee, WA, is licensed to grow



and market the fruit in the U.S. CMI began an import program for Ambrosia out of Chile last year.

**Autumn Glory.** Parents of this crisp, juicy, spicy flavored bi-color apple, grown and marketed in North America exclusively by Domex Superfresh Growers for the last four years, are Fuji and Golden Delicious. The



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apple harvests in mid-October and is marketed after the first of the year. Last year's crop totalled between 20,000 and 30,000 cartons, with production set to ramp up to 100,000 boxes in the next 3 years. Sixty percent of the 2013 crop will be organic with the mix of organic and to conventional to eventually settle at 50 - 50.

**Breeze.** Commercial production in Washington of this New Zealand variety developed from a natural variation of Royal Gala and will be available in 2018 from the Sage Fruit Company. The marketing niche for this bi-color, dense-fleshed, aromatic apple is harvest nearly a week before Gala, which can fill in new crop demand. The variety also is 1 to 2 brix higher in sugar than Gala, plus it stores well.

**CN121.** Chelan Fresh holds the patent rights to this still-numbered medium to large, red-color variety that has Honeycrisp parentage and harvests in early September. A commercial crop is expected in three to four years, and there are plans to grow 300,000 to



400,000 boxes in the next five to eight years. Organic fruit will be available in the future.

**Junami.** A cross between an Idared and Maigold with Elstar, this crisp, juicy, tangy, deep red-colored apple was developed in Switzerland and has been commercially grown and marketed by Rainier Fruit for three years. This variety harvests in September / October, has good keeping qualities, and is available for sale in December through January. The nearly 100,000 Euro-carton crop is expected to double in volume over the next five years — some organic fruit will be available for the first

time this coming season.

**Kanzi.** Intensely flavored and bi-colored, this Belgian variety that harvests in September / October and stores well into January / February is a cross between a Braeburn and Gala. Unfortunately, CMI's president Bob Mast reports that hail storms will limit volume this year out of Washington.

**Kiku.** Derived from Fuji and first grown in Italy, this intensely sweet apple (20 percent sweeter than traditional Fujis) gained a following over the past four to five years. The variety harvests in late October and markets in December / January. CMI expects to market 150,000 cartons this year, both Washington-grown and imported from New Zealand during the summer in a seamless transition.

**Lady Alice.** First marketed in 2008, this sweet-tart, bi-color apple (discovered as a chance seedling in Washington) is harvested in late September and put into controlled-atmosphere storage until February when it is released to market. Rainier Fruit expects to grow close to 100,000 Euro cartons this season with double the organic availability.

**Opal.** Developed in the Czech Republic and exclusive to Broetje Orchards (parent company of First Fruits Marketing of Washington) in Prescott, WA, this bright yellow apple is poised to give Golden Delicious competition. It's a firm, crisp variety naturally does not brown when cut. Frost and cold weather restricted volume on this apple, which harvests in late November, to 150,000 bushels last season with 25 percent of the crop organic. First Fruits expects volume to eventually reach 600,000-plus bushels.




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**Pazzazz.** Honeycrisp parentage is a huge selling feature for this sweet, tart, crispy, juicy bi-color

apple sold under the Honeybear Brand. Unlike its parent, this variety, which harvests mid-October, holds its flavor and texture in storage for late season winter-to-summer marketing. Wescott is targeting 500,000 to 2 million boxes in the next two to three years.

**Piñata.** Available commercially for seven years out of Washington, Stemilt's Pepperl says this bi-color variety that has Golden Delicious, Cox's Orange Pippin and Duchess of Oldenburg for parents, experienced a 25 percent increase in retail sales last season. Marketing, which runs from January

through April and later for this good-storing variety, is oriented around the apple's hint of tropical flavor. Volume is approaching 300,000 cartons with 75,000 cartons of organic. Total volume is expected to grow to 350,000 cartons.

**Sweetie.** Traits of Gala and Braeburn give this New Zealand variety, grown in Washington by Broetje Orchards and marketed by First Fruits of Washington, its bi-color sweet and crunchy characteristics. A volume of 30,000 boxes is expected this season.

**Sweet Tango.** Stemilt Growers is in its third year of marketing this bi-color apple, which is a cross between a Honeycrisp and Zestar, harvests in early September. Size of this year's crop is estimated at 125,000 cartons. **pb**



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PHOTO COURTESY OF GRAPES FROM CALIFORNIA

Research shows that promoting all three colors of grapes can produce an increase in sales.

# Bumper Crop Brings Opportunity For California Grapes

A California grape bonanza is underway, and the industry jockeys for position to capitalize on the available opportunities. **BY BARBARA ROBISON**

**C**onsumers and retailers are in the midst of a California grape jackpot. The latest estimate for the 2013-2014 season's crop (which began in May and ends next February) is 105.7 million boxes. That's 5 million more boxes than last year's 101.6 million boxes — which was a record crop at the time. The estimate covers all varieties. It includes grapes from the recently finished Coachella Valley season, and the crop from the Central Valley, where the season is now underway.

## Many Varieties And Colors Available

The California Table Grape Commission, Fresno, CA, does not focus on individual grape varieties, but promotes all varieties. "The variety mix has pretty much remained the same the past few years. There are over 70 varieties of grapes grown in California, and the top 15 varieties are responsible for over 90 percent of the volume. Two of the top selling varieties are the Flame Seedless and the Crimson Seedless," reports the Commission's president, Kathleen Nave.

According to George Papangellin, salesman for Gerawan Farming, Fresno, CA, a grower, shipper of California table grapes and tree fruits, "With no agency doing studies on the volume of each individual grape variety and with so many varieties, it is difficult to tell exactly what varieties have decreased in volume and what have increased. Some focus has been on the Autumn Royal (a large black grape) and the Red Globe (a large red grape). There are a lot of new white varieties that seem to be gaining popularity. Some growers are scaling back their Thompson Seedless green grapes for the newer white varieties."

"Grape demand has never been better," says Mark Givens, director of foodservice for HMC Farms, Kingsburg, CA, a California table grape and tree fruit grower and shipper. "The record crop will allow retailers and foodservice operators the opportunity to promote and sell California grapes through the end of the year. During the past few years, the demand has been so high that even with record crops, California has not been able to provide enough grapes for all customers

through the end of the year," he says.

The Scarlet Royal, a large, flavorful, red seedless grape, is still having acreage coming into production. According to Givens, this will help fill the gap between Flames and Crimson grapes. "Autumn King, a large green seedless grape, also has more acreage coming into production. We are continually looking at and evaluating new varieties," he adds.

"Picking is going heavy with red seedless grapes, mainly Flames, and will transition into Scarlet Royals shortly," comments Jon Zaninovich, president of Jasmine Vineyards, Inc in Delano, CA, a grower, shipper of California table grapes. "White varieties are being picked in heavy amounts up and down the valley. Storage capabilities will play a strong role during the season."

Among the many California grape varieties, there are also some proprietary varieties marketed by individual grape shippers. Examples are Prima Royale black seedless and Prima Red Seedless grapes — available from October and November through the New Year from Gerawan Farming. Sweet Sunshine,

## EXPORT BUSINESS GROWING

Last year, 30.4 million 19-pound box equivalents of California grapes were exported, excluding shipments to Canada. This season, the Commission has targeted 25 export markets, representing 94 percent of last year's export volume.

Retailers will be provided with promotional opportunities, such as point-of-sale materials, in-store activities, and trade contests to drive table grape sales. Retail chain logos in consumer print and online media throughout Asia will be available. Also local holiday-themed promotions with retail chains will be used within individual countries.

"Grape exports into Asian countries have picked up after the countries encountered a disastrous ending for the Chilean and South African grape seasons. Australia and New Zealand, despite stringent protocol measures, are showing strong interest in our grapes," says Jon Zaninovich, president of Jasmine Vineyards, Delano, CA. **pb**

a mid-season white seedless grape available from August through October, and Sweet Celebration, a large, bright red grape in the market from September through January, are proprietary varieties available from Jasmine Vineyards, Inc, a fruit breeding operation in Delano, CA, that grows 12 varieties of high quality grapes.

### More Grape Usage Seen With Increased Availability

"At HMC Farms, we focus not on only varieties and packaging, but how people use the grapes. We provide large bunches on the stem in all pack styles; small bunches ready to wash and serve in our Lunch Bunch; or off the stem completely in small packages, Grape Escape, or in large amounts, ONEders," says the company's Givens.

Thirty-three percent of consumers shop for grapes at least once per week, according to a 2012 Fleishman-Hillard International Communication study. Focus group testing by the same research firm in 2012, showed consumers would purchase more grapes if they knew more ways to use them. Keeping this in mind, the California Table Grape Commission is now featuring more usage images in its advertising campaigns.

With bumper crops available for the months ahead, there are many ways retailers can boost sales. Research by the Nielsen Perishables Group, West Dundee, IL, in 2010 showed that retailers would get the greatest volume lift if they advertise all three colors of grapes. The primary grocery shopper typically purchases grapes for multiple people in the household. If all three colors of grapes are displayed, there is a strong likelihood that the customer will purchase all three colors. The Perishables Group in a 2005 study also showed that during the California grape season, at least 25 to 30 square feet should be devoted to grapes for maximum sales.

Secondary and refrigerated grape displays can provide additional sales lifts.

Grape snacks are popular, but grapes in salads and desserts are also well liked. Promoting a quick-and-easy grape recipe by cross merchandising with other ingredients provides customers with helpful ideas they are seeking. QR codes displayed on print advertising campaigns leading shoppers to a

**"During a bumper crop season . . . close cooperation between the shipper and retailer is critical. It is important that there be clarity on what the retailer needs . . ."**

— George Papangellin, Gerawan Farming

mobile site that includes recipes for the usage images is an interactive approach to capturing consumers' attention.

### Strong California Grape Promotional Support

"During a bumper crop season, like the current one, close cooperation between the shipper and retailer is critical," states Papangellin of Gerawan Farming. "It is important that there be clarity on what the retailer needs for price points and gross margins for an agreement on an FOB price that will move the grapes



through the store to the consumer."

To help retailers increase sales of the large California table grape crop, the California Table Grape Commission has a variety of promotional programs in place. "One of our marketing concerns is that many consumers, and some retailers, think of California table grapes as a summer fruit, when actually we have a large variety of top quality grapes available through the fall and into the New Year. We want everyone to be aware of that, so our promotional and retail support will continue throughout the fall season," reports the commission's Nave.

The Commission maintains its partnership with the Food Network, by advertising with its television, magazine and on-line programs. The Food Network is among the Top 10 cable networks and provides programming that is available to over 99 million homes, or about 87 percent of U.S. viewers. Retailers have the opportunity to include their logo on the *Food Network* magazine ads for promotional activity. The partnership allows the ads to be tagged geographically in the retailer's state or markets. The Food Network is available for U.S. retailers, and tagging opportunities are available in Canada with *Chatelaine* magazine.

"For the June and July/August issues of *Food Network* magazine, 19 retailers agreed to commitments for ads or prominent display locations in store for June and July. For the month of June, the commitments generated 37 ads, of which 10 were front-page and three were multiple varieties. In addition to the ads generated, club stores across the country stocked grapes from California.

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**“Canada is one of biggest markets for us, so we’ve produced a short video and newspaper feature with News Canada, a media distribution firm . . . it will be distributed to website- and video-content providers throughout Canada.”**

— Kathleen Nave, California Table Grape Commission

Club stores have also placed grape displays in prominent store locations, with some of them increasing the space devoted to grapes. The Commission’s domestic marketing team will continue to make personal retail calls throughout the season to generate California grape promotional activities. “Table grapes are also being promoted on social media via Facebook and Pinterest,” reports the Commission’s Nave.

Traffic radio is available to retailers that upgrade their California grape ads to front page or multiple varieties. For those retailers

that do not advertise, traffic radio is available when they feature California grapes in store during grand openings. In-store radio runs September through November, reaching consumers with messages about grapes while they grocery shop. Retailers have the opportunity to receive in-store radio promotions at available locations in exchange for more display space devoted to California grapes.

The Commission also has a retail program that includes a volume-based promotional award, consumer and category research, media incentives and point-of-sale materials.

The Commission is reaching more than 60 U.S. and Canadian retailers with electronic newsletters and e-mails. The newsletter will continue every two weeks throughout the season focusing on general crop updates and promotional opportunities for retailers. Monthly e-mails will be sent to retailers with recipes and photos they can use to promote grapes on their websites and social media.

An important part of this season’s California table grape promotions includes a focus on good nutrition and healthy eating. Five nutritionists, such as Tara Gidus, MS, RD, Orlando, FL, who is the dietitian for the Orlando Magic basketball team, will be promoting table grapes across the country.

“Canada is one of biggest markets for us, so we’ve produced a short video and newspaper feature with News Canada, a media distribution firm. It features our main tagline, ‘The One Ingredient That Can Change Everything,’ and it will be distributed to website- and video-content providers throughout Canada. A similar themed radio spot, in English and French, will also be distributed in Canada,” explains the California Table Grape Commission’s Nave. **pb**

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Madera, CA

# Where Do Suppliers Envision The Juice/Beverage Category In The Year 2020?

**GREG STELTENPOHL**

CEO

Califia Farms  
Bakersfield, CA

## Setting The Stage

The Fresh Produce Juice Section stands for three big things in the minds of the consumer: freshness, health and innovation. The produce aura extends to the fresh-pack juice cases as well, and retailers should know that they disrupt that brand's promise at their own risk. It's more and more a place to highlight what's new, exciting and good-for-you.

Expansion of the section will help showcase the colors and variety as we see 8-foot sections become the base modular instead of a pitiful 4-foot section to contain all the excitement. Ordering the space by types of drinks will make consumer choices easier, and co-displays with well-paired products from other sections will capture the consumers' attention. We'll see a mini rebirth of in-house juicing across selected fruits propelled by new food-safety technologies and presentation innovations in other retailing formats.

## Meta Trend Drivers

The big trends that support most of the food industry have an influential effect on the fresh juice section. These are my top 5 motivating trends:

Natural Health and Wellness

Energy that Sustains, Nutrition that Delivers  
Clean and Simple (With Lower Sugar)

Increased needs for Functionality

Continued need for Convenience and 'On-the-go Nutrition'

## New Tastes And Flavors

Mixology is more important than ever. With bar drinks and juice bars having gone through a revolution of exotic sensory explorations—the basics will no longer be enough. New flavor specificity will be the order of the day; for



example, white peach, Saskatoon berry, elderberry, dark chocolate, purple carrot or sour cherry are flavors of the future.

Ethnic junctions and spicy arrivals will stimulate trial and be necessary to attract burgeoning ethnic populations into the juice cooler. Hot flavors like cayenne and black pepper, jalapeno, chipotle and wasabi will captivate the taste buds. There will be more vegetable-fruit combos that mix standards like apple or carrot juice with things like sweet potato, pumpkin, zucchini, red tomato, rhubarb, rutabaga and, of course, beets with everything.

Herbal accents and functionalities are another category that will be explored. Ginger, garlic, mint basil and fennel are all great tasting accents that also have interesting functional properties that chefs and herbalists have long ago discovered are beneficial in any food application. The pure functionality of protein itself will continue to make big waves in this section.

Specialty citrus varieties like mandarin tangerine, Meyer lemon, pomelo and key lime will continue to make this category, the largest of all the fruit beverage types, interesting to the consumer.

Exotic lemonades are already here in concept but will continue to be refined into great tasting refreshers with good functional properties.

Finding a better process will be another exciting phenomena. "Just like fresh squeezed" is always the Holy Grail, but the future will truly make the preparation easier and more accessible. Think what could be possible for mango, pineapple, banana or orange if someone really takes it to the next level of development.

## Fusions We've Never Seen Before

By borrowing from other categories (yogurt with fresh fruit purees, nut or grain milk smoothies, new coffee drink platforms), we will see plenty of wild new combinations that, at first glance, one would never think to put together but that emerge with better nutrition properties and expanded taste frontiers. Think of combinations such as matcha green tea lattes made with non-dairy milks or Familia oat milk smoothies with banana.

## New Technologies

HPP (High Pressure Pasteurization) is a proven technology that many brands have already adopted and are in the market with today; examples are Starbuck's Evolution Fresh, Blue Print Juices, Suja etc. By 2020, these brands will be commonplace and new ones like PEF or Micro Current Extraction will be the next generation. Price points will be reasonably higher.

## New Packaging Formats

New formats help relieve the fatigue that comes from too many SKU's in the same package. But many forget the authenticity that is needed to please the fussy produce beverage customer who wants to feel the product is minimally processed and not just another pretty face. Another fact that many marketers fail to consider is that the sophisticated consumers in the fresh juice section want to

know how they will feel after they drink the product. Will they feel weighed down with empty calories or will they feel energized with the active nutrients from the well crafted wonder drink?

### Brands Need An Emphasis

New brands will need to establish their reason for being unique platforms. Technology/packaging innovation will be needed to compel buyers into offering space.

Survival of the Fittest will prevail. Weak SKUs will no longer be justifiable by strong brands or category captains. Each SKU will need to have a point of clear differentiation. Overlapping and duplication of same flavors across major brands will disappear—no more four versions of Strawberry Banana.

The take-away is that new brands and SKU's really need a compelling and believable USP (Unique Selling Proposition) to justify their existence in what is becoming a very desirable part of retailers to build brand visibility.

### MICHAEL D'AMATO

Director of Sales

Natalie's Orchid Island Juice Company  
Fort Pierce, FL

There remains no question that over the past 20 years, the fresh fruit and vegetable industry has accomplished more to educate consumers nationwide on the importance of healthy, safe and fresh food products. The transformation of the conventional retail produce department continues to unfold, emphasizing the many facets of seasonal, local, organic and global fruits and vegetables, as well as many other traditional food items found in a supermarket—joining the cause for a fresher, safer and healthier American consumers.

Among the first categories to lead the way with this philosophy is the "Produce Juice and Beverage Category". It has not gone unnoticed that across the board, consumers in every demographic area of the United States are tired of juice products marketed as "all natural" or produced "fresh" but are over-developed, over-processed and overloaded with sugar, preservatives, concentrates, additives, flavors,



and calories.

Natalie's Orchid Island Juice Company is convinced that consumers continue to seek a juice option that they can rely on. A juice that does not impersonate fruit and vegetables but one that is produced from the very heart of the nutrients that the packaging promotes. We expect the juice and beverages in produce to continue to grow and help to reshape the way that the average shopper thinks about purchasing juice.

However, there is much at stake for the produce department. The improvements in packaging, labeling and marketing can be very convincing. But, what is really happening? What is the true meaning of "fresh"? Who defines it? What will sustain the produce juice category? What will make the most profit for the retailer? Without a doubt, Natalie's Orchid Island Juice Company has achieved SQF status level 2 and believes that the answer—is it is the juice inside the container!

Consumers should not and will not be fooled. The juice and beverage offered in the produce department must be true to itself. They must practice what they preach. Squeezed fresh juice, made to order, locally grown and

harvested products, and not industrial in any way. Squeezed fresh is the best way to grow and sustain a produce juice category.

### BRIAN NICHOLSON

President & CEO

Red Jacket Orchards

Geneva, NY



Fresh will continue to be everything in the juice category. Purity of ingredients, lack of additives, and overall an understanding that concentrated juices are not fresh, even if they are sold cold.

There is an explosion of innovation going

on right now with the use of raw ingredients, cold pasteurization and the like. Who knows what's next — perhaps a bottle that juices the fruit in front of you?

Consumer demand will only continue to evolve up. The mantra, “I am what I drink” will be universal, not a niche concept. People will be paying anywhere from \$3 a pint to \$10 a pint. Home juicing machines will evolve to be “instant health-ification” devices. Simply drop fruit in and these self-cleaning devices, the size of a coffee grinder, will transform your next meal.

Produce shelves, the only obvious place in the retail box to present these “live goods,” will explode with options, colors, flavors, combinations. Perhaps even fresh juice on tap, and a featured “flavor of the week.”

**JASON MORAFF**  
Brand Manager  
Sambazon Co.  
San Clemente, CA

We see four key trends beginning to take shape today among early adopters that will define the category for the next 10 years. We have structured our line and innovation around



these factors.

*Natural Confusion.* As consumer concerns continue to grow around the confusion of “natural,” they will continue to look for USDA Organic and / or Non-GMO labels as assurance of quality. All Sambazon products are USDA Organic and Non-GMO Project Verified.

*Real Ingredients.* The move toward more real food ingredients in beverages will continue to grow as consumers scrutinize not only the nutrition facts panel but also the ingredient label. Highly fortified ingredients, such as isolates and concentrates, will be avoided as the

nutritional value and the mechanisms used to derive these isolates and concentrates is called into question (e.g. Hexane extracted soy). Sambazon uses only whole food ingredients to craft our smoothies; for example, whole food proteins instead of soy protein isolate.

*Allergy Awareness.* As consumers become more educated about common allergens and irritants, a continued avoidance of dairy in beverages will rise as consumers look for alternatives. Sambazon recently launched a Brazil and Cashew Nut Milk Protein smoothie to target this audience.

*Gulp-able Health.* Consumers will continue to look for healthy, approachable and tasty ways to manage their overall wellness through convenience of beverages. Products, programs and systems that provide feel-good functional health with tangible results will be in demand. There will be resurgence in the philosophy of: “Let food be thy medicine.” Sambazon recently launched a 3-Day Purifying Cleanse, which is a series of superfood juices that are accompanied with a meal plan developed by Ashley Koff, a registered dietician. The program is a means to kick start healthy eating habits, and has exceeded expectations. **pb**

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# Windy City Winds Up For Economic Opportunity



**Chicago's distributors rebound from past economic setbacks and charge forward confronting the new challenges ahead. BY LISA WHITE**

**D**espite the recent consolidation of wholesalers resulting in the demise of veteran produce companies, erratic economic conditions in the Midwest increasing competition, and a multitude of logistical challenges, the produce industry in the Chicago area is booming.

The closing of Chicago-based produce wholesalers has resulted in higher competition for those who remain, along with increased business. "We've picked up more business due to the struggles of our competitors," says Mike Couwenhoven, who handles sales for JAB Produce Company in Chicago, IL.

Pricing and quality are at the forefront more than ever.

"All of us have become more competitive to get the best prices and product for our customers," says Adolfo Vega, Jr., owner of La Hacienda Brands, Inc., a 40-year-old third-generation-owned company in Chicago that can be compared to a Hispanic Costco or Sam's Club. "Lately, I've noticed many chain stores are buying direct out of Texas, which is causing more competition and forcing small companies out of business."

Strube Celery & Vegetable Co.,

established in 1913 and a fourth-generation, family-run wholesaler located in the Chicago International Produce Market (CIPM), has not been impacted by the consolidation.

"We are a broad liner, and consolidation hasn't impacted us here," says Lisa Strube, director of finance and administration at Strube. "Only a couple of wholesalers on our market may have picked up a few customers due to consolidations. As one went out, another went in."

The company, which targets the city's independent grocery chains, is in the process of strategic planning for future growth.

With its recent resignation from PRO\*ACT, one of the foodservice industry's largest produce buying and marketing organizations, Testa Produce is back on its own as an independent distributor.

"We are getting into new specialty items, such as fish, dried goods, and some green chemicals, which fit into our environmentally friendly operation model," says Peter Testa, the company's president. "It's these types of products that fit in more with our customer base."

As a fruit house, the wholesaler consolidations have not largely impacted Mandolini Co. Inc. With the company's longtime salesman,



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Greg Mandolini, Mandolini Co.



Lisa Strube, Strube Celery &amp; Vegetable Co.

Rick Balcaitis, recently retired, David Mandolini joined the company to work alongside his brothers Mark and Greg Mandolini as co-owners.

"A few companies have become larger, and the smaller ones, unfortunately, are not around," says Greg Mandolini. "Being a fruit house, we have a specialty that we cater to, so this has

not impacted us. But it's sad to see long-time businesses close."

## Economic Climate & Trends

The up and down of the country's — and the Midwest's — economic conditions has impacted some Chicago wholesalers more than others.

"The economy is still shaky, so many stores are getting smarter in the way they buy," says La Hacienda's Vega. "They're not just looking for the best deal on the cheapest items, but are trying to get the best deals for their customers."

The growth of Hispanic items, such as jalapenos, cilantro and tomatillos, is evident in more areas of the city, especially in Polish enclaves.

"In certain areas, Hispanic produce is growing and people are trying new things — as long as items are being sold at the right price and on sale," Vega says. "More stores are incorporating Hispanic produce in areas I wouldn't expect."

There have been many signs that the economy is on the upturn in the Chicago area and produce arena.

"There has been a speed up on the accounts receivable side with getting paid faster, so we feel like the economy is getting stronger," Strube says. "It's nice being in an industry where, whether the economy is weak or strong, people need to eat."

With the focus on more healthful eating, there has also been an uptick in local produce sales. As a result, through a USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant, the Illinois Department of Agriculture has developed "Ready to Grow: A Plan for Increasing Illinois Fruit and Vegetable Production" (see "Gearing Up To Grow More In Illinois" on page 64 for more details).

"We've noticed the tendency to buy local has grown," Strube says. "Even independent grocery chains are looking toward local items to accommodate the push for better health and wellness." The company has a strong local program and works with area growers who supply these products throughout the summer.

"In terms of product trends, cilantro and some other Mexican items are more mainstream," says T.J. Fleming, Strube's vice president. "Romaine hearts have taken a good leap due to bagged salads and the continuing popularity of convenience items. Also, celery hearts are popular."

Testa Produce also has been focusing on local produce and utilizing technology,

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## PRODUCE IS JEWEL'S TOP FOCUS

**W**ith more than 170 stores in the Chicago area, Jewel Food Stores, Inc.'s produce business is currently in transition. Formerly owned by Minneapolis, MN-based Supervalu Inc., the company was purchased for \$3.3 billion by private equity firm Cerberus Capital Management L.P. in January of 2013.

"We've made a tremendous amount of changes in produce [as a result of the sale]," says Scott Bennett, produce sales manager of Jewel Food Stores. In 2006, Supervalu bought Jewel and tried to centralize all buying of produce. "Now we're decentralized and no one else is controlling what we do in the marketplace," reports Bennett.

As a result, all of the chain's buyers are purchasing direct, which wasn't the case when Jewel was a part of Supervalu.

"We're talking to growers, shippers and packers and building partnerships with top U.S. growers," Bennett says. "Supervalu was more about filling gaps in the margin with cheaper produce. It's a big deal for us to do what we want to do and move forward with top growers."

Now produce is Jewel's top focus, and the store is expanding its selection and revamping displays. Produce offerings have expanded from 500 to 729 SKUs, and additional variety and organic items will be available.

"We are grouping products so it's easier for customers to identify items," Bennett says. "This creates a cleaner shopping experience." Displays are now categorized with apples, citrus, pears, grapes, berries and other items all grouped together.

"In Chicago, it's all about bulk, leafy organics, with no cellophane," Bennett says. "In terms of vegetables, the biggest movement increase is on kale, and we're expanding options in terms of mixes, fresh, chopped, etc."

**pb**

about it," Testa says.

The company is always seeking the next hot produce product that chefs are utilizing. "Kale is the new big thing," Testa says. "We used to sell five cases of kale a week, and now we sell five containers a week. With the big run on it, we're seeing a huge spike in price. If the supply is not there, the price triples quickly. Thankfully, there are no shortages yet."

Fortunately, unlike the severe drought and unseasonably cold weather of last year,

the conditions have been favorable for local produce. "So far, there have been excellent growing conditions in Illinois, Michigan and Ohio; unlike last year when Michigan's unusually cold weather impacted the apple crop," JAB Produce's Couwenhoven says.

The freeze that destroyed last year's Michigan apple and peach crop resulted in a loss of 90 percent of the products.

Mandolini has obtained strong citrus sales, particularly with lemons and navel oranges, and a good run on stone fruit.

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Chicago's wholesalers and receivers continue to battle rising fuel costs and new hours-of-service regulations.



Adolfo Vega, Jr., La Hacienda

"Pear movement is good on imports and domestics. There has also been a nice transition to varieties off shore to Chile and New Zealand," Greg Mandolini says.

Local product has faced some delays on the retail side. J.L. Gonzalez Produce, Inc., which specializes in Mexican items, typically works with local growers to supply its peppers, but the weather and rain that impacted Michigan, Wisconsin and Indiana affected this year's supply.

"Mother Nature is still a factor in everything we do," says Jason Gonzalez, director

of logistics at J.L. Gonzalez Produce. "The economy is doing a little better, with people starting to pay on time, but we're still cautious about who we deal with. Also, every case, dollar and cent counts now. Even food banks do case counts. We will sell items for \$1 to try and not lose margin before donating it."

**Transportation Concerns**

With rising fuel costs and new hours-of-service regulations, transportation continues to be a challenge for Chicago-based

produce companies. For example, this past spring, wholesalers were contending with near record freight rates from Salinas.

"The transportation issue will just get worse because the fuel situation is way too volatile," Testa says. "Natural gas is much more stable, because it can be purchased on a yearly basis rather than daily."

Consequently, the company added two all-electric trucks to its delivery fleet earlier this year, along with 10 new trucks that run on clean-burning, low-cost domestic compressed natural gas (CNG). The new

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24-foot refrigerated CNG trucks will replace existing biodiesel trucks in Testa's fleet, lowering its carbon footprint and bringing the company closer to its goal of zero dependence on foreign oil within five years.

CNG is priced at around \$2.60 per gallon compared to biodiesel's recent \$4.30 to \$4.89 per gallon (including tax).

The company is the first perishable food distributor in the nation to earn LEED (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design) Platinum, the highest certification available from the U.S. Green Building Council, for its green distribution center. The facility incorporates energy-saving solar, wind and water technologies. Prior to piloting electric and CNG trucks, Testa Produce was one of the first to convert its entire delivery fleet to biodiesel and all company cars to hybrids.

"We're basically trying to figure out the new laws and rules, with the changing of the drivers' hours," says Brent Schmit, president of Eclipse Distribution in Elburn, IL. "It will now take an extra day to get back to Chicago, and we'll have to load a day earlier to compensate."

The impact will fall on the most perishable products and single truck owner / operators.

"With California's TRU (Transportation Refrigeration Units) regulation standards, trucking companies are having to spend \$25,000 on a new reefer unit — not to mention trailers and skirts," Schmit says. "Plus, the new regulations will result in more truck shortages."

Freight rates, which were normally peaking in July, have now reached their highest levels over Memorial Day weekend.

"Rates peaked over the holiday weekend and then came down," says Fred Plotsky, president of Cool Runnings. "In the past two years, we've had trucks laid over without freight on July 3. Business over that holiday has been slower than normal, and we don't

know why." Memorial Day rates to California peaked at about \$7,000 compared with \$5,800 over July 4th. The company's business has been up more so earlier in the year compared with the summer months. "When the economy is looking good, the price of gas goes up and then no one can afford it, so it goes back down," Plotsky says. "When some things get less expensive, the cost of other items goes up."

Cool Runnings faces the challenges of the new hours-of-service rules. "People will

now be working at night instead of during the day, which stretches them out further," Plotsky says. "Also, companies won't get the turns in, and more money will be needed per turn."

"It will be difficult, if not impossible, to make deliveries as we are accustomed to," Greg Mandolini says. "Buyers will have to get their items on the road a day earlier. We try to be a 'just in time' supplier with fresh and timely arrivals, but 12 hours can mean the difference between making and

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## GEARING UP TO GROW MORE IN ILLINOIS

**B**ecause the demand for locally grown produce in Illinois has far outstripped the supply, the Illinois Department of Agriculture has funded a new program called “Ready to Grow: A Plan for Increasing Illinois Fruit and Vegetable Production” through a USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant.

An action plan and feasibility study recently released by familyfarmed.org, a culmination of a six-month assessment surveying 181 growers, found that 14 buyers interviewed would purchase more than \$23 million in Illinois-grown produce annually if it were available.

The potential is there. According to a 2010 study by the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State University, the economic value of Illinois’ current consumption of 28 types of produce amounts to more than \$264 million in farm-level sales.

Examining the key findings regarding barriers to meet wholesale demand, the study found that there is a large capacity among a network of growers with experience in wholesale marketing to further expand production and sales to wholesale buyers. Close to half of respondents who indicated this growth potential said that they could at least double participation by 2015, which could result in 550 to 700 acres of additional production by 2015.

The most significant barriers to scaling up

include marketing, processing capacity, risk of not selling crops grown, access to funding / financing, food safety certification cost, liability insurance cost, grower satisfaction level with current marketing channels and labor availability. To overcome these challenges, growers recommend improving the local food system infrastructure, providing education and information about resources available, help with lowering their costs, and building win-win relationships with buyers. A majority of the survey respondents, more than 80 percent, said a packing house would be valuable for marketing, which would allow farmers to focus on their crops.

The recommendations for the Illinois Food Farms and Jobs Council and the Illinois Specialty Crop Industry are to encourage the development of regional packing houses to supply wholesale markets; support existing efforts across the state to better inform farmers about funding and financing options; implement a Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) food safety audit cost-share program and offer GAP training to Illinois growers; create and disseminate a resource sheet to inform growers about options for locating qualified farm labor; and create and disseminate a fact sheet and support existing efforts to train growers about best practices in post-harvest handling. **pb**

missing a sale.”

The rise in transportation costs has impacted Chicago wholesalers, including Strube. “Also, food safety and staying ahead of the new FSMA (Food Safety Modernization Act) and how it will impact us at a distribution level [is a concern],” Strube says. “It’s up to us to educate our suppliers and the people we do business with, because it’s ever changing. Each retailer and grower does things differently, and we have to be that pass-through piece to make sure it’s all in place.”

Many companies have to readjust ordering schedules and push deliveries back a day to accommodate the new driver hour restrictions. “There are less trucks in the summer, due to higher demand, and that’s an easier expense to spread across products because everyone is paying higher rates,” Strube’s Fleming says.

J.L. Gonzalez Produce regularly picks up product from Texas, California, Florida and the East Coast. “We’re seeing more

people use LTL more,” Gonzalez says. “If I have 5,000 asparagus and 5,000 tomatoes, I can run it with someone else’s products. I have to be confident in what they’re selling. It’s important not to take a full-truck load just to fill the truck, even though the price is better.”

La Hacienda works with 10 independent trucking companies that are at its disposal all year. “Although it can be difficult during the holidays, I am guaranteed six trucks a week,” Vega says. “We try to buy at least two weeks ahead.”

Produce companies have benefitted from a stronger economy and the support of loyal retail and foodservice customers in the area.

“Although we’ve suffered over the past couple of years in terms of pay practices, we’ve had great support from our retail and foodservice customers,” Greg Mandolini says. “The economy seems to be improving, our sales are up from last year, and we hope that trend will continue.” **pb**





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# Onions – New Ways To Sell An Old Favorite

Onions grace consumers' tables in everything from soups, sauces and salads to sandwiches and much more. The widespread popularity of this versatile vegetable has made it a steady winner for retailers. **BY CAROL BAREUTHER**



Consider displays that pair items for certain dishes to drive sales. For example, avocados, tomatoes and onions for homemade salsa.

**S**cott Schuette, director of produce operations for Bashas' Inc., a 132-store chain headquartered in Chandler, AZ, couldn't be happier with the performance of his onion category. "The onion category is extremely stable and provides us with some much needed profit dollars to help off-set competitive ad loss," he says. "In doing so, onion sales are extremely important to our top line sales, bottom line dollars, and a strong part of our department's financial foundation."

Beyond this, Teri Gibson, director of marketing and customer relations for Peri & Sons Farms, Inc., in Yerington, NV, advises out-of-the-box creativity when merchandising onions. "To generate incremental sales, retailers need to provide consumers with unconventional ideas on how to use onions. Consumers are attracted to anything that sparks a new idea or a new way to utilize onions."

## CAPITALIZE ON CHEF-INSPIRED TRENDS

Onion consumption in the U.S. nearly doubled from 11.3 pounds per person in 1970 to 21.4 pounds in 2011, according to the

USDA's Economic Research Service. One reason is changing demographics in the U.S. and Americans' appetite for ethnic foods.

Nelia Alamo, vice president of sales and marketing for Gills Onions, LLC, in Oxnard, CA, says, "From Southwest and TexMex cooking to bold fusion creations and Asian-influenced flavors, these combinations are calling for onions as either key components of the foundation or as unique flavor accents."

Another reason for the growth in onion consumption is a succession of foodservice favorites. Ralph Schwartz, director of category management for Potandon Produce LLC, in Idaho Falls, ID, says, "First there was sautéed onions on fast food burgers, then onion rings, and most recently the 'Bloomin' Onion.'"

Today, chefs continue to use onions in several creative ways. This gives a clue as to the types of recipes that will be popular with retail shoppers.

"Caramelized onions are the rage now," explains Peri & Sons' Gibson. "Slow cooking brings out the onion's natural sugars. When cooked right, you have soft, golden-brown, onion morsels, with a savory sweet taste that can be used in infinite ways."

Emily Robinson, client services manager for Melissa Libby & Associates, in Atlanta, GA — speaking on behalf of the Vidalia Onion Committee (VOC) of Vidalia, GA — says, "Pickling onions and other vegetables is also becoming quite popular. To add acidity to a dish, many chefs will do a quick pickle by slicing onions and marinating them in a mixture of vinegar, sugar and spices. This adds brightness to dishes like meaty tacos and simple salads."

"Salsas continue to be a consumer favorite and have branched out to include fun flavors and creative combinations," adds Matt Curry, president of Curry & Company, Inc., in Brooks, OR. "There are now salsas made with onions that are fruit-based, such as watermelon, mango, stone fruits and more. We developed a blueberry onion salsa last year."

"Another hot trend is consumers' interest in health. Onions fit right in," says Sherise Jones, marketing director for the Parma, ID-based Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onion Committee (IEO). "There are so many different diets out there now. Not just weight loss but for allergies, different health conditions, and even for those who like to work out often. How do we reach all these people? The selling points are that

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**EDUCATE CUSTOMERS ABOUT TYPES OF ONIONS**

“Retailers can capitalize on culinary trends by offering a variety of onions: yellow, sweet, red, white and fresh-cut,” says Gill’s Alamo. “All have unique characteristics that will entice the consumer.”

“One onion program doesn’t fit all,” agrees Curry & Company’s Curry. “In our customer base, we’ll see wide swings of what is the most popular onion. Yellow onions typically lead the way, but we’ll see one store that has stronger white onion sales, another store with stronger red onion sales and a third with stronger sweet onion sales — yet they are all within miles of each other. By understanding the customer, you maximize sales.”

A good example of this is Bashas’, which operates four distinct formats. When the chains VMI (vendor-managed inventory) produce buyer researched differences in consumer demand, she found that overall onion consumption in Food City’s multi-ethnic format was four times greater than the conventional format based on the same store count. In other words, Food City sells 75 percent greater tonnage of yellow onions per week and 94 percent more white onion tonnage than Bashas’. Bashas’, however, sells 97 percent greater tonnage of sweet onions than Food City. The top selling onions for Bashas’ are yellows and then sweets. The top selling onions for Food City are whites and then yellows with reds only 1 percent of their total sales.

On a nationwide basis, yellow onions remain the mainstay of the shopping basket. In fact, of the 3.3 percent of produce dollar sales contributed by onions during the 52-weeks ending April 27, 2013, according to data provided by the Nielsen Perishables Group (a Chicago, IL-based fresh food consulting firm), yellow onions represented the largest segment, or 31.1 percent of onion category sales.

Keith Cox, produce category manager at K-VA-T Food Stores, Inc., a 104-unit chain based in Abingdon, VA, says, “Sales of yellow cooking onions really pick up in the fall. We’ll offer them loose for customers who just want one or two and in 2- and 3-pound bags. When the weather gets really cold, we’ll also promote a 3-bound bag of yellow onions and a 10-pound bag of russet potatoes to entice customers to pick up both.”

Sweet onions contributed 28.1 percent to total onion category dollar sales during the 52

weeks ending April 27, 2013, according to Nielsen Perishables Group data.

At Bashas’, sweet onions represent 30 percent of category dollars. Schuette explains, “Sweet onions are gaining movement due to rotational ad planning that keeps them in the mix while maintaining strong sales profit for the category. Other reasons driving sweet onion growth include increased media coverage, such as in cooking magazines and food network shows. Local restaurants and social media have also helped sweet onion growth.”

According to Sarah Seebran, director of marketing for Bland Farms, LLC. in Vidalia, GA, “Sweet onions are the drivers of the entire onion category.” Research from the Nielsen Perishables Group in 2012 commissioned by Bland Farms revealed that over 60 percent of consumers purchase sweet onions, and 13 percent of these shoppers buy only sweet onions.

John Shuman, president and director of sales at Shuman Produce, Inc., in Vidalia, GA, recommends, “Call out the sweet, mild flavor of sweet onions through signage placed close to the product. It’s the flavor profile and versatility of sweet onions that cause consumers to value them so highly, so it’s important to call attention to these attributes.”

“Availability of sweet onions once lagged behind demand,” says Marty Kamer, sales manager for the Northeast office of Keystone Fruit Marketing Inc., in Greencastle, PA. “Today, a reliable steady supply of year-round authentic sweet onions is available to meet increasing demand.”

Sweet onions are sourced annually from growing areas in Northern and Southern hemispheres. “Seasonality can be a potent marketing tool,” says Curry & Company’s Curry. “On our Twitter feed and website, we alert consumers to the upcoming onion seasons. We’ll show images of the fields prior to harvest to generate seasonal excitement. A retailer could post images over several weeks showing the fields and say, ‘We are four weeks from harvest, three weeks, two weeks, harvest has started; look for us in stores today.’”

“Growing consumer demand for sweet onions has led to a rise in requests for bagged product,” says Shuman Produce’s Shuman. “Consumer packs currently account for nearly half of our total sweet onion sales.”

Mike Kemp, executive business analyst for Market Fresh Produce, LLC. in Nixa, MO, suggests that one reason for this “is that it allows consumers to recognize a good sweet brand and come back to it time again.”

The premium price commanded by sweet

onions has led to a problem with “imposter” sweets, or pungent onions that are marketed as sweet.

Barry Rogers, president of the Melbourne, FL-based Sweet Onion Trading Company, says, “It’s our hope that buyers would request flavor profile certifications. If consumers would return hot impostor onions to the produce department, we think more buyers would take action.”

Red onions have gained sales momentum over the past five to seven years due to TV food shows and foodservice. Celebrity chefs are using more red onions because they show up better during cooking demonstrations, and restaurants — every format from fine dining to QSR — started topping salads with red onions.

K-VA-T’s Cox brought this latter trend in-store by cross-merchandising red onions with tomatoes and across from lettuces and bagged salads. “We especially do this in May, which is a strong salad month, and in January when consumers want to eat more healthfully after the holidays.”

Red onion dollar contribution to total onion sales represented 13.3 percent during the 52 weeks ending April 27, 2013, according to Nielsen Perishables Group data.

Both sweet red and hot red onions are now available. This serves up an opportunity to sell both and a challenge to make sure shoppers know which they are buying.

Anthony Mazzuca, Western region sales and commodity manager for Salinas, CA-headquartered Tanimura & Antle, explains, “It’s hard to differentiate our Artisan Sweet Italian Red Onions, which are grown from a proprietary seed, from other reds by sight. That’s why we use the PLU sticker and packaging to tell our story.”

In addition to introducing a specially bred sweet red onion last year, Peri & Son’s grows and markets a jumbo white onion. “This onion does exceptionally well on the West Coast where there’s a large Hispanic population and is increasing in sales on the East Coast where there are more and more Latin immigrants,” Gibson explains. “The advantage of white onions, in addition to flavor, is that they retail their texture and color in dishes like stir-fries.”

White onions contributed 13.3 percent of onion category dollars during the 52 weeks ending April 27, 2013, according to Nielsen Perishables Group data.

#### FIVE WAYS TO SELL MORE ONIONS

Display, cross-merchandising, recipes and price promotion can all drive onion sales. In addition, special programs and seasonal

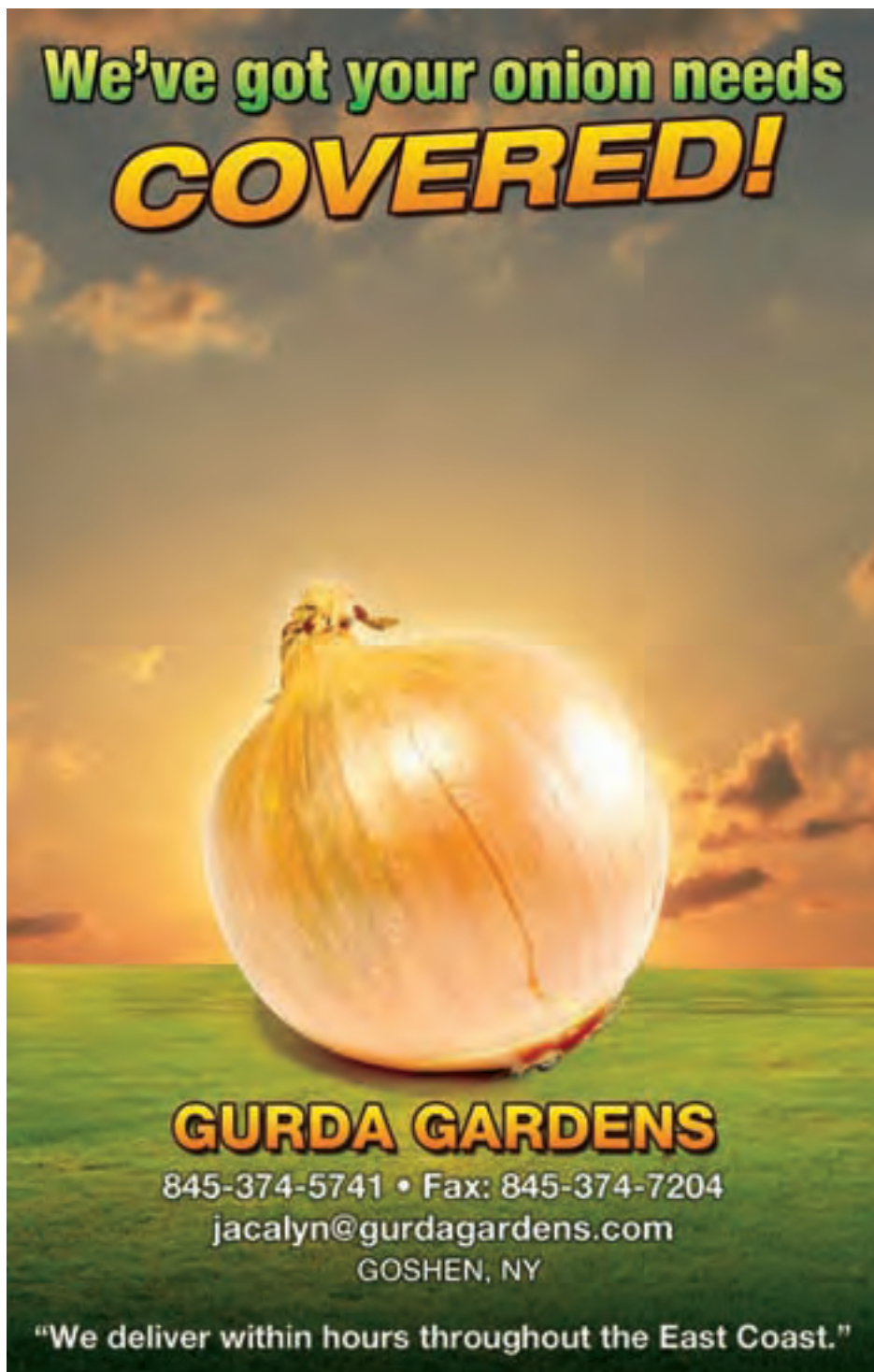
promotions offered by shippers, committees and associations could bring new sales life to the onion category.

#### 1. BUILD STRATEGIC DISPLAYS

“Nothing says ‘buy me’ like big, prominent bulk and consumer bag displays of onions,” says Keystone’s Kamer. “End caps, stand-alones, value-added product offerings, multi-size strategies and consumer bagged displays offer consumers multiple buying options and ensure sales lift.”

“A dozen SKUS of onions are displayed year-round at Bashas’. These include reds, whites, yellows, sweets, Maui in season, pearls, boilers, shallots, and reds, white and yellows all offered in 3-pound bags,” says Schuette. “Onion displays are located on dry, unrefrigerated tables.”

Sweet Onion Trading’s Rogers says, “We think building ‘waterfall’ displays on endcaps and adjacent to produce tables are very attractive and effective. To do this, stack sweet onion cartons in front of a table or endcap in



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‘stairsteps’ and arrange the onions to flow down the steps.”

“Fresh-cut onions must remain in the refrigerated section,” advises Gill’s Alamo. “Make sure they are prominently displayed with other fresh-cut items to take out the guess work so the consumer can find them.”

K-VA-T’s Cox makes it easy for customers to shop the chain’s onion displays. “We group bag product together with loose or bulk adjacent. That way shoppers can see all of their choices at once. We’ll also merchandize a 3-pound bag of yellow onions and 3-pound bagged sweet onions together on an island table. This encourages shoppers to buy one of both, a cooking onion and sweet onion for a burger topping.”

Use signage to highlight the flavor and color of the onions to entice multiple sales. This is something that Woodman’s Markets, a 14-unit warehouse-style chain based in Janesville, WI, did successfully and in partnership with Alsum Farms & Produce, Inc., in Friesland, WI. Marketing manager, Heidi Randall, explains, “Retail customers first asked us to provide signage to educate customers about different types of potatoes. We figured this would work with onions too.”

Alsum drew on the resources of the Greeley, CO-headquartered National Onion Association for information and used high quality stock photos. Alsum worked closely with Woodman’s to create the customized signage. The results were 2-foot by 2-foot durable signs hung strategically by chains respectively over the yellow, sweet, red and white onion tables. Each sign provided a color-coded picture of the onion with information on type, flavor attributes, usage suggestions and nutritional information.

Rick Kantner, Alsum’s director of sales and marketing, says, “It’s hard to tell if it’s all the signage, but onion sales increased by 20 percent. I think more importantly, the signage helped to build consumer awareness for the different types of onions.”

**2. MAKE MEAL SOLUTIONS SIMPLE**

Cross-merchandising is a great way to boost sales across categories as well as provide shoppers with convenient ideas for meals or snacks.

A display including lettuce, tomatoes and sweet onions is a great start for a salad promotion, describes Shuman Produce’s Shuman. “Place sweet onions alongside avocados and jalapeños for the perfect guacamole pairing or

display bell peppers alongside sweet onions and sausage to promote a great grilling match-up.”

Bashas’ Schuette and his staff place large display bins of onions in the store’s front lobby to promote salsa and / or guacamole themes. “Onions are also cross-merchandised with the grocery department for a BBQ grilling theme. We take advantage of cross-merchandising onion batter mixes with the regular onion displays too to promote quick and easy onion rings.”

“Onions cross-merchandise well in the meat department with ground beef or steaks,” says Brian Kastick, president and general manager of the Savannah, GA-headquartered Saven Corporation.

Gill’s Alamo adds, “When a retailer can put together a ‘What’s for dinner tonight?’ concept with all ingredients in one place, they can really drive consumer sales.”

Some shippers, such as Market Fresh Produce and Tanimura & Antle, offer secondary display units to make this type of meal-bundled display easier for retailers to use.

Market Fresh’s two-tier cardboard shipper is low profile and can hold one 40-pound case of jumbo onions, or 10 4-pound bagged onions, and a 25-pound case of tomatoes.

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Kemp explains, “Retailers that run ground beef on sale for 99 cents don’t make a lot of money, but they will get 30 to 40 percent margin on the onions and tomatoes merchandised at the same time. They can also include buns and condiments for a whole burger meal.”

Tanimura & Antle offers a false-bottom bin in two options: a 120-pound and a 40-pound. “The latter is ideal for cross-departmental merchandising,” says Mazzuca. “Fourth of July, Labor Day and Super Bowl are times to use this display unit filled with our Artisan Sweet Italian Red Onions. A picture on the bin of a burger topped with red onion gets the concept across.”

### 3. OFFER AN ARRAY OF RECIPES

Never underestimate the popularity of recipes. According to Allrecipes.com, there were over 1.5 billion visits to food and recipe websites in 2010. Onions are commonly used in eight of the Top 10 recipes searched: chicken, chili, slow cooker, pork chops, salmon, meat-loaf, ground beef, and pasta salad.

There are several ways retailers can disseminate recipes. The IEO offers recipe tear-off pads that feature a number of different recipes.

Keystone’s Kamer says, “Today’s innovative packaging includes usage tips, nutrition details and recipes.”

On-pack recipes change seasonally for 2- to 5-pound bags of yellow, white, red, red Italian sweet and sweet onions sold by Onions, Etc. Inc. in Stockton, CA.

Shuman Produce has introduced high-graphic bags not only with recipe suggestions, but a QR code that leads to a mobile-friendly website. On this site are short videos featuring dishes prepared by the company’s in-house chefs. The videos give consumers step-by-step preparation instructions while weaving in information about sweet onions.

Shoppers can review recipes right in the produce aisle and purchase everything they need for the meal in one trip — increasing rings at the register.

Peri & Sons shares numerous recipes on its Facebook page. Customers can also visit the company’s website, sign up for the Onion Obsession Club, and receive regular recipes and other information via e-mail.

### 4. PRICE PROMOTE

Price discounts can spur onion purchases. Schuette takes a rotational approach to promoting the onion category at Bashas’. “We try to feature an onion in every ad, just not the same onion every ad. A lot of the ad item decision-making comes from current market costs and individual shipper interest in

moving tons of products at the right price. In general, we’ve found that using sale price multiples, like 3-pounds for 99 cents, has not been as affective as using a lower image retail of 39 cents per pound.”

At Food City, Cox focuses promotions around seasonal availability. “In the spring, when Vidalias come in, we’ll run a couple of back-to-back front-page ads with a strong retail like 69 cents per pound. In-store, there will be a corresponding large display in the middle of the department that is signed with a free-

standing poster that provides background information on the onion.”

Give shoppers a reason to buy more onions. Team together price-promoted onions with other ingredients, such as potatoes and carrots, in a group ad to give consumers ideas for a soup or a roast.

### 5. TRY SOMETHING NEW!

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locally grown theme,” says Derrell Kelso, Jr., owner and president of Onions Etc. “We are growing new seed varieties of sweet onions in California and packing them in 2-pound wine-glass bags. The back of the bags is blank, which allows us to customize packaging by printing the name of the grower and retailer.”

The Saven Corporation is growing an OSO Sweet branded onion in California. This will be available from May to October, in 3- and 5-pound bags, imprinted with the California Grown logo.

Sweet Onion Trading’s Rogers adds, “We recently introduced a line of sweet onions grown in South Carolina to be sold in the Carolinas using the phrases, ‘Carolina Grown’ and ‘It’s SWEET to Eat Healthy! Buy Local! Eat Fresh!’”

**Bloomin’ Onion Redux.** After successful retail-test marketing last summer, Peri & Sons Farms’ has introduced its Bloomin’ BBQ Onion, a low-fat alternative to the traditional deep-fried blooming onion.

Gibson explains, “Our premium colossal yellow onions are individually net-wrapped with a bright, colorful tag. The tag invites consumers to go online or scan the QR code to get our Bloomin’ BBQ onion recipe. On the QR code landing page, there are step-by-step preparation and cooking instructions with a photo. We provide several low-fat, dipping-sauce recipes on the page as well.”

**Flavors of Summer.** In May, the VOC launched the Flavors of Summer campaign to educate consumers about the seasonality of Vidalias and to capitalize on the growing consumer trend of outdoor kitchens, which was named one of the top food trends by the Food Channel in 2012. The VOC partnered with iconic summer brands such as Johnsonville Mild Italian Sausage Links, Gourmet Garden Herbs & Spices, the National Mango Board, Avocados from Mexico, National Watermelon Promotion Board, and Stemilt Growers’ cherries to highlight the seasonality of Vidalia onions and to promote the versatility of all participating products.

Heidi McIntyre, managing partner for Orlando, FL-based Full Tilt Marketing, speaking on behalf of the VOC, says, “This integrated marketing campaign includes a variety of activities happening all summer long such as: on-pack brand / message integration, POS materials, national consumer contest, campaign website for consumers, digital coupons, social media messaging, food blogger outreach, retail display contest, and advertising and public relations initiatives.”

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## ETHNIC GUIDEBOOK

MERCHANDISING TO ETHNIC CONSUMERS

**BRAND:** Avocados from Mexico  
**PRODUCT FOCUS:** Avocados  
**TARGET ETHNIC GROUP:** Hispanic



### Why does your product appeal to this specific ethnic group?

Avocados are a food staple in the Latino household. According to new research conducted by Avocados from Mexico in 2013\*, avocado usage and purchase frequency have increased among Latino consumers. In fact, over two thirds of Hispanics say they buy avocados once a week or more, a significant increase over the previous year. Further, significantly more Hispanics say they are consuming avocados more often now compared to one year ago. The study also revealed that the majority of Latino consumers continue to prefer Avocados from Mexico, and 69% said Avocados from Mexico taste best.

### Are there other market segments for this product?

Avocado consumption reached a record 1.5 billion pounds in the U.S. last year and is expected to continue increasing thanks to steady demand from the retail and foodservice sectors. According to Nielsen's Perishables Group, avocados had a 9.4% dollar growth last year. Even with this growth, there is further opportunity with new consumers, from Gen Y to Baby Boomers, due to the fruit's great taste and versatility, as well as growing interest in the health benefits of avocados.

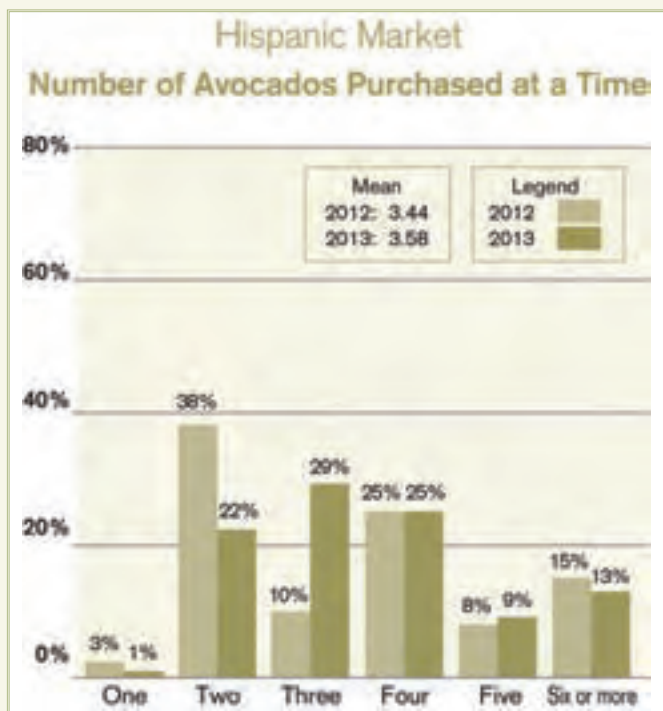
### What are you doing to better understand the Hispanic consumer?

Avocados from Mexico has continued to invest in consumer research to better understand Hispanic consumers and their avocado usage habits and perceptions.

Key Findings from the most recent study showed:

- 70% of Hispanic consumers report year-round avocado usage
- Nearly 30% now buy three avocados at one time (vs. 10% last year)
- "Taste" and "Family Enjoyment" continue to be the primary reasons why Hispanics eat and serve avocados
- "Health" is also an important factor, particularly among the 35+ age group
- Avocados are most commonly consumed in guacamole, sandwiches and tacos, but significantly more Hispanics reported eating avocados for breakfast, lunch and as a snack

\*Study conducted April 2013 using KnowledgePanelLatino<sup>SM</sup> (Methodology: Over 200 online interviews conducted in key markets).



### Are there any upcoming Avocados from Mexico programs targeting this ethnic group?

Avocados from Mexico continuously invests in sales-building marketing programs targeting Hispanic consumers including advertising, public relations, promotions, retail activation and social media to keep Avocados from Mexico top of mind and expand usage with this important market segment.

### What other support is available to retailers from Avocados from Mexico?

Avocados from Mexico works with retailers to develop customized programs to help build their avocado sales. We also offer merchandising materials as well as training in Spanish. There are a variety of Spanish language POS materials available to retailers year-round that can be ordered online at [www.avocadosfrommexico/trade](http://www.avocadosfrommexico/trade).

With the popularity of avocados continuing to rise, it's more important than ever for retailers to rely on the unsurpassed quality, consistent flavor and year-round availability of Avocados from Mexico.

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# Mushrooms As Moneymakers

Retailers properly merchandising mushrooms will see the money follow and shrink disappear. **BY LISA WHITE**



Thorough product rotation at the distribution center and in retail displays can reduce shrink.

In the produce industry, missed merchandising opportunities are akin to throwing away profits. The mushroom category is a prime example of this.

Retailers who neglect this segment by not allocating enough space or keeping shrink top-of-mind are selling themselves short. However, those retailers that expand mushroom varieties, incorporate value-added products and market these items with recipes and nutritional information can see incremental sales boosts.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service, sales of U.S. mushrooms in 2011-12 totaled 900 million pounds, an increase of 4 percent from the same period a year prior. The sales value for the 2011-12 crop rose 8 percent in the last year to total \$1.1 billion.

About 10 percent of the U.S. population consumes fresh mushrooms on a weekly basis, according to a report by The NPD Group, a Port Washington, NY-based research firm.

Additional findings showed that adults 55 and over are most likely to consume fresh mushrooms, and this population group is projected to grow in the next 10 years.

“Today’s inquisitive consumers are more health-conscious and looking for new products to try,” says Katie Preis, marketing

coordinator with The Mushroom Council, based in San Jose, CA. “Mushrooms are familiar but different, yet these items are coming more to the forefront.”

## Space Dictates Sales

The amount of space a store should devote to the mushroom category depends on region, location and demographics.

Redner’s Markets, Inc., a Reading, PA-based supermarket chain with over 45 stores, offers a wide variety of mushroom types that warrant a decent amount of space. “With all of the different mushroom types now, we have to have 4 feet with five shelves or 20 linear feet at minimum,” says Richard Stiles, Redner’s director of produce.

Tadych’s Econofoods, a six-store operation based in Iron Mountain, MI, also devotes 4 x 5 foot shelves of mushrooms, according to Jim Weber, produce director.

“We have about 3 feet of mushrooms, since we are a relatively small store,” says



**“Retailers should offer between 10 and 12 mushroom varieties, including sliced, portabellas and shiitakes to give customers a good sense of what’s available.”**

— Richard Stiles, Redner’s Markets, Inc.

Thomas Nichols, owner of Harry’s Supermarket in Pittsfield, MA. “Larger stores are more likely to devote 6 to 8 feet of space to these products.”

The size of the store and produce area are significant factors in determining how large a mushroom display is needed. It’s important to ensure that the selling velocity of these items remains strong.

“I have retailers in Toronto and Vancouver that have 8 feet of bulk mushrooms on the bottom and four 8-foot shelves filled with packaged mushrooms, which is a real attention-getter in the produce section,” says Brian J. Kiniry, vice president of Oakshire Mushroom Farm, Inc., based in Kennett Square, PA. “A 3- to 4-foot-wide space with three to four shelves is ideal at minimum.”

Tadych’s Econofoods has expanded its mushroom displays to the meat department, cross-merchandising certain varieties by steak and other meats.

**The Optimum Mix**

Publix Super Markets offers both white and brown mushrooms. The white variety includes sliced, stuffing and whole mushrooms, in addition to shiitake, oyster and blends. Brown mushrooms include whole, sliced and organic portabella, portabella organic stuffing caps along with whole and sliced baby portabella.

There are many contributing factors that help determine the optimum mix for any one store or group of stores. A good rule of thumb, according to manufacturers, is 60 to 70 percent white, 20 to 30 percent brown and between 10 and 20 percent exotic, value-added and dried.

To determine the optimum mix of mushroom types, it helps to be aware of the

consumption trends of these foods.

According to research from The NPD Group, most fresh mushrooms are consumed as an additive ingredient as opposed to a base dish. Also, when fresh mushrooms are used as an additive ingredient, it is most likely within homemade or mix variety dishes primarily cooked in skillets, as well as in salads and Italian dishes. The growth of these types of foods in the past five years has helped spur growth in the mushroom category.

“Retailers should offer between 10 and 12

mushroom varieties, including sliced, portabellas and shiitakes to give customers a good sense of what’s available,” Redner’s Stiles says. “Price points should be between \$2 and \$5.”

Tadych’s Econofoods’s hot sellers include: 8-ounce regular whole white, 8-ounce sliced, whole and sliced baby portabellas, whole and sliced portabellas, as well as 14- and 16-ounce stuffing mushrooms. At its locations, there has been increasing interest in baby portabellas. Pricing is between \$1.99 and \$3.99.

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Harry's Supermarket, with portabella caps coming in second. Its mushroom varieties are priced between \$1.49 and \$2.99.

"The question is not what the optimum

mix is, but how to sell convenience," Kiniry says. Oakshire sells a specialty mushroom blend under the Dole brand that includes brown, shiitake and oyster mushrooms

## Addressing Mushroom Shrink

"In the produce department, we dedicate 4 feet by at least five shelves to mushrooms," says Jim Weber, Tadych's Econofoods' produce director. "While most produce shrink is between 4 and 8 percent, mushrooms are probably 5 percent at the most. We order these products at the same time as we do salads."

Unfortunately, because mushrooms are sensitive to light and temperatures, it's a category that always has to contend with shrink.

This is an issue with some retailers. For example, Lakeland, FL-based Publix Super Markets, which has 1,073 stores, receives mushroom deliveries at least five days a week keeping shrink low.

"We have our heaviest movement over the holidays, especially Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter. However, mushrooms are a top seller within our produce departments year-round," says Maria Brous, director of media and community relations at Publix Super Markets.

A larger space with slower sales can be a recipe for disaster in regards to shrink. Suppliers encourage produce managers to keep mushrooms as cold as possible to increase shelf life. Although shelf temperatures may vary, the ideal range is between 36 and 39 degrees Fahrenheit.

"Our mushroom shrink is probably about 8 or 9 percent," Stiles says. "These are very perishable products, and people won't purchase darker-looking mushrooms. Improving ordering is the only way to contend with it."

Thomas Nichols, owner of Harry's Supermarket, admits that mushroom shrink can be as high as 15 percent, but the store's full kitchen makes use of these mushrooms as ingredients in prepared dishes.

"As far as shelf life, specialty mushrooms are heartier and don't have the browning and bruising issues like white buttons, which can lose appearance quickly," says Bob Engel, director of marketing and chief liaison at Gourmet Mushrooms, Inc., based in Sebastopol, CA.

"Some retailers use mushrooms as a loss leader to attract high-end clientele and accept higher shrink, while other

stores find they have the turnover to keep shrink at a minimum," Engel says.

Improved temperature control throughout the supply chain will help the mushrooms last longer and provide better shelf appeal for consumers.

"Brown mushrooms hold up better than white on the shelf, so displays should include more brown sliced mushrooms, along with whole white and brown mushrooms," Oakshire's Kiniry says.

Proper pricing, including value deals, can also help retailers control shrink with these products.

"Some retailers will price these products to a level that covers their shrink, but in doing so they shoot themselves in the foot because, at that high price, there will continue to be high shrink," says Joseph P. Salvo, president at Vancouver, B.C.-based Ponderosa Mushrooms & Specialty Foods. "The key is to buy the freshest product possible, build bigger displays, lower prices and make sure someone is working the mushrooms."

Incorporating mushrooms close to their expiration date into prepared food programs, such as in salads and pizza, will help further leverage these products.

"If it gets to a point where the product is not at its best for retail sale, the produce department can transfer mushrooms to the deli kitchen and refill shelves with fresher items the next day," Salvo says. "The other advantage of doing this is it gets customers thinking about ways to incorporate mushrooms into their meals."

The keys to reducing shrink are to have good product rotation at the distribution center combined with decent product rotation in the retail display.

"Shrink in the mushroom section usually runs between 10 and 12 percent," says Bill Litvin, senior vice president of sales and national account manager at Giorgio Foods, based in Temple, PA. "Older, tired-looking product should be removed from the display so as not to inhibit sales from the total retail display. A well managed store purchasing a quality product can cut the shrink to 8 percent."

pb



**“People just need to be shown how to prepare and properly cook these items. Recipes don’t need to be complicated.”**

— Joseph P. Salvo,

*Ponderosa Mushrooms & Specialty Foods*

combined in a 4-ounce package.

“This packaging gives consumers variety and allows them to try mushrooms they may have heard about on television,” Oakshire’s Kiniry says. “I believe that mushrooms are inelastic when it comes to price. The consumers who regularly buy them know the benefits of mushrooms and how to introduce them to their everyday meals.”

A testament to the growing popularity of mushrooms is that Ponderosa Mushrooms offers a total of 22 SKUs. “There are lots of choices out there, and they’re moving,” says Joseph P. Salvo, president at Vancouver, B.C.-based Ponderosa Mushrooms & Specialty Foods. “People just need to be shown how to prepare and properly cook these items. Recipes don’t need to be complicated.”

Customers who don’t find the mushroom type they are seeking will visit another store, so it’s critical for produce departments to offer the proper selection based on the area’s demographic. Specialty varieties can help draw more attention and, if merchandised properly along with recipe ideas, encourage impulse sales.

“We would like to see a third of the mushroom category dedicated to specialty varieties, because studies have shown that these items will draw in consumers,” says Bob Engel,

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director of marketing and chief liaison at Gourmet Mushrooms, Inc., based in Sebastopol, CA. Gourmet Mushrooms' Mycopia Chef Sampler, which includes four types of specialty mushrooms, is one of the company's top sellers.

**Marketing Opportunities**

Unfortunately, there have been a number of missed opportunities in the mushroom category. Not many retailers are taking advantage of seasonal mushrooms, such as morels and chanterelles, to boost the profile of these products and displays.

"Larger retailers are featuring mushrooms with different SKUs on sale," Ponderosa Mushrooms' Salvo says. "Timing is very important, such as offering certain types during grilling season."

The price points of several mushroom varieties may seem daunting to some retailers, but with the support of nutritional information and recipes, stores can create a destination for these products. "We're big believers in cross merchandising mushrooms in the meat department as well as utilizing recipes to help promote these products," Redners' Stiles says.

Harry's Supermarket utilizes hand-made signs to market its mushroom selections and draws attention from the nearby meat department. "It would be nice to have someone provide recipes to use, as well," Harry's Supermarket's Nichols says.

Because many consumers are afraid to try new mushroom varieties and are not sure how to prepare these items, retailers need to

**"I think retailers have a great opportunity to create prepared meals with mushrooms and then share their recipes on the packaging."**

— Brian J. Kiniry,  
Oakshire Mushroom Farm, Inc.

help educate customers.

"I think retailers have a great opportunity to create prepared meals with mushrooms and then share their recipes on the packaging," Oakshire's Kiniry says.

Highlighting health claims is another tool that can help better market these products. Dole Mushrooms introduced newly designed labels with approved health claims. One label identifies mushrooms as a good source of selenium, which helps maintain a healthy heart. "This type of health and nutritional information directed at the consumer will help drive the retailers' mushroom category growth," Kiniry says.

Also, marketing mushrooms as a healthful meat substitute with a themed special — for example, "Meatless Monday" — can bring added attention to these products.

Tadych's Econofoods provides recipe



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## MERCHANDISING REVIEW

stations in its stores that are kept up-to-date with current trends. “Now that we’re working with the meat manager to get mushrooms slotted in that department, and trading off by also having meat in the produce department by the mushroom section, we’re selling more of these products,” says Tadych’s Econofoods’ Weber.

At the store level, Giorgio Foods provides its retailers with a care sheet that describes how to make an appealing fresh mushroom presentation in the store. This includes

cooling the product to 34 degrees Fahrenheit for optimum shelf life; avoiding spray misters and overstacking; and rotating product to keep the display fresh.

Retailers also can take advantage of The Mushroom Council’s “Swap It or Top It” campaign. With this program, consumers are encouraged to purchase mushroom products and create new, unique recipes where mushrooms are either used as a prominent topping or main ingredient.

Gourmet Mushrooms includes recipes

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The campaign created by The Mushroom Council encourages consumers to get creative with recipes.

with its retail packs to help stimulate consumers’ creativity. “Mushrooms are different than vegetables, and people need to know these can be used as a center-of-the-plate item,” Engel says.

The stage is set for a mushroom resurgence, with the focus on healthful eating, the emergence of creative dishes and the prevalence of unique mushroom varieties. “Today’s consumers are inquisitive and looking for new products to try,” says the Mushroom Council’s Preis. “That’s why these products are coming to the forefront.”

The Mushroom Council offers retailers reports noting retail sales dollars divided by category and region as well as summary sheets that provide information on which mushroom categories are growing.

“We arm retailers with legitimate information and also run several regional promotions,” Preis says. “With the increasing awareness of mushrooms’ health benefits, there are growing opportunities for sales at the retail level.”

pb

# Raisins Push Impulse Envelop When Promoted In Produce

Produce retailers hold the key to a new revolution of raisin sales. **BY MICHELE SOTALLARO**



Marketers are inventing new packaging and variations of raisins for retailers to promote in Produce to capture new buyers and appeal to current users.

**A**rguably one of the most popular dried fruits in the world, raisins have undoubtedly carved a niche and paved the way for others in its category. “The fact that raisins are nearly a third of the total dried fruit makeup is impressive. All the different sizes and variations to tie in with seasonal peaks and demands makes it even more complex. Raisins are merchandized and advertised by many of our retail partners, and the profitability meets their requirements,” says Joe Tamble, vice president sales of Sun-Maid Growers of California in Kingsburg, CA.

But even a classic commodity can experience some obstacles. “Raisins are a very thin-margin fruit item, which has historically been a high volume, low margin business,” explains Miranda Ackerman, marketing director at Mariani Packing Company in Vacaville, CA. “With the recent pressures to return a higher price to the growers, this has caused prices to increase, which is impacting sales.”

## Starting A Raisin Revolution

Profitability, location within store and inventiveness are all “muscle” elements that raisins are strengthening as they forge forward in the industry. Playing off raisin versatility, marketers are expanding product variety to increase profits. Many of the innovations occurring in the confectionary and baked goods industries may one day be filtered into packaged product sold in Produce.

“Mariani is working on some new flavor developments for our global ingredients business,” says Ackerman. “This includes bake-stable flavored raisins that can be used in confectionary products and baked goods.”

“The power of the Sun-Maid girl is very extensive,” says Tamble. The iconic trademark was once voted the Best-Lasting Logo by *Reader’s Digest* in its annual “America’s Best” issue in 2007. “The Sun-Maid girl has consumer recognition, a symbol of quality, and most importantly, it has consumer trust. With that being said, we license different products.

The most notable is Sun-Maid bread. We also have oatmeal raisin cookie mixes, raisin English muffins and a few other items. But we are very, very careful with our licensing agreements and with the manufactures that we partner with.”

Under industry standards, it is pretty unusual for a co-op like Sun-Maid to introduce four new products. “Since the vanilla and chocolate-covered raisins are very popular, we used that as a springboard to develop these new flavors and increase consumption,” explains Tamble.

The first item within the new Sun-Maid raisin category is a strawberry Greek yogurt flavor in a stand-up bag. Second is a cherry chocolate yogurt in a stand-up bag. Third is orange cream in a mini bag and half-ounce boxes. Fourth is a dark chocolate in a six-pack. These varieties are all raisin-based items coated with four confectionary flavors targeted for consumers who are not current raisin users.

“The consumer testing that we’ve done is



# INTELLIGENT RISK-TAKING



**M**any times during my career I have sat in a meeting and someone poses the question, “Why does our best competitor have a better produce presentation than we do?” As we all know, the answer is quite complex and is comprised of an amalgamation of factors including labor, commitment, training, and many others.

One common denominator that I observed over the years is that of intelligent risk-taking. To ensure that your produce department has an edge over the competition, this strategy allows for creativity in Produce with carefully guided and planned display arrangements within the department. Management has a difficult time grasping this concept, and they feel that it is an unnecessary exposure to loss in the department — in other words; they just don’t “get it!”

Intelligent risk taking involves precise planning and development of key seasonal items, not currently promoted in the ad, that provide produce departments and their managers with opportunities to drive sales. It also requires encouragement for produce managers to take the “risk” of promoting these items along with those in the ad.

Strong direction from management as to how to best take this “risk” and generate successful results should be given to the team. This instruction includes recommendations on display size, placement in the department, utilization of tie-ins (and similar family-type items), and the duration of the promotion. The ultimate goal of this type of promotion is to entice customers to purchase items that are not in the ad and at regular retail price. This feat is accomplished by delivering such a beautiful presentation that the customer is attracted and motivated to buy.

This exercise takes advantage of the customers’ propensity to buy with their eyes. They expect large, colorful displays of advertised items, and generally assume that any large display is “special,” and that the items on display are something they should consider. The

customer should perceive the entire produce department as a special division with value offers at every turn. This is what builds a perception of a superior produce presentation. The success of such an undertaking is to understand that this is a “risk and reward” game.

The major pitfalls to such a strategy — and management often points these out — is over-displaying, over-ordering, and maintaining presentations over a longer period of time. A typical complaint might be: these items add to the shrink of the department and do not accomplish the sales boost that they were intended to create. This is why strong direction and careful item selection is vital. By providing direction, managers can help the departments not fall into traps that rob profitability and sales — not to mention the fact that managers who are strong leaders and have well thought-out strategies and directives get less resistance from upper management.

It is the responsibility of produce management to take as much risk out of intelligent risk-taking as possible. One can do so by planning and selecting the proper items that will not only generate the sales and profits but also complement the items that are being advertised — enhancing the overall seasonal appeal of the produce department.

As you progress with this strategy, you begin to condition produce department managers to look for these opportunities and take advantage of the risk to drive the sales of their department. These types of managers develop a skill for finding the next item that will push their performance to a higher level. This type of aggressive action is only successful when all the proper planning and preparation has been done to allow them the luxury of taking the “risk” to highlight the item.

This activity is a way that one can address management’s question about the home-store’s produce presentation versus the competitor’s. It is a strategy that requires lots of effort and planning from produce management, but it is well worth the commitment in terms of sales, profit generation and the improvement in the perception of the produce department. When executed properly, this is a wise use of resources and work to produce the desired results.

**If executed properly, large, colorful displays of non-advertised seasonal items can bring sales and profits over and above what is expected from risk-averse upper management.**

**By Don Harris**

Don Harris is a 38-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)

# TACKLING GLOBAL FOOD WASTE

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY MIRA SLOTT



**Q: FoodDrinkEurope, an association representing the European food and drink industry, recently spearheaded the Joint Food Wastage Declaration, titled “Every Crumb Counts,” to halve the amount of food waste by 2020 and take further action on a global scale to abate world hunger, alleviate depletion of valuable resources such as water and fuel, and address ensuing ecologic and economic impacts.**

**Could you discuss the triggers driving the initiative and help frame the issues as they relate to the produce industry?**

**A:** A year ago, FoodDrinkEurope developed a vision on environmental sustainability. The aim was to identify those challenges and actions we want to take moving forward. We surveyed a number of stakeholders in the EU — the group contained NGO’s, industry executives, and government officials. Food waste prevention ranked as a high priority to address, which gave us the go-ahead to put that top-of-mind in our actions.

**Q: According to research by one of the co-signatories of “Every Crumb Counts,” UK-based WRAP, “approximately 60 percent of household food waste arises from products not used in time. The majority of this is made up of perishable / short shelf life products, and includes 17 billion ‘5-a-day’ portions of fresh produce (more than a fifth of purchases) bought but not eaten each year.” Do these numbers correlate with your findings?**

**A:** Overall figures come from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), which estimates one third of all food — 1.3 billion tons a year — is being lost or wasted globally. In the EU, every person wastes approximately 179 kilos (about 395 pounds) of food a year. According to the European Commission study published in late 2010, the annual food waste across the EU is 90 million tons.

**Q: Could you discuss strategies and actions that produce industry executives can take to alleviate food waste, and address the different steps along the supply chain from field to fork; i.e., growers / shippers, processors and manufacturers, distributors, retailers, and consumers?**

**A:** We outline certain commitments in the Declaration regarding weight and the use of more quantitative measures; we also provide sector guidance to our members on how to prevent food waste. We call them toolkits, building on recommendations of best practices. The goal is to disseminate information to prevent food waste. We examine what our member companies are doing that could be spread across the industry as some kind of inspiration. We also look at what activities could be translated to other industries.

The toolkit is online, and it shows the most obvious and practical

actions that each of our signatories could be doing, and that could potentially be picked up by others that haven’t signed. Practical actions include: how manufacturers can avoid food loss during processing, ways to train personnel, identify efficiencies in food production, how they can work with growers, situate factories near fields and maximize environmental benefits. There’s also a section in the toolkit on extending shelf life without sacrificing food safety and quality, packaging technologies and innovations.

While there is competition in the marketplace, there is a joint approach in the Declaration. For instance, we have recommended guidelines that apply to all member states for food that is withdrawn but is still safe for consumption.

**Q: In the U.S., food safety issues and logistics often inhibit retail and produce industry efforts to donate to food banks ...**

**A:** We have been discussing those issues here with EU regulators and with food banks. There are current investigations and explorations of how we can adopt food safety protocols to ensure more edible food is not withdrawn, but reaches those in need. What we can do is work more effectively and efficiently to support food banks in a coherent way to assure the work they are doing is more effective.

**Q: Where are the biggest opportunities? The toolkit covers a broad range of solutions, pinpointing key areas for our readers, such as soil enrichment, renewable energy production, extending shelf life, innovative packaging, storage methods, cold chain advances, merchandising, marketing, labeling, education, and raising awareness. What are some of the “low-hanging-fruit” solutions that industry executives can put into practice right away?**

**A:** The Declaration is fairly short and easy to read. Whatever the top line demands, the general question that comes back is how to raise awareness of food waste and work with consumers on that end.

**Q: How important are supply-chain partnerships and joint efforts between government policy-makers and those of industry organizations? In the U.S., what can the Produce Marketing Association, United Fresh and regional produce organizations do to help the industry prevent food waste?**

**A:** In the U.S., there is the Food Waste Reduction Alliance. This is an industry-led initiative where you have manufacturers, distributors and retailers involved. They have two goals: to reduce food waste to landfills and increase food waste to donations. It’s more limited. This initiative is feeding into a U.S. government-led initiative, the U.S. Food Waste and Recovery Challenge. These are fairly new initiatives in the U.S. As far as I see, “Every Crumb Counts” links to it or the other way around, the U.S. alliance links to “Every Crumb Counts.” The U.S. alliance could potentially benefit by going further than its current goals, which are limiting.

pb

Tove Larsson

Tove Larsson, director environmental sustainability, FoodDrinkEurope, Brussels, Belgium



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# THE PROMISE OF BIOTECHNOLOGY



There are now over 17 million farmers utilizing biotechnology globally, at least 15 million of whom are small, resource-poor farmers in developing countries. Clive James, founder and chair of the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications (ISAAA) reports this significant statistic in his brief, *Global Status of Commercialized Biotech/GM Crops: 2012*.

James also shares that last year was the 17th year that biotech crops were grown commercially, with a record 420 million acres produced; yet consumer opposition is at an all time high.

In the produce industry, it's important to understand the reasons farmers are planting millions of acres and address how the industry is going to overcome consumer resistance.

## THE BENEFITS

A particularly notable paper on the benefits of biotech crops, titled *GM Crops: Global Socioeconomic and Environmental Impacts 1996 to 2011*, draws from 16 years of studies conducted by UK consultants, PG Economics. Perhaps the most telling statistic of all is the \$98.2 billion in global income gains from crop biotechnology during this period. Around half of these benefits are a result of yield increases from lower pest and weed pressure and improved genetics, but the benefits extend far beyond agronomic enhancements.

Agricultural biotechnology has significantly reduced greenhouse gas emissions. According to PG Economics, in 2011 alone the use of biotech crops reduced carbon dioxide emissions by 23 billion kg; the same as removing over 10 million cars from the road for a year. Biotech crops have also reduced pesticide use by a whopping 474 million kg from 1996 to 2011.

These benefits represent just the tip of the iceberg, and many believe the greatest benefits are yet to come.

## THE FUTURE

With ever-increasing technological expertise at our disposal, advancements that are incredibly precise and effective will tap into even more potential.

My work as a trained botanist, mycologist and plant pathologist has led me to an exciting project with a small agricultural biotechnology company — Okanagan Specialty Fruits (OSF). At OSF, we have developed a truly nonbrowning apple — the Arctic apple.

Using relatively simple gene-silencing techniques, the enzyme that initiates the browning reaction in apples (and many other produce items) when its flesh is exposed to air has been essentially “turned off.” As a result, the apples’ flesh stays crisp and white. This is a fairly minor change, yet it provides a benefit to every member of the supply chain,

especially consumers.

Just as the added convenience and “snackability” of baby carrots sent sales skyrocketing, these nonbrowning apples can do the same in the apple category. Fresh-cut apples are a growing category, but a product that can remove much of the associated processing costs has the potential to propel apple consumption to a new high. Apples are also one of the most often wasted foods, but non-browning apples will reduce needless waste and shrink from the orchard right through to the consumer.

There are plenty of other biotech crops that have already made their way to the produce aisle — or soon will. The USDA is reviewing Simplot’s new Innate potato that is resistant to black-spot bruising and has reduced degradation of starch and produces less acrylamide (a carcinogen) when cooked. Del Monte is also testing a new “Rosé” pineapple that has elevated lycopene content and is pink in color. Insect resistant sweet corn has been available for over a decade. And, of course,

Hawaiian papaya wouldn’t be present in the produce aisle today if it wasn’t for biotechnology.

Beyond developments like these, a number of upcoming biotech staple crops have significant life-saving potential. Researchers have been able to fortify cassava — the most important food source for half a billion people — with improved

nutritional value and tolerance to pests and disease. Scientists also have created a blight-resistant potato that can save farmers’ shares of the \$5 billion a year currently being spent fighting this disease.

**Agricultural biotechnology is controversial to some, yet the fact that it's the fastest adopted crop technology in history validates that the tangible benefits are trumping the perceived risks.**

## THE NEED FOR EDUCATION

Biotech crops can offer so many important benefits, and a vast wealth of evidence supports its safety. One major hurdle to address is the need for greater education on the subject. A survey from the International Food Information Council highlights that a number of studies have shown that consumers know very little about biotech crops and it is important to note that very little has been done to actively educate and engage consumers.

Agricultural biotechnology is on track to play a large part in the future. It's a technology that can help feed our planet, which, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, is expected to have over nine billion people by 2050. Biotechnology can help us fight disease, grow food in the face of drought, and help people eat healthier.

The first step to understanding agricultural biotechnology is to learn more and to obtain information from reputable sources. Once the industry has its collective arms around how biotechnology will benefit produce, we can then educate consumers. The goal for this technology is to offer consumers produce that tastes better and is better for them. There will likely come a day when produce enhanced through biotechnology will be recognized as the most environmentally sound approach to delivering fruits and veggies to consumers.

**pb**

**By Jennifer Armen**

With nearly 30 years of experience in the specialty crops arena, including many in the post-harvest crop protection and vegetable seed industries, Armen is well acquainted with the challenges facing the produce industry. Today she works as a strategic business and marketing consultant to the vegetable seed and grower/shipper industries.



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Gourmet Trading Company	73	310-216-7575	www.gourmettrading.net	Triple J Produce, Inc.	81	252-205-2936	www.triplejproduce.com
Gourmet's Finest	78	313-832-4640	www.gourmetsfinest.com	United Fresh Produce Assoc.	46	202-303-3400	www.unitedfresh.org
Gurda Gardens, Ltd.	69	800-475-4732		United Fresh Produce Assoc.	56	202-303-3400	www.unitedfresh.org
Harris Produce Vision	36	269-903-7481		The USA Bouquet Co.	14	786-437-6502	www.usabq.com
Harvest Sensations	73	305-591-8173	www.harvestsensations.com	Washington Apple Commission	47	509-663-9600	www.bestapples.com
Highline Mushrooms	82	519-326-8643	www.highlinemushrooms.com	We Are Many Foundation	33	877-319-9613	www.wearemanyfoundation.org
Honey Bear Brands	47	509-663-9600	www.bestapples.com	Western Fresh Marketing	53	559-662-0301	www.westernfreshmarketing.com
Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onion Promotion Committee	71	888-466-4667	www.usaonions.com	Yakima Fresh LLC	41	800-541-0394	www.yakimafresh.com



## THE 'FATHERS' OF GARLIC

**I**t's rare moments in time, like the one captured in this photo, that have insignificant meaning at the time the flash goes off but have tremendous significance years later. Pictured from left to right are: Rex Duden of Basic Vegetable Products, Walnut Creek, CA; Bill Lane of The Garlic Company, Bakersfield, CA; Don Christopher of Christopher Ranch Growers, Gilroy, CA; Joe Battaglia of August Battaglia Co., Chicago, IL; Joseph Gubser of Joseph Gubser Co., Gilroy, CA.; Jack Kacus of Basic Vegetable Products; Irwin Auerbach of Maurice A. Auerbach, Inc., Secaucus, NJ; Joe Cimino of Cimino/Vessey Foods. "These guys are the ones who put domestic garlic on the map in the U.S.," says Auggie Battaglia, son of Joe Battaglia.

"When Joe Lane (son of Bill Lane) from The Garlic Company sent me this picture, he said, 'Auggie, I gotta share this with you; it's really the old garlic gang — the guys who originally put us where we are today.'"

The photo was taken at the wedding of Joseph Gubser's daughter

sometime around the early 1970s/late 1960s in Monterey, CA. At the time, each gentleman was established in their trade and setting the bar for growing, distributing and marketing garlic.

"Joseph Gubser was really the Godfather of the garlic industry, and Don Christopher helped to eventually expand upon marketing and distributing, taking the business to the next level," says Joe Lane of The Garlic Company.

"This was in the old days, when one group did the growing and one group did the sales," says Battaglia. "These were growers and distributors that promoted California garlic in their regions and were responsible for developing the sales."

Even though the business models have changed over the past 40-plus years, the family values have not. Each family represented in the photo thrives today in the garlic industry and so does the inspiration behind each pioneer.

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