

# produce business

MARKETING • MERCHANDISING • MANAGEMENT • PROCUREMENT

## RECIPES FOR MARKETING EXCELLENCE



- ◆ California Avocado Commission
- ◆ California Giant Berry Farms
- ◆ California Giant Berry Farms, Duda Farm Fresh Foods, Grimmway Farms/Cal-Organic Farms and the National Watermelon Association
- ◆ Columbia Marketing International
- ◆ Idaho Potato Commission
- ◆ National Mango Board
- ◆ Ocean Mist Farms
- ◆ Robinson Fresh
- ◆ Sunkist
- ◆ Wholly Guacamole

10 Best Campaigns Recognized For Stellar Creativity, Strategy And Execution

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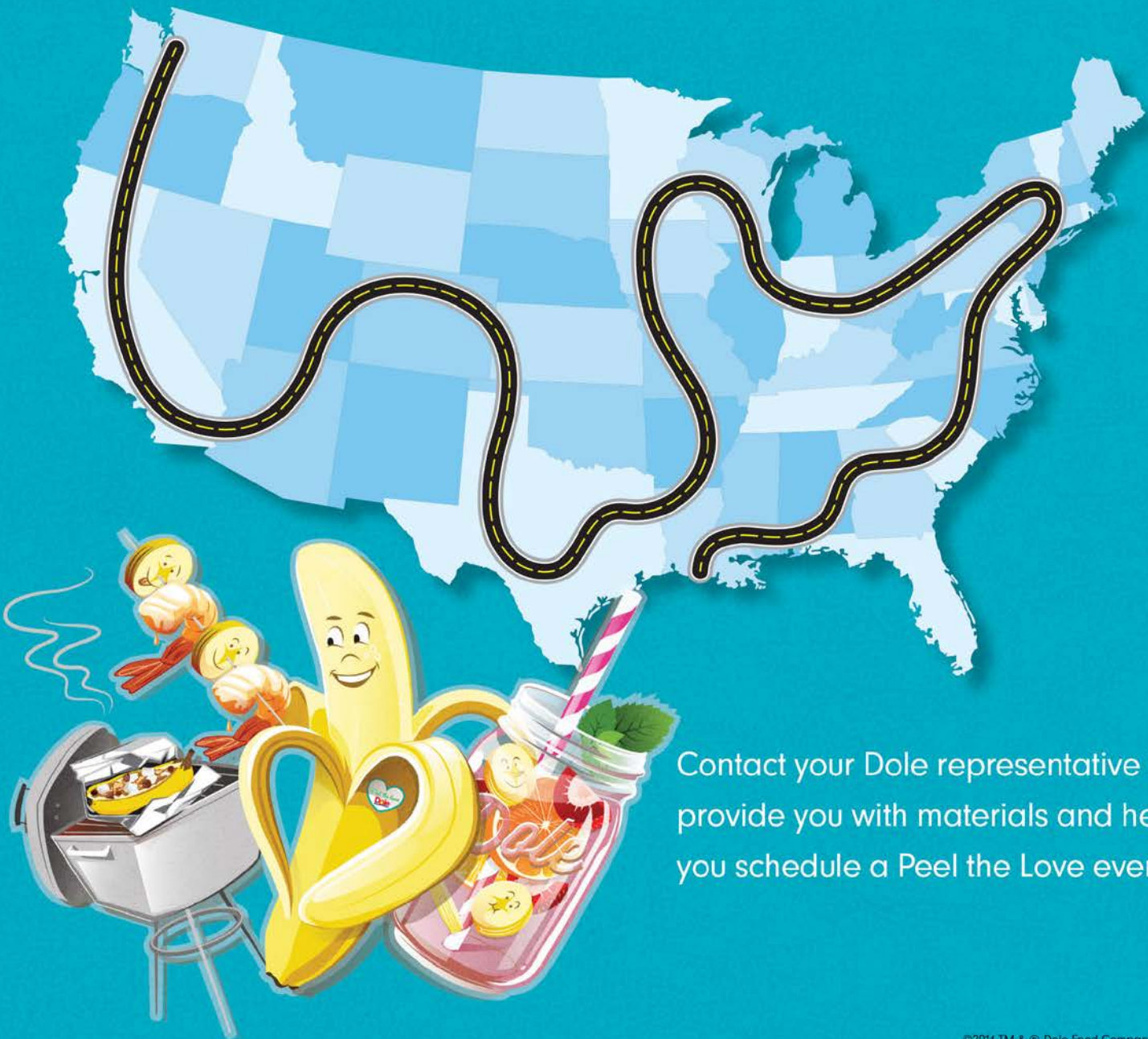
THE PUNDIT EXAMINES PMA DUES RESTRUCTURING  
FALL MERCHANDISING • TAILGATING • HOME-JUICING  
TRADE PACKAGING • WASHINGTON APPLES • RAISINS  
ATLANTA MARKET PROFILE • ONIONS MERCHANDISING  
MUSHROOM MERCHANDISING • CALIFORNIA FALL FRUIT

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provide you with materials and help  
you schedule a Peel the Love event.



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**19 26TH ANNUAL MARKETING EXCELLENCE AWARDS**  
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**THIS MONTH'S WINNER**



**Mike Greene**  
 Produce/Floral Merchandiser  
 Lowes Food  
 Winston-Salem, NC

Mike Greene has been working in the produce industry since 1986. "I started out after graduating high school," says Greene.

"I went to college and began working at a grocery chain in South Carolina."

Now, Greene is the produce/floral merchandiser for Lowes Food, a grocery chain headquartered in Winston-Salem, NC. In his position, Greene oversees all divisions in the produce and floral department. "I make sure we are up to speed on the company expectations [within each department], as well as manage training and development of the store teams," says Greene.

His favorite part of working in the produce industry is the different people Greene gets to meet and work with. "I like working with the different teams, helping people grow in the industry, and all the guest interaction," says Greene.

Greene has been reading Produce Business for seven years. "I like reading about the different articles within different industries and new items coming out."

**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) Where are the two city and state locations for Prime Time Produce? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) What are the three days in September for USA Onions' Tour, Onion Country USA? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) What is the web address for Robinson Fresh? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) What kind of juice is advertised on the Tsamma Juice ad? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) What is the name of the grapes that Sunlight sells? \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) Which commodity is pictured on the RemBrandt Masterpiece Fruit ad? \_\_\_\_\_

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

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\*Nielsen Perishables Group Freshfacts®, November 2013–April 2014.



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## MAINTAINING MOMENTUM FOR SCHOOL SALAD BARS



**Ray Gilmer**  
Vice President,  
Issues Management & Communication

Let's make sure that school kids get their half a cup of fruits and vegetables at lunch. That's been a resounding theme for us at United Fresh this summer. A challenge to the USDA's school meal standards came a few weeks ago when Rep. Robert Aderholt (R-AL) added a waiver rider in the House agriculture appropriations bill to allow schools to evade the requirements in 2014-15 if the schools show a net loss for six months. United Fresh opposed the idea, especially since 90 percent of schools report they are already meeting the federal standards, which enables them to receive federal funding.

The move to water down the standards was sparked by the National Harbor, MD-based School Nutrition Association (SNA). The national, nonprofit professional organization representing more than 55,000 members who provide high-quality, low-cost meals to students across the country previously championed the healthier meals as part of implementation of the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act. SNA now says too many schools are unable to meet the standards, which include a half cup of fruits or vegetables at lunch. Not unexpectedly, First Lady Michelle Obama says that she will "fight until the bitter end" to keep the healthful meals requirements in place.

United Fresh believes that school meals should be consistent with the national dietary guidance, which calls for half your plate to be fruits and vegetables. To that end, we think getting to half a plate starts with half a cup at lunch for 32 million students who participate in the National School Lunch Program. To allow schools to start opting out of such an important standard doesn't make sense.

This standard requires new thinking for menu planning, procurement, logistics, preparation and so many other considerations. It's no wonder that a few schools feel challenged about meeting the fresh produce requirements, espe-

cially when you consider all the pizza and hot dogs served as standard fare on school menus.

At USDA on July 10, United's Chairman Ron Carkoski, whose day job is president & chief executive of Ephrata, PA-based Four Seasons Produce, represented United Fresh at a meeting with Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack, to explore how to help all schools comply with the lunch requirements. Leaders from more than a dozen organizations representing nutritional and educational interests also attended, including the SNA.

Sec. Vilsack, Chairman Carkoski and others at the meeting voiced support for helping schools provide half a cup of fruits or vegetables to kids at lunch. It's our best shot for improving access to healthful fresh produce for millions of kids every day.

"I urged everyone to use the strength of the suppliers to find solutions and help the schools succeed in meeting these standards," said Carkoski after the meeting. "The overall discussion was excellent, with a commitment for ongoing discussion and education to help school nutrition operators find the most efficient ways to provide a variety of fruits and vegetables to their students."

The following week, produce suppliers converged on the SNA convention in Boston to provide the help schools need for buying produce to meet the lunch standards. Hundreds of school nutrition officials from across the country visited the first-ever Fresh Produce Pavilion at the expo. The pavilion was a resounding success, with United staff, produce distributors, growers, fresh-cut processors, and school nutrition directors sharing ideas and information in one-on-one exchanges.

United's Fresh Produce Pavilion included exhibits by many United Fresh member companies and an "Ask the Experts: Produce Solutions Center" for school foodservice directors. The "Ask the Experts" area was co-sponsored by PRO\*ACT, which brought a

number of produce distribution experts from around the country to serve as consultants for schools to answer all their produce-related questions, share guidance and tips for writing produce RFPs, and talk about fresh produce items and fresh-cut fruits and vegetables that are ideal for school foodservice.

United also presented two education workshop sessions on produce procurement and logistics, all in an effort to assist the school nutrition community.

Don Governale, director of sales at Houston, TX-based distributor, Hardie's, participated in the United pavilion. "It was great to interact with school foodservice directors from across the country, and I think we had a lot of productive conversations at SNA."

Another produce supplier to schools took his message straight to Congress on July 23. Phil Muir, president and chief executive at Salt Lake City, UT-based Muir Copper Canyon Farms, testified on behalf of United Fresh members in support of protecting the fruit and vegetable requirement for school lunches. Muir Copper Canyon Farms provides fresh fruits and vegetables to 52 rural and urban school districts in Utah, Idaho, and western Wyoming. Schools are about 15 percent of the company's total sales volume.

"If a specific fruit or vegetable becomes unaffordable during the school year, we work with our schools to substitute another fruit or vegetable that meets the school's needs," said Muir at the hearing of the Senate Agriculture Committee. "This is a collaborative relationship. We want our schools to be successful."

Despite all the political wrangling, let's not forget that implementation of the Healthy, Hungry-Free Kids Act of 2010 is about making sure school children have access to a wide variety of colorful fruits and vegetables — essentially improving the health of America's children. It's an issue we can't afford to lose.

# floralbusiness magazine

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a publication of producebusiness

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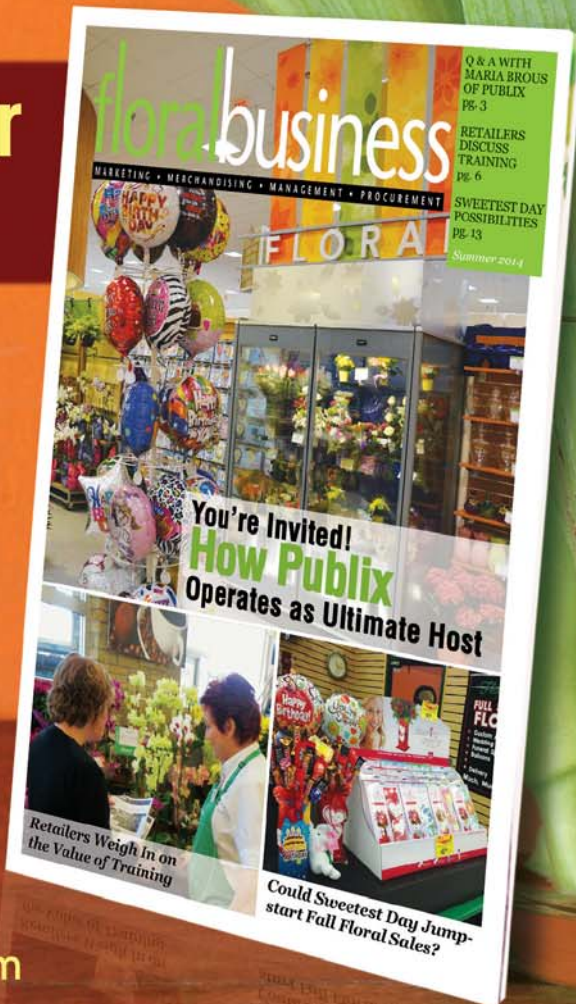
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## TRANSITIONS

### TO-JO MUSHROOMS AVONDALE, PA

To-Jo Mushrooms, Inc. announces that **Kevin Delaney** joins the company as vice president of sales and marketing. Delaney is responsible for managing To-Jo's national sales team and overseeing the marketing strategies for both the Fresh and Food Products Divisions of the company.



**Amy Steenrod** was appointed to director of human resources. Steenrod brings 20 years of HR experience, and a proven set of business practices that will enhance the company's culture and contribute to the To-Jo "employee experience."



### MARKET FRESH NIXA, MO

Market Fresh announces the addition of **Alison Bos** to its corporate staff as marketing manager. Bos' primary responsibilities will be overseeing marketing and promotion efforts of the company, developing and maintaining good rapport with the client base, and supporting ongoing implementation of Market Fresh's strategic marketing plan.



Market Fresh announces the promotion of **Adam Faust** as the new operations coordinator at its Tampa, FL campus. Faust's primary responsibility will be entering product, sales and logistics data into the system and daily monitoring of commodity inventories. In addition, Faust will daily evaluate trends in the market, interact directly with customers and work to expand the customer base.

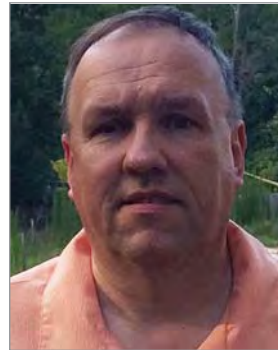
### COLUMBIA MARKETING INTERNATIONAL WENATCHEE, WA

Columbia Marketing International (CMI) hires **Garrett Joeckel** as the production and sales analyst. In his role, Joeckel will work with CMI's sales and marketing staff as well as its member warehouses to maximize grower returns and effectively meet customer needs.



### WP RAWL PELION, SC

WP Rawl announces **Marshall Sherman** as the new director of food safety and quality assurance supporting all its growing and processing operations. In his new role, Sherman will direct and implement all food safety and quality programs company-wide to include field operations, plant operations and external vendors.



### READY PAC IRWINDALE, CA

Ready Pac Foods Inc. announces **Robert Prystash** as its new vice president of continuous improvement. Prystash will lead transformation initiatives and continue to progress Ready Pac's enterprise. Prystash will report directly to Peter Laport, Chief Supply Chain Officer at Ready Pac.



Ready Pac Foods Inc. announces **Stephanie Santiago** as its director of national accounts-Costco team lead. Santiago will serve as the primary account contact for Costco. She will collaborate with internal resources to develop and guide the implementation of account specific business plans that achieve profitability and sales targets.



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### DUDA KICKS OFF CITRUS IMPORT SEASON

Duda Farm Fresh Foods, Oviedo, FL, has a large variety of citrus items available now in promotable volumes for summer citrus categories nationwide. This summer, availability and quality is good for Satsumas and Minneolas from Peru.



### PERO FARM'S LAUNCHES NEW WEBSITE

Pero Family Farms Food Company, LLC, Delray Beach, FL, announces the launch of its "Family Grown in the USA" campaign featuring "Pero Family Farms Mini Sweet Peppers." The campaign consists of a dedicated website for "Mini Sweet Peppers," promoting the "Family Grown in the USA" theme, featuring recipes, coupons, and links to Pero Family Farms' main site.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

**CAESPAN NORTH AMERICA LAUNCHES CLEM GEMS**

Capespan North America, St. Laurent, Canada, announces the launch of ClemGem, the brand name for the company's clementines and other easy-peeling soft citrus products. Capespan North America will source quality clementines and mandarins from South Africa, Chile and Peru and will market the product to the consumer as ClemGems in the summer and early autumn months.



**BOLTHOUSE FARMS LAUNCHES LINE OF FRUIT AND VEGGIE SNACKS FOR KIDS**

Bolthouse Farms Kids products will be available nationwide and regionally in retailers (such as Giant Eagle, A&P, Hy-Vee and more) this month. The new line of kids snacks is based around real fruits and vegetables with no added preservatives and is designed for maximum kid "craveability." The set will vary by retailer, but may include items such as pre-cut fruit, fruit purees and fruit-and-vegetable snack packs.



**SETTON FARMS PISTACHIO CHEWY BITES PARTICIPATES IN NEW CAMPAIGN**

Setton Pistachio, Terra Bella, CA, pistachio processor and maker of Pistachio Chewy Bites is participating in the 12th Annual Produce for Kids Get Healthy, Give Hope campaign, which raises thousands of dollars for children's organizations. The joint campaign offers grocery shoppers at participating Price Chopper locations the opportunity to contribute to Children's Miracle Network Hospitals and other local children's charities when purchasing Pistachio Chewy Bites and other healthy and nutritious foods.

**BALOIAN FARMS EXPERIENCES GROWTH MOMENTUM WITH PACKING SHED EXPANSION AND RENOVATIONS**

Baloian Farms, Fresno, CA, a West Coast pepper producer, recently completed improvements to its packing facility. The facilities were completed just in time for the company's local mini-sweet, baby bell, green pepper, red pepper season, as well as all repack and value-added packing operations.



**FRESH ORIGINS DEBUTS NEW BRAND & PACKAGING**

Fresh Origins, San Diego, CA, is proud to expand its offerings and debut BrightFresh Microgreens for the retail market. Fresh Origins is introducing its Rainbow Mix and other varieties in a 1.75 ounces consumer package. The new BrightFresh brand represents in words, both the taste and environment that makes BrightFresh microgreens unique.



NEW PRODUCTS



**FREY FARMS' DEVELOPS WATERMELON JUICE**

Frey Farms, Keenes, IL, introduces a new invigorating watermelon juice beverage called Tsamma. The juice is low in calories, natural sugars, antioxidant rich and supports cardiovascular health. Frey Farms looks forward to the next Marine Corp Marathon held in the nation's capital on October 26 as participants will receive Tsamma watermelon juice as they cross the finish line.



**HOT NEW VEGGIE SPROUTS IN PRODUCE**

Tozer Seeds America, Santa Maria, CA, offers the first new vegetable in more than a decade to consumers. This fall, shoppers will be wowed by the adorable and versatile Kalettes. This vegetable is the delicious and exciting green and purple offspring of brussels sprout and kale. Plans for the U.S. launch include consumer media engagement and a strong presence on social media channels.



**MANN PACKING LAUNCHES NEW FAMILY FAVORITES PACKAGES**

Mann Packing, Salinas, CA, redesigned its full line of fresh vegetable packaging to be more consumer-focused and better represent the company's third generation of family farmers. The redesigned packages feature a new Mann's Family Favorites logo — complete with a nostalgic design, rich and natural color palette and recipe photos on select packages.

# WILL WAL-MART'S PRICE FIRST BRAND LEAD IT TO LEAN FIRST ON PRODUCE SHIPPERS?

By James Prevor  
President & Editor-in-Chief



Last year, Wal-Mart began a test of a new private label “brand” called Price First. The brand was identified by Wal-Mart executives as an “opening price-point” brand, meaning its appeal was to those customers wholly or primarily focused on price.

Consumer perceptions of value are tricky. A warehouse club such as Sam’s Club, Costco or BJ’s might actually provide the best “value” if defined as the lowest cost per unit of an item. For some consumers, however, the issue is quantity. That low price per ounce may be pointless if a single person has to buy a 4-pound container of 18 kiwifruits that have to be eaten in a few days or a jar of sliced jalapenos with more peppers than one will use in a lifetime. Sometimes the issue is storage space. It is all fine to get a cheap deal on paper goods, but if one doesn’t have space to store 30 rolls of paper towels, the bargain is moot.

For many of Wal-Mart’s customers, living paycheck to paycheck or food-stamp payment to food-stamp payment, the value proposition focuses heavily on out-of-pocket expenditure. This group of shoppers may have only 30 bucks to last the week, and they need to feed their families.

One reason Wal-Mart executives are carefully monitoring the efforts by both Dollar Tree and Dollar General to buy Family Dollar is that it is here where these concepts just kill Wal-Mart. At Dollar Tree, for example, everything is actually priced at one dollar. The package may be smaller than what Wal-Mart sells, the price-per-ounce may be higher than at Wal-Mart, but certain consumers really prize that they can get an assortment of items they need — each at a low price point. In addition, the single price point makes shopping easy; people shop with 20 bucks, and they know they can walk out with 20 items.

It is beginning to fade in one’s memory when Wal-Mart last had favorable comparable store sales in the U.S. To compensate, it is investing heavily in its Internet business, and global e-commerce sales for Wal-Mart are now more than \$10 billion a year, and this segment is growing faster than the general Internet commerce business.

Another effort Wal-Mart is investing in is its small store initiative. Back in February, Bill Simon, Wal-Mart’s president and chief executive, announced the company intended to open almost 300 Neighborhood Market and Wal-Mart Express stores in the coming year. He further explained that, unlike the big supercenters, these

stores are delivering favorable comparable store sales. He mentioned that comparable store sales at Neighborhood Markets, excluding fuel, grew 5 percent.

Wal-Mart, though, is such a behemoth that even fast growth on the Internet, and with new store sizes, can’t really compensate if supercenters don’t perform well. So finding a way of dealing with Dollar Stores, Aldi and other discount operations is crucial.

The new private label line has a retro look, harkening back to the age of generics and to a time when private label suggested cheaper and lower quality. This look has not necessarily pleased sophisticates. Christopher Durham, a vice president of retail brands at Charlotte, NC-based Theory House, a branding and marketing agency, commented that “the 1970s flashback design is at best disappointing, but at its worst could set the industry back 20 years.”

We would suggest Wal-Mart knows exactly what it is doing, and the retro look suggests “cheap” and that is the emotional response it hopes to induce when people see the brand. In test markets Wal-Mart ran many promotions declaring Price First to be its “lowest price brand for all your grocery staples.”

**The retro look suggests “cheap” and that is the emotional response it hopes to induce when people see the brand.**

The need for this imagery is urgent. An annual study done by Louisville, CO-based MarketForce recognized Aldi as America’s low-cost price leader in groceries for four years in a row, and London-based Kantar Retail found Dollar General beat Wal-Mart on a market basket of opening price points. The basket was 18 percent more expensive at Wal-Mart. For a company that built its business on a slogan: “Always low prices. Always,” these results are a serious problem.

Wal-Mart has heavily focused on its price-match promise — even developing an App to make it easier — as a way to deal with this problem. Yet this may be counter-productive, as raising consciousness of the promise raises awareness that unless one does a lot of work, one will be paying more than necessary at Wal-Mart.

What all this means for perishables, and especially produce, is unclear. Wal-Mart has continuously expanded its trademark application for Price First to incorporate many categories, including meat, fish, poultry and game. It requested the trademark cover dried and cooked fruits and vegetables — but its plans for Fresh are unclear.

What is clear is the largest buyer of fresh produce on earth is under pressure, struggling to identify its path to growth and profitability in the future. If relentless pressure to reduce prices cuts margins on all the “grocery staples,” it is highly likely that Wal-Mart will try to boost margins elsewhere. That means more pressure on produce suppliers. **pb**



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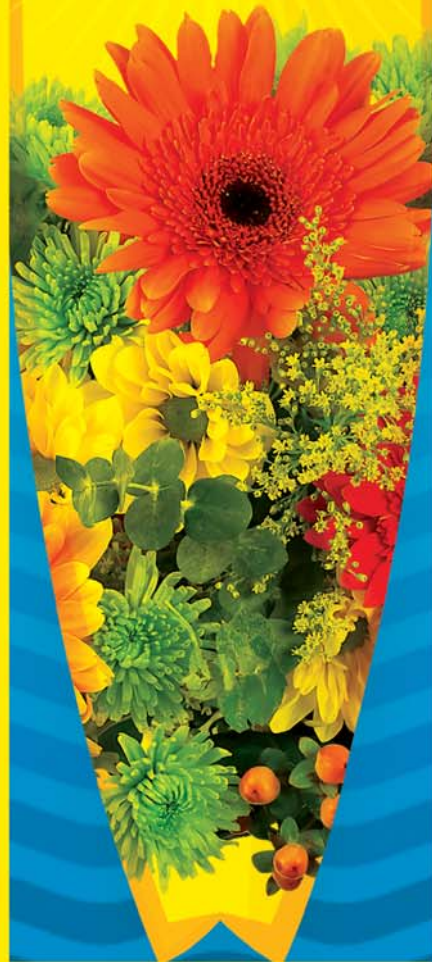


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## AUGUST 13 - 14, 2014

### FRESH CONNECTIONS SOUTH AFRICA

The fourth annual event attracts the fresh produce supply chain, and offers attendees opportunities to grow their businesses, break into new markets, and share ideas with other leaders on how to take fresh to the next level.

**Conference Venue:** Centre for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) International Convention Centre, Pretoria, South Africa

**Conference Management:** Produce Marketing Association, Nemark, DE

**Phone:** + 27 (0) 11 447 1513

**Email:** [freshconnect2014@mci-group.com](mailto:freshconnect2014@mci-group.com)

**Website:** [pmafreshconnections.co.za](http://pmafreshconnections.co.za)

## AUGUST 21 - 22, 2014

### APPLE CROP OUTLOOK AND MARKETING CONFERENCE

**Conference Venue:** Ritz-Carlton, Chicago, IL

**Conference Management:** U.S. Apple Association, Vienna, VA

**Phone:** (703) 442-8850 • **Fax:** (703) 790-0845

**Email:** [lstephens@usapple.org](mailto:lstephens@usapple.org)

**Website:** [usapple.org](http://usapple.org)

## AUGUST 27 - 29, 2014

### IDAHO GROWER SHIPPERS CONVENTION

**Conference Venue:** Sun Valley Resort, Sun Valley, ID

**Conference Management:** Idaho Grower Shippers Association, Idaho Falls, ID

**Phone:** (208) 529-4400 • **Fax:** (861) 672-6425

**Email:** [mklompian@idahoshippers.org](mailto:mklompian@idahoshippers.org)

**Website:** [idahoshippers.org](http://idahoshippers.org)

## SEPTEMBER 2 - 7, 2014

### JOINT TOMATO CONFERENCE

**Conference Venue:** Ritz-Carlton Beach Resort, Naples, FL

**Conference Management:** Florida Tomato Committee, Maitland, FL

**Phone:** (407) 660-1949 • **Fax:** (407) 660-1656

**Email:** [Diana@floridatomatoes.org](mailto:Diana@floridatomatoes.org)

**Website:** [floridatomatoes.org](http://floridatomatoes.org)

## SEPTEMBER 8 - 10, 2014

### THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

**Conference Venue:** Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill, Washington, D.C.

**Conference Management:** United Fresh, Washington, D.C.

**Phone:** (202) 303-3400 • **Fax:** (202) 303-3433

**Email:** [jtoner@UnitedFresh.org](mailto:jtoner@UnitedFresh.org)

**Website:** [unitedfresh.org](http://unitedfresh.org)

## SEPTEMBER 11, 2014

### NEPC PRODUCE & FLORAL EXPO

**Conference Venue:** Hyatt Regency Newport Hotel & Spa, Newport, RI

**Conference Management:** New England Produce Council, Chelsea, MA

**Phone:** (781) 273-0444

**Email:** [nepc2@rcn.com](mailto:nepc2@rcn.com)

**Website:** [newenglandproduce.com](http://newenglandproduce.com)

## SEPTEMBER 17 - 19, 2014

### FFVA CONVENTION

**Conference Venue:** Ritz-Carlton Beach Resort, Naples, FL

**Conference Management:** Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association, Maitland, FL

**Phone:** (321) 214-5200 • **Fax:** (321) 214-0210

**Email:** [martha.tucker@ffva.com](mailto:martha.tucker@ffva.com)

**Website:** [ffva.com](http://ffva.com)

## SEPTEMBER 24 - 27, 2014

### SEPC FALL CONFERENCE

**Conference Venue:** Brasstown Valley Resort, Young Harris, GA

**Conference Management:** Southeast Produce Council, Inc., East Ellijay, GA

**Phone:** (706) 276-4025 • **Fax:** (866) 653-4479

**Email:** [info@seproducecouncil.com](mailto:info@seproducecouncil.com)

**Website:** [seproducecouncil.com](http://seproducecouncil.com)

## OCTOBER 7 - 10, 2014

### NACS SHOW 2014

**Conference Venue:** Las Vegas Convention Center, Las Vegas, NV

**Conference Management:** The Association for Convenience & Fuel Retailing (NACS), Alexandria, VA

**Phone:** (703) 684-3600 • **Fax:** (703) 836-4564

**Email:** [jlennard@nacsonline.com](mailto:jlennard@nacsonline.com)

**Website:** [nacsshow.com](http://nacsshow.com)

## OCTOBER 17 - 19, 2014

### PMA FRESH SUMMIT

**Conference Venue:** Anaheim Convention Center, Anaheim, CA

**Conference Management:** Produce Marketing Association, Newark, DE

**Phone:** (302) 738-7100 • **Fax:** (302) 731-2409

**Email:** [jmickel@pma.com](mailto:jmickel@pma.com)

**Website:** [pma.com](http://pma.com)

## OCTOBER 19 - 23, 2014

### SIAL PARIS EXHIBITION

**Conference Venue:** Paris Nord Villepinte, Paris, France

**Conference Management:** SIAL Group, Paris, France

**Phone:** +33 (0)1 76 77 11 11

**Email:** [exhibit@sialparis.com](mailto:exhibit@sialparis.com)

**Website:** [sialparis.com](http://sialparis.com)

## OCTOBER 30 - NOVEMBER 1, 2014

### NOGALES PRODUCE CONVENTION AND GOLF TOURNAMENT

**Conference Venue:** Tubac Golf Resort, Tubac, AZ

**Conference Management:** Fresh Produce Association of the Americas, Nogales, AZ

**Phone:** (520) 287-2707

**Email:** [aadams@freshfrommexico.com](mailto:aadams@freshfrommexico.com)

**Website:** [freshfrommexico.com](http://freshfrommexico.com)

## NOVEMBER 2 - 5, 2014

### WESTERN GROWERS ANNUAL MEETING

**Conference Venue:** Bellagio Hotel, Las Vegas, NV

**Conference Management:** Western Growers Association, Newport Beach, CA

**Phone:** (949) 863-1000 • **Fax:** (949) 863-9028

**Email:** [jtimmering@wga.com](mailto:jtimmering@wga.com)

**Website:** [wgannualmeeting.com](http://wgannualmeeting.com)

## DECEMBER 2 - 4, 2014

### THE NEW YORK PRODUCE SHOW AND CONFERENCE

**Conference Venue:** Jacob K. Javits Center

**Conference Management:** Produce Business and Eastern Produce Council

**Phone:** 212-426-2218

**Email:** [info@nyproduceshow.com](mailto:info@nyproduceshow.com)

**Website:** [nyproduceshow.com](http://nyproduceshow.com)

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# Exploring The Specialty Fruit Consumer

KELLI BECKEL, SENIOR MARKETING MANAGER, NIELSEN PERISHABLES GROUP

It wouldn't be a stretch to say that specialty fruit, which includes products such as mango, coconut and pomegranate as well as up-and-comers guava, sapote and Kiwano melon, is a produce category on the upswing. In a retail environment where consumers continue to seek "new" eating experiences and gain exposure to multi-cultural flavors and cuisines, specialty fruit offers a unique mix of flavors consumers know and love (think mango and pomegranate) as well as more exotic fare such as figs, passion fruit and Cactus pear. This valuable category is rife with opportunities for growth and department differentiation. While it currently accounts for just 2 percent of fruit sales, the total ring for baskets containing specialty fruit is 45 percent larger than the average produce basket.

Specialty fruit also offers a prime example of the power of produce as an influencer across the store. Flavors like coconut, mango, pomegranate, even kiwi and guava are popping up on labels from candy and juice products to sauces and packaged meat dinners.

But what do the numbers say? During the 52 weeks ending April 26, 2014, specialty fruit was purchased by more than a quarter of U.S. households, a figure that stands to increase as consumers continue to broaden their tastes and seek more adventurous ingredients for every-day meals and snacks.

Specialty fruit was also the third-fastest growing fruit category in terms of average dollar sales. Distribution increased for the majority of specialty fruit categories. Despite significant price hikes across the category during this time, specialty fruit volume sales remained stable from the previous year — hinting at shoppers' willingness to pay a premium for "new" eating experiences.

## Specialty Fruit Stars

With 21 colorful varieties, specialty fruit has room to grow. During the latest 52 weeks, the five top-selling specialty fruit categories were mango, kiwi, pomegranate, papaya and tomatillo. Of the Top 5, both

mango and pomegranate experienced average dollar, and volume per store per week, increases of roughly 10 percent. Guava, a product featured heavily in Hispanic cuisine, outpaced growth of some of the larger sub-categories, up roughly 30 percent in both average dollar and volume sales. Like many of the smaller varieties, the sales jump with guava was aided by a significant increase in distribution points — up 61

TOP SELLING SPECIALTY FRUIT AMONG 21 VARIETIES OVER A 52-WEEK PERIOD	
Mango	39.3%
Kiwi	19.2%
Pomegranate	12.0%
Papaya	11.0%
Tomatillo	5.2%
Dates	4.6%
Coconut	2.2%
Figs	1.6%
Persimmon	1.1%
Guava	0.8%
Other Specialty Fruit	0.8%
Star Fruit	0.8%
Cactus Pear	0.4%
Sapote	0.2%
Kiwano Melon	0.2%
Cherimoya	0.2%

percent compared to the previous year.

Despite a 12 percent increase in average retail price, "other specialty fruit" increased average dollar and volume sales 40 percent and 26 percent respectively — suggesting that shoppers are willing to pay a premium for products like dragonfruit and peacharines. "Other specialty fruit" growth was also aided by a nearly 40 percent increase in distribution. Though smaller than the more ubiquitous mango and pomegranate varieties, sub-categories including sapote and passion fruit increased average volume sales by more than 75 percent.

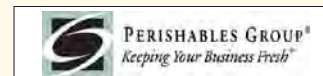
## Reaching Specialty Fruit Buyers And Non-Buyers

The key to continued growth for this emerging category is shopper under-

standing — for both shoppers currently purchasing specialty fruit products and, perhaps more importantly, the shoppers who aren't buying — and strategizing based on their needs.

Specialty fruit buyers are relatively varied in terms of demographics and shopping behaviors. The shopper group that indexes highest for specialty fruit is highly affluent and generally without children in the home. These shoppers are typically 55 to 65 years of age and purchase premium, high-quality fresh products. Affluent couples (ages 25 to 34 and 55 to 64) and families (ages 35 to 44 with children under the age of 10) who primarily purchase organic and natural products also heavily shop the specialty fruit category. Merchandising specialty fruits with recipe cards or demonstrations on "how to eat" could appeal to these adventurous shoppers seeking quality fresh ingredients and snacks. Couples and families that heavily shop Hispanic products (indicating a high likelihood of Hispanic/Caribbean heritage) also index high for specialty fruit. These households tend to skew toward the lower income ranges. Cross-promoting with other items typically associated with Hispanic cuisine could help drive incremental sales with these heavy buyers.

In-store education/signage can go a long way toward capturing shopper groups — especially around what the product is, how to select a ripe one, how to use/peel. These shoppers are typically from smaller middle-income households concerned with convenient meal options, and middle-income families whose purchases skew toward kid-oriented products (including convenience products). Merchandising specialty fruit as a grab-and-go snack option or cross-promoting as a fun way to spice up a pre-made or frozen meal could help bring specialty fruit into the mainstream for shoppers concerned with convenience.



Nielsen Perishables Group consults with clients in the fresh food space. Based in Chicago, IL, the company specializes in consumer research, advanced analytics, marketing communications, category development, supply chain management, promotional best practices and shopper insights.

# Specialty Today, Mainstream Tomorrow

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

**S**pecialty fruit is a category that is destined to always be relatively small. The reason is simple. If a specialty item takes off, gains universal distribution, almost universal household penetration and, most important of all, large sales, then it is no longer classified as a specialty fruit, thus removing its heft from the category.

In fact, even among the items currently classified as “specialty,” we would question if that were the best way of understanding these items. For example mangos, the largest specialty fruit, are probably better thought of as staples for many key segments of the population, from Mexicans to Indians, and specialty items for the rest of us.

Kiwi, which this study classifies as the No. 2-specialty item, is also a problematic case. If you go by shipper channels, kiwi started with distribution through specialty houses, such as Frieda’s; but today that is not the dominant distribution pattern. Besides, kiwis have been commonly sold in supermarkets for many years and have had plenty of exposure in baking. Is this really a specialty item or just a slow-selling mainstream item?

Perhaps the most shocking — and for the produce industry, the most hopeful thing about this list — is that pomegranates rank No. 3 — behind mango and kiwi. This is a big change. Had such a list been compiled 20 years ago, pomegranates would be included with “other specialty fruit.” So what changed?

First, you have the Resnick family and their keen marketing insight. As owners of Pom Wonderful, they supported medical research about pomegranates, and the results of that research helped to position pomegranates as a health “Super Food.”

Second, the development of machines to efficiently extract pomegranate arils, combined with modified atmosphere packaging, has made consumption of pomegranate much easier.

Kelli Beckel’s point that in-store education and promotion can help raise familiarity with these products, provide usage ideas, and boost sales is not arguable. Yet it is also possible that many of these products are

specialty items because their inherent nature is less desirable on a mass-market scale compared to, say, bananas.

The experience with pomegranates teaches us that change in value perception — as with medical research finding hitherto unknown benefits from eating pomegranates — and changes in the product itself — as with pre-packaged pomegranate arils that save consumers time — are more successful methods of boosting consumption.

Indeed, it is not in these figures, but it is good to keep in mind that the real boom in pomegranate consumption is neither in the whole fruit, nor the arils, but in pomegranate juice — a still more convenient way for consumers to get the benefits of pomegranate.

The focus on the total value of the market basket and the fact that grocery shoppers, who include specialty items, have more valuable baskets is a key insight of this study. It is not a surprise. Years ago, the National Association for the Specialty Food Trade (now renamed the Specialty Food Association) sponsored research showing supermarket grocery baskets were larger for consumers who included specialty items in general, such as high-end cookies, balsamic vinegars and fancy chocolates.

Other research has shown that not only are these baskets larger, they tend to have higher margins as well. Filled with high-margin prepared foods, fresh seafood and, yes, specialty foods of all types fresh and non-fresh.

This insight adds enormously to the complexity of managing a store’s assortment. It may be easy for some category manager to study “his category” and ascertain that sales and profitability can both be increased by simply dropping the lowest selling cookie, cracker or apple variety. The problem, of course, is the store’s interest has little to do with maximizing the profitability of any one category.

If selling organic golden raspberries doesn’t maximize space utilization for the berry category, but the consistent presence of organic golden raspberries attracts a certain consumer who buys the store’s most

expensive wines, prepared foods and upscale olive oils, a category manager just “doing his job” could easily discontinue the item and cost the store its most valuable consumers.

It turns out that assortment selection is more like three-dimensional chess than checkers, and retailers abandon these items at their peril.

**The focus on the total value of the market basket and the fact that grocery shoppers who include specialty items have more valuable baskets is a key insight of this study.**

Indeed the nature of specialty produce items, in which they start as ethnic specialties and pick up in sales as they gain broader distribution, means the changing ethnic composition of the country bodes well for expanded distribution of specialty produce. As with the growth of guava sales chronicled in the research, as specific ethnic groups spread across the country, their culinary favorites get distributed in more stores.

The broader distribution encourages trial by a broader population base and soon the transition from specialty to mainstream is well underway. That is why, say, avocado, is not on the list of specialty produce anymore — it just sells too darn well!



**JIM PREVOR'S**

PERISHABLE PUNDIT

## PMA Restructures Dues: New Plan Brings More Revenue, Boosts Costs For Larger Firms, Breaks Longstanding Link Between Retail And Grower/Shipper Dues... DOES PMA NEED MORE MONEY?

FROM JIM PREVOR'S PERISHABLE PUNDIT 07.23.2014

**T**he Produce Marketing Association (PMA), the industry's largest trade association, announced a new dues structure effective for 2015. Right now it covers U.S. and Canadian members with the expectation that a new foreign dues structure will be unveiled and made effective in 2016.

Currently, there is a relatively small spread between the dues a small company pays and what the largest might pay — the smallest produce grower or marketer pays \$1,165 a year in dues, and the largest pays \$2,585 a year in dues. Under the new structure, the top category, companies with over \$300 million in produce sales will pay \$9,330 a year in dues — or almost four times what it pays currently.

The change is being positioned as a move to make the PMA dues structure more “fair and equitable.” The big grower/shippers who serve on the PMA board voted for this change and, in this day and age, the idea that large companies such as Dole or Chiquita should pay \$9,330 a year in dues to an association is not unreasonable.

Indeed it probably won't get much push-back, because most of the larger companies in the industry already do some kind of extra sponsorships with PMA. If they want to keep their “PMA budget” flat, they will just cut back on their sponsorships to keep the dollar amount flat.

But the change in structure does raise other questions:

**1. Although nobody can object to the idea of being “fair and equitable” — and that might well mean changing the ratio between what different-sized businesses pay — that could have been accomplished by cutting the dues of smaller members.** So the purpose of this has to be seen as increasing the revenue to PMA. This may be good or it may be bad depending on what PMA will do with the money. PMA's strategic plan involves global expansion.

**2. Even many who support PMA, and believe it does important work, may question the need for PMA to raise more money.** PMA has a very successful business model. At the end of 2012 (according to the latest figures available), PMA had over \$12 million in cash and investments, plus it owned its headquarters, both land and building, free and clear. In contrast, leaving aside pre-paid membership dues and advance payments for events, etc., PMA had less than \$3 million in liabilities. Although PMA's bottom line can vary widely depending on things such as if the board decides to make a big donation to another group that year, in 2012 PMA's bottom line was a profit of \$1,840,713.

In addition, at the end of 2012, the PMA Foundation for Industry Talent had net assets of over \$3 million. Although PMA expressed a vague need for the revenue to assist in executing its strategic plan, and obviously the board of directors agreed, it is fair criticism to say that PMA has not done a good job of building a case to the general industry of why PMA needs more money.

**3. PMA's recognition that the dues range between the smallest and the largest companies was too small may be accurate, but simply raising the maximum to \$9,330 in dues really doesn't fully address the problem.** The issue is why different companies pay different percentages of sales as dues. International supplier, Univeg, had sales over \$4 billion in fiscal year 2013, and Chiquita's sales for the same period exceeded \$3 billion (and will grow substantially with the acquisition of Fyffe's). Sunkist has proudly reported its fourth consecutive billion-dollar year.

It is not for us to say how much these organizations value PMA or what dues they would be willing to pay and, of course, many of these organizations support PMA by exhibiting and sponsorships.

Still, the dues categories top out at

\$300 million. The restructuring is raising a broader question: if sales dollars are a rough approximation of what value an organization derives from membership, why make the top bracket \$300 million? The way this is structured is that per-dollar-of-sales, the largest companies will pay a lower percentage of their sales than their smaller competitors. Is this someone's idea of “fair and equitable?”

**4. This increase in dues for growers and marketers has another impact: it dramatically reduces the equity between different industry segments.** It used to be the top grower/marketer dues were \$2,585, while the dues for the largest retailers were set at the same level. However, dues for retailers and foodservice operators are not included in the new plan. It may well be that PMA calculated that retailers and foodservice operators would be unwilling to pay higher dues, and yet PMA, of course, still wants retailers and foodservice operators to participate.

At some point, the question becomes this: If a group does not perceive sufficient value in an organization to pay dues comparable to those paid by other members, in what sense is this their association?

**5. Another issue raised by the new dues structure is the fairness to the wholesale sector.** Wholesalers always felt that dollar-based dues were not right. After all, a shipper who ships five million cases of product from California and a wholesaler who sells that same five million cases in New York will have dramatically different sales. Depending on the product and price levels, it wouldn't be shocking by the time one adds in transportation and mark-up if a shipper with sales of \$50 million translates into a wholesaler with sales of \$100 million. Why an enterprise that sells five million cases in California should pay lower dues than an enterprise that sells five million cases in New York has always been unclear.

Now, however, the new dues structure





## FOCUSED ON PRODUCE AND FOOD SAFETY

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The Center for Produce Safety (CPS) maintains a singular focus as an organization dedicated solely to enhancing food safety within the produce industry. Our mission is unambiguous: we provide ready-to-use, science-based solutions to make sure our food is safe at every step, from plant to plate. We're here to provide the science that protects your business interests, wherever you are on the supply chain, as we address gaps in produce safety knowledge, inform the regulatory community and keep consumers healthy.

## THE RESEARCH

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CPS provides our industry with credible, independent, science-based research that is applicable across the produce supply chain. The goal is always to produce results — at the speed of industry — that respond to timely issues that can affect food safety, ranging from employee hygiene to wash water sanitation, use of soil amendments, composting, management of domestic animals and more.

## SUPPORT CPS

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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 become a donor, please contact Bonnie Fernandez-Fenaroli, Executive Director at (530) 757-5777 or [bfernandez@cps.ucdavis.edu](mailto:bfernandez@cps.ucdavis.edu).

The Center for Produce Safety 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 was provided by the California Department of Food and Agriculture, the University of California, Produce Marketing Association and Taylor Farms.

## CAMPAIGN FOR RESEARCH CONTRIBUTORS (as of July 7, 2014)

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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.

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The Produce Marketing Association provides all administrative support funds for CPS, \$2.9M to date.



biases against the industry sectors that purchase through wholesalers. A supermarket buying \$300 million worth of produce direct from a producer will have lower expenses than a wholesaler buying \$300 million in produce direct from a grower. Obviously the dollars are small but the inequity is there.

#### **6. PMA also has not yet changed the dues for people outside North America.**

This is being studied, and it is expected that a change will be announced in the future. Although executives at PMA are pleased that firms outside North America account for about 23 percent of the membership and about 24 percent of PMA's revenues, it is not clear this is the right metric. A very large share of that money comes in the form of booths and sponsorships at Fresh Summit, PMA's large October event. Put another way, this investment is made mostly to reach PMA's North American members in order to sell them produce and ancillary items. In other words, it is not clear at all that these funds have anything to do with PMA's global outreach.

In the old days, foreign membership was seen as less valuable as it was difficult for non-North American members to access PMA's events and services. Now, PMA has set its mind on being a global association, and it has events around the world.

**7. Indeed the nature of PMA's business model makes it unclear to what degree people feel loyalty to PMA as an association.** It might be wise to try to ascertain an answer to this question. Certainly we know many people, especially people overseas who built their entire careers around PMA. They spent 30 years in various positions with PMA boards, and coming out of Australia or South Africa would credit PMA, more than anything, with helping build their business. They built a global network of friends and business associates and owe it to PMA.

What PMA has is powerful events. This is the primary way it faces the industry. And one big benefit of PMA membership is one gets discounts for exhibiting at or attending PMA events. In fact, the discounts are so large that PMA membership has been, in effect, free for many companies that exhibit. A 10' by 20' booth at PMA's Fresh Summit event costs \$10,200, but if one is a PMA member, the booth only costs \$6,800. Under the old dues structure, the PMA membership was *de facto* free if one's company was going to buy a 10' by 20'

booth. Even under the new dues structure, with trade show booths and multiple registrations, dues in effect will still be free for most, and there will be a steep discount for the rest.

What this and similar discounts on other PMA events and services means is that PMA's membership doesn't necessarily feel deep devotion to PMA. We got some sense of this during the break down of talks on the merger between United and PMA. Board members aside, we got the sense that United members felt passionate about United and its role in representing them before government, though these same companies, which typically were also PMA members, did not feel emotionally invested in PMA.

Here is a thought-experiment that won't be tested: PMA doesn't subsidize Fresh Summit; Fresh Summit subsidizes PMA. If PMA decided it wanted to really know where it stood — and decided that each part of its budget should stand on its own — so each event charged what it needed to, and there were no discounts for being a PMA member, how many members would PMA have?

There is nothing wrong with PMA looking to shift its business model so more money, at least proportionately, comes from dues. The American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) indicates that associations of PMA's size generally get 47 percent of their revenues from dues. PMA gets only 18 percent of its revenues from dues. After this dues increase and restructuring, internal estimates are that PMA will get 20 percent of its revenues from dues. Of course, the ASAE numbers are just a snapshot, not a goal. They may just mean that other associations don't have an event as financially lucrative as Fresh Summit.

The PMA board is filled with hard-working people who only deserve praise for their tireless efforts to help PMA and the industry. We watched Tim Riley of Giumarra, PMA's current Chairman, work on this and related projects for a decade. He deserves enormous thanks from the industry for doing yeoman's work in trying to guide this process.

However, a discussion within the board is not the same thing as a discussion within the industry. Board members run in uncontested elections and do not represent anyone. They are just the people who impressed the leadership of a year or two or three ago and were thus invited to join

the board.

In recent years, both the effort to launch a mandatory assessment consumer promotion program for produce and the proposed PMA/United merger collapsed in no small measure because industry associations decided to keep everything under their hat and spring it on the industry.

That is simply not best practices in 2014. Indeed it hasn't been for a long time. One can look at the website of the American Society of Association Executives and find articles a decade old explaining how an association should proceed when considering changing its dues structure. The answer is not to develop it in secret and then spring it on the trade:

*Discuss anticipated changes to the dues structure using a variety of communication vehicles, calling for input and discussion. Conduct a town meeting to discuss the issue at an upcoming conference or via conference call. This will ensure that the association has provided every opportunity for input and discussion prior to the board taking action or the issue being put to a vote by the membership.*

This change by PMA is relatively small. Some who are hit with higher dues will grumble, especially those close to the dues cap who will feel that larger competitors are being given an edge, and wholesalers will grumble for being disadvantaged compared to their retail competition. But any drop off in membership or reduction in sponsorships will easily be compensated for by higher dues revenue. So the plan is probably a win for PMA.

But if, instead of announcing this as a *fait accompli*, PMA had published it as a proposal, did a few town halls and webinars to explain the plan, and then genuinely solicited feedback, it would have given the industry the opportunity to wrestle with and discuss important issues such as: how large a financial reserve do we want our big trade association to hold; how do we deal with insuring equity between different size industry participants; what exactly is the role of retailers within the trade's associations; how do we envision foreign firms contributing; and how do we insure equity between those who buy through the wholesale channel and those who buy from retailers.

The likely outcome would have been a better dues restructuring, with more solid support in the trade. That would have bode well for both PMA and the industry at large.

# RECIPES

## FOR MARKETING EXCELLENCE



PRODUCE BUSINESS magazine would like to congratulate the following winners of this year's awards. These 10 entrants are recognized for their outstanding creativity, comprehensive strategy and successful execution:

- ◆ California Avocado Commission
- ◆ California Giant Berry Farms
- ◆ California Giant Berry Farms, Duda Farm Fresh Foods, Grimmway Farms/Cal-Organic Farms and the National Watermelon Association
- ◆ Columbia Marketing International
- ◆ Idaho Potato Commission
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- ◆ Ocean Mist Farms
- ◆ Robinson Fresh
- ◆ Sunkist
- ◆ Wholly Guacamole

# ◆ CALIFORNIA AVOCADO COMMISSION

## California Avocado Season Foodservice Chain Promotion

**Objectives:** California Avocado Commission's (CAC) goal was to increase usage of California avocados by foodservice operators. The company also sought to obtain California avocado branding on menus and restaurant promotion support materials as well as increase brand awareness and help foodservice operators increase its sales.

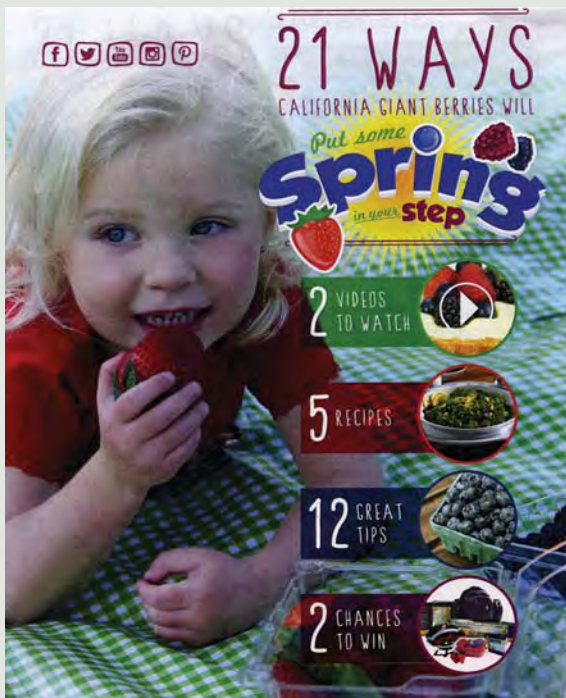
**Campaign:** CAC's campaign was customized to fit the needs of the operator. However, all outlets included purchase of fresh California avocados during the promotion period, call-outs to the brand and use of the *Hand Grown in California* logo. Most of the programs also included a point-of-purchase support material and advertising and/or promotion support.

**Results:** Through its campaign, California Avocado Commission had 24 promotions with major foodservice chains and all chains purchased California avocados. The promotions reached over 5,550 restaurant locations and all with the *Hand Grown in California* logo on materials. All goals were met with a 45 percent usage increase of California avocados at participating chains.



# ◆ CALIFORNIA GIANT BERRY FARMS

## “21 Ways to Put Some Spring in Your Step”



**Objectives:** The campaign for California Giant Berry Farms was designed to engage the consumer as the spring season evolved. The company's goal was to build brand loyalty through free offers and a spring-themed sweepstakes in efforts to better understand the company's consumer base and serve them in the future.

**Campaign:** The “Spring in Your Step” campaign consisted of two key components. The first component was a free expansive online booklet showing consumers the “21 Ways to Put Some Spring in Your Step” with links to educational videos, recipes, cooking tips and two chances to win a prize. The second component was the sweepstakes consumers were encouraged to enter. Winners of the sweepstake received a “Spring-Inspired Prize Pack,” which included family-style backyard games and picnic items.

**Results:** Cal Giant received around 6,000 entries for the sweepstakes and 2,500 instant downloads of the free online booklet. Most importantly, of those 2,500 downloads, over 2,300 opted in as new contacts into California Giant's consumer database. Total website traffic also increased by over 80 percent during the 30-day period.



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## ◆ CALIFORNIA GIANT BERRY FARMS, DUDA FARM FRESH FOODS, GRIMMWAY FARMS/CAL-ORGANIC & NATIONAL WATERMELON ASSOCIATION

### Cloudy 2 With a Chance of Meatballs: Revenge of the Leftovers

**Objectives:** California Giant Berry Farms, Duda Farm Fresh Foods, Grimmway Farms/Cal-Organic and the National Watermelon Association partnered together in a co-promotional effort that connected leading growers of fresh produce, a national entertainment brand, and a nonprofit organization around a relevant cause-marketing message. The main goal was to raise awareness about the need for fresh produce in local food banks across the U.S. that operate as part of Feeding America, one of the nation's largest hunger relief organizations.

**Campaign:** With the guidance of Soquel, CA-based marketing agency McDill Associates, the teams built a campaign model from scratch. The public relations effort included highlights such as branding produce packaging, web exposure via social media and microsites, food truck sales, and a giveaway. Each company of the program was responsible for different facets of the promotions. Some developed promotional presents with retailers through produce, supported National Hunger Action Month, and promoted Sony Entertainment's family film, *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs 2*.

**Results:** Together, the organizations, Sony Entertainment and Feeding America successfully rolled out a large-scale, integrated campaign. Impressions reached millions of consumers, and thousands of pounds of produce were delivered via branded semi-trucks to food banks in five cities across the country in a single day. The campaign ranked as one of the Top 5 Feeding America initiatives of the year.



## ◆ COLUMBIA MARKETING INTERNATIONAL (CMI)

### Sweet Gourmet Pears



**Objectives:** CMI's Sweet Gourmet Pears program was designed to bring ordinary pears into the spotlight as a gourmet food item, and to help consumers learn tips and tricks to pick the perfect pear.

**Campaign:** CMI developed the brand, Sweet Gourmet Pears, and created a comprehensive program, which included a suite of high graphic components such as a striking two-box shipper, complementary grab-n-go pouch bags, and other colorful supporting point-of-sale materials. A large part of CMI's campaign focused on educating consumers about pear ripening. Special graphics were developed to teach consumers about pear ripening. Recipes were also provided on pouch bags to encourage consumers to cook with pears.

**Results:** In general, pear sales increased significantly throughout the promotion period. Sweet Gourmet Pears' pouch bags drove 98 percent of the category sales gain. On social media, Facebook and Pinterest users shared pear recipes and experimented with cooking. Overall, consumers became more educated about pears.

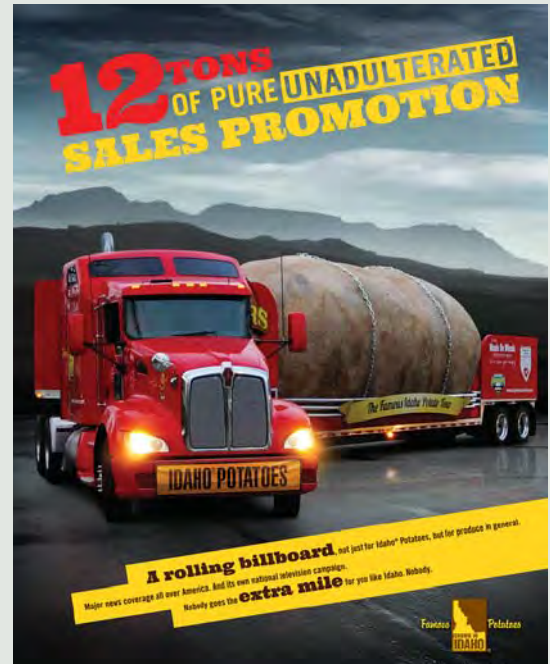
# ◆ IDAHO POTATO COMMISSION

## Big Idaho Potato Truck

**Objectives:** The “Big Idaho Potato Truck” was an integrated retail trade marketing campaign to reinforce and grow the reputation of Idaho potatoes as America’s highest quality, No. 1 selling potato. Also, it aimed to increase retailer support for Idaho potatoes, thus driving volume and growing the potato business throughout the country.

**Campaign:** The campaign leveraged the well-known Big Idaho Potato Truck that has been touring the country each spring and summer raising customer awareness. The campaign ran a 30-second TV commercial nationwide along with nine different full-page print advertisements appearing in retail trade publications. Online banner ads were also used to spread awareness. Toy model replicas of the Big Idaho Potato Truck were handed out at trade shows and other events to promote the unique campaign.

**Results:** A survey in early 2014 (spearheaded by Kelton, a global insights and strategy firm with offices in Los Angeles, New York City and London), showed that 97 percent of Americans eat potatoes, 72 percent would be inclined to eat Idaho potatoes over potatoes from other states. Nine in 10 Americans associate potatoes with Idaho more than any other state in the nation. The campaign received widespread recognition from industry organizations and media such as the *TODAY Show*, CNBC and The Weather Channel. Mention of the truck’s charity beneficiary, Meals on Wheels, was included in about 95 percent of all media coverage.



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# ◆ NATIONAL MANGO BOARD

## Mangover Celebrations, Consumer Marketing Promotion

**Objectives:** The National Mango Board's Mangover campaign aimed to motivate consumers to use mangos as a way to inspire consumers in their daily lives from wardrobe to home decor. The Mangover initiative approached lifestyle inventiveness by highlighting creative ways to enhance meals throughout the day and seasons.

**Campaign:** To help with its Mangover campaign, the National Mango Board (NMB) partnered with celebrity spokesperson Clinton Kelly (co-host of ABC's lifestyle TV series, *The Chew*). Kelly motivated consumers to refresh their dishes and upgrade seasonal favorites with mangos. In addition to national broadcast and online coverage, the NMB also integrated the Mangover campaign into all web and social elements including Facebook, Pinterest, YouTube and Instagram. The NMB took an interactive approach with a simple idea by compiling a cookbook with the Board's recipes in addition to blogger recipes that featured mangos.

**Results:** The NMB saw a record-setting year with about 853,513,262 total impressions made during the June 1, 2013 through June 1, 2014 timeframe. The number of social reach impressions from mango mentions exceeded the Board's goal by more than 34,000,000. There was a 154 percent increase in total coverage volume across stories placed in print, broadcast and online channels.



# ◆ OCEAN MIST FARMS

## Branding the Heirloom Artichoke: Celebrating 90 Years in Business



The company also rebuilt its website from the ground up to improve the users' experience. Ocean Mist was honored for its service and support of the Castroville community at the annual Castroville Artichoke Festival held at the Monterey County Fairgrounds.

**Results:** The results of the rebranding efforts were measured in sales, retail engagement, media, impressions and direct consumer engagement via the Artichoke Club and social media channels.

**Objectives:** Ocean Mist Farms wanted to strengthen the brand identity for its "green globe" variety artichoke. In conjunction with the company's 90th anniversary celebration, the marketing effort to establish a stronger name-sake for the classic artichoke was established. Green globes were now going to be referred to as "Heirloom" due to its genetics as a perennial plant and Ocean Mist's roots as far back as the 1920s.

**Campaign:** There was a variety of components to Ocean Mist's campaign. To kick off the peak of Heirloom season, celebrity chef Curtis Stone toured the fields in Castroville, CA, and experienced firsthand the harvesting of artichokes. To build brand awareness with consumers and retailers, all Heirloom artichokes were branded with a red PLU/UPC sticker to help consumers find the variety in stores. Additional POS materials were made available for retailers to order on Oceanmist.com. During the five-week peak harvest season, the company hosted display contests, radio ads, and a geo-marketing program called Arti-Alerts. These email messages were distributed to around 40,000 members of its exclusive Artichoke Club and promoted when local retailers had Heirloom artichokes on sale. Starting March 1, Ocean Mist also gave away a free case of fresh Heirloom artichokes every day as part of its online "90 Days of Artichoke Giveaways."



# ◆ ROBINSON FRESH

## Robinson Fresh Rebrand Campaign

**Objectives:** C.H. Robinson aimed to clarify for current and future customers what the company's produce division is and the products and services it offers. An essential part of this goal was to differentiate the fresh product business from the third-party logistics and transportation services that C.H. Robinson is best known for. The marketing team had to create opportunities to explain how the produce division has evolved to better meet customers' needs. The company was also working to consolidate business brands (such as Timco Worldwide, Rosemont Farms, Foodsource, and C.H. Robinson's sourcing service line) while maintaining a unified message and executing complex solutions.

**Campaign:** To raise general awareness of its products and services, C.H. Robinson distributed press releases to a core sourcing media list and secured advertising placement in the top produce and sourcing industry publications. C.H. Robinson also promoted its website and social media channels in promotional e-blasts to target subscribers. New branding collateral was created and made available online. The company participated as an exhibitor and as a sponsor at The London Produce Show and Conference as well as the United Fresh conference.

**Results:** The press release announcing the launch of Robinson Fresh made 57,121 total headline impressions, 357 photos downloads, and drove 237 clicks to the Robinson Fresh website. The official website, [www.robinsonfresh.com](http://www.robinsonfresh.com), had 11,861 total page views from May 14 to June 5 of this year — a 211 percent increase from 2013. Finally, Robinson Fresh received overwhelmingly positive feedback from long-time customers and friends in the industry. The social media impressions were also remarkable with 94 social media mentions reaching a potential audience of 114,143 people.



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## ◆ SUNKIST

### S'alternative Consumer Communications Program

**Objectives:** Sunkist's overall goal was to extend exposure and reach of its S'alternative Health Initiative amongst consumers, and position Sunkist lemons as a naturally healthy and flavorful alternative to salt. The team also set out to secure one national media story placement for Sunkist as well as increase connectivity with consumers on Facebook through a S'alternative Sweepstakes (with a goal to exceed 20,00 new entries). Lastly, Sunkist sought to build existing and new relationships with supermarket dietitians who can help spread the S'alternative message.

**Campaign:** The S'alternative campaign focused on promoting lemons as an "all-natural way to flavor food, boost potassium intake, and cut down on sodium." Sunkist partnered with Costa Mesa, CA-based Integrated Marketing-Works (IMW) to launch an integrated media campaign, which spanned a sweepstakes, all social media outlets, a consumer newsletter, print coverage as well as supermarket dietician outreach. The research and consumer education in all these formats was extensive and well executed to each audience.

**Results:** A special segment featuring S'alternative tips and recipes with Sunkist's Chef Jill Davie aired on the Emmy-nominated *The Better Show* (a nationally syndicated lifestyle TV program) and resulted in nearly 2 million impressions. More than 35,000 consumers entered the sweepstakes with 25 third place winners receiving a \$5 Sunkist citrus coupon, 10 second place winners receiving \$100 Amex gift cards, and a grand prize winner receiving a \$1,000 Amex gift card. Eight of the 24 target supermarket dietitians (from retailers such as Price Chopper, Festival Foods, ShopRite, Meijer) included the S'alternative message in their consumer outreach efforts.



## ◆ WHOLLY GUACAMOLE

### OMGuac



**Objectives:** The challenge for Wholly Guacamole was to leverage OMGuac creative assets to increase market share through household penetration and frequency in a growing category. The primary goal was simply to drive traffic to the landing page and coupon downloads during January's typical "New Year, new you" consumer diet mindset.

**Campaign:** For its strategy, Wholly Guacamole created a target digital media strategy with display media. The company utilized existing best performing targeting from Q3 OMGuac campaign and enhanced it with additional relevant data. Wholly Guacamole also updated creative to highlight the seasonality of healthier living as well as to focus on breakfast, lunch and snacks.

**Results:** Wholly Guacamole made 391,000 total campaign impressions through digital media and its creative efforts to capture audiences.



Rastelli's offers an array of locally grown produce as well as a Vegetable Butcher counter where guests can get their favorite items prepped for their specific needs.

# Rastelli Market Fresh

Poised for success, the newest independent retail addition to New Jersey resonates with down-to-earth culture. **BY MIRA SLOTT**

**I**t's a hot July evening, and guests await the much-anticipated grand opening and celebratory ribbon cutting of Rastelli Market Fresh, a distinctive, specialty retailer, bent on penetrating a competitive landscape in Marlton, NJ, and beyond. The food-savvy, historic farm community in Marlton is situated 25 minutes outside Philadelphia, and is already flanked by a Wegmans, a Whole Foods Market, and roadside farm stands swapping seasonal produce from April through October.

Ed Blade, the produce manager, and Peter Gallagher, produce specialist, prepare for the throng of enthusiastic shoppers as they tweak the old-world style produce department — home spun with a chopped-to-order vegetable butcher station, which is emblematic of the unique, store-wide concept — flush with produce in the 35,000 square-foot location.

Rastelli Market Fresh amplifies the idea of farm-to-table. The Rastelli family takes ownership — both figuratively and literally — of locally grown, sustainably raised and harvested, freshly made and delivered, all-natural products across departments from meat, to seafood, to produce, to its solely made-to-order cuisines, according to Tony Rastelli, co-founder and president of Rastelli Global.

Most recently, Tony started his own 30-acre farm nearby, adding an unlikely face to the stories of smaller growers that will grace the shelves of Rastelli Market Fresh. "I always had a passion to have a farm," he reminisces about his childhood in Bradford, PA, noting that he comes home from work and farms until 11 p.m. as his way of relaxing.

"While growers may differ on the job's relaxation factor, one thing is certain: the Rastelli family's commitment to support farmers in their own backyard and other community vendors whenever possible,"

explains Ray Rastelli, co-founder and president of Rastelli Foods Group. Ray and Tony are co-owners of Rastelli Market Fresh, and encourage a welcoming, down-to-earth culture, which resonates on the retail floor.

Ray and Tony don't profess to be produce experts, but they are experts in getting fresh products to consumers. Their principles are quality, safety and integrity. They consult top-notch specialists to elevate every department at the operational and consumer levels.

"We have our guy at the Philadelphia Wholesale Market every day



with his eyes on everything, giving us field reports,” says Blade. “We were advertizing Jersey peaches, and the quality wasn’t there. We had a gap to fill and decided to go into a South Carolina peach that had much better eating quality and sugar content. If the product is not eating right, we won’t carry it.

“Because we have the Philly Market, we are able to make decisions on the fly,” adds Blade. “Farmers call us at times and say, ‘due to the heavy rain, you may not want this product.’ It happened with local blueberries. Because they were likely to break down really fast, we decided to go with Michigan farmers, and now we’re back to Jersey blueberries.”

### From Meat To Produce

In the mid-70s, the Rastelli family name established roots in the area when it opened the iconic Rastelli’s Meat Stop, which still operates in Deptford, NJ. Eventually they went on to build a vast, vertically integrated, sustainable meat processing and distribution business that translated into other product lines and reinforced featuring highly trained experts in every department from the cheese monger to the coffee barista, according to Chris Dougherty, store manager of Rastelli Market Fresh.

For example, Rastelli’s domestically raised, grass-fed Black Angus cattle are nurtured in a Midwest facility designed by livestock activist Temple Grandin. Rastelli branded dry-aged beef is preserved and displayed in a glass encasement in-store using a high-tech curing process that utilizes upscale, imported Himalayan salts, according to Chris Mentzer, operations manager. Its sustainable, wild-caught seafood program (with extensive certifications), involves partnerships around the world — including the Black Tiger Seafood facility in Egg Harbor Township, NJ, which allows easy access to docks ensuring the freshest fish possible.

“We chose to move away from self-service — no salad bars or hot bars. Our signature concept is going to be all freshly made-to-order cuisines in open kitchens, where you can see chefs chopping, prepping, and sautéing,” says Howard Ellis, culinary operations manager. Customers will be able to interact with some 25 expert chefs churning out fresh pasta, brick oven pizzas, and customized sushi laden with fruits and vegetables in seasonally inspired recipes. In addition, there is a “Chopped and Tossed” salad station as well as a juicing bar. “During peak season, our goal is to use all the best-available product from local vendors,” says Ellis.



Modest, non-aggressive signage provides sophisticated product information for customers that crave it, yet the displays blend seamlessly into the underplayed décor. You won’t be inundated with flashy merchandising or large signage touting “organic,” “fair trade,” or “local.”

### A Different Concept

As you enter the store, rustic wooden displays of local peaches are front-and-center, and husked corn is stacked tightly in horizontal rows. Locally grown tomatoes are merchandised with fresh basil bunches — all loosely displayed, yet artfully orchestrated. The department is noticeably void of bagged items, with the exception of some convenience packaged salads, and ever-changing, in-house-cut fruit and vegetable selections to go.

Refrigerated shelves mist an array of loose leafy greens and vegetables, some of which are organic and others are local with the name of the farm on the label. The section is smartly lined up and color-blocked with nothing left to chance. Unusually sophisticated and detailed item description dangles hang below different vegetable varieties, educating consumers on the nuances of how to select, store and prepare items, as well as suggested creative uses. For two like items, such as parsley and Italian parsley, adjacent signs compare and contrast the important differences.

Perhaps most notable is the produce department’s sense of confidence that product will live up to the ideal description on the sign. For instance, Blade couldn’t very well encourage customers to select broccoli Rabe/Rapini “with dark green stalks, fresh looking leaves, and sturdy stems,” if the Broccoli Rabe was wilted or off-color.

There are no sprawling apple displays selling countless varieties; just a few carefully selected SKUs of the best eating apples

in season. “We do not carry shiny red delicious apples stored for 10 months. We won’t have the most comprehensive offering, but if we have four varieties, you’ll enjoy all of them. This store is a different concept from other supermarket chains in the area. We carry fewer SKUs, less varieties, and just the freshest, best quality. As a customer, you won’t need to examine every melon.

“If it’s not locally available, we’ll offer the best imported alternative. Rounding out supply involves close partnerships and regular visits to Philadelphia Wholesale Produce Market with daily deliveries and fast turnaround to get the freshest items coming in,” says Blade. He adds that Tony Rastelli travels around the world developing global connections as well. “Bottom line, if it doesn’t eat well, we won’t put it in the store,” says Blade. “We want to give customers value, but we’re not out to take over Acme’s or ShopRite’s business, and that’s a premise for every department. If you come here for the 99-cents-a-pound chicken, you will be disappointed, but you’ll always find the best quality,” he says.

The township services 90,000 people during the work day, leaving an opening for an innovative retailer, according to the supportive Mayor Randy Brown, who was on site for the private Rastelli Market Fresh ribbon cutting. The Rastelli extended family gathered to celebrate its long-awaited store opening with a close-knit community of employee specialists, friends and business partners, including local police, fire fighters, and enthusiastic neighborhood shoppers.

The weeks ahead will find a flood of customers descending on the new Rastelli Market Fresh. Tony and Ray Rastelli, along with their business partners, already plan to extend market reach with several more stores, looking to build on its initial success.

pb



(L-R) PHOTOS COURTESY OF PEAR BUREAU NORTHWEST AND DEAN BARNES



Marketers suggest using seasonal produce to set the ambiance of the store's fall promotions.

# Focus On Fall Commodities

Industry players analyze a compilation of seasonal favorites to show how retailers can increase sales. **BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD**

**Y**ou can take seasonality out of the produce department with 52-week supply, but you can't take the memory of seasonality out of consumers' minds. It's the traditions of fall holidays and events like Back-to-School, Labor Day, Halloween and Thanksgiving that dictate shoppers' buying habits. That's what makes promoting peak-of-the-season produce around these times so profitable. Here are ideas for merchandising a compilation of the top fruits and vegetables sold September through November.

**APPLES.** An apple for a teacher is a classic scenario for back-to-school. This fall, experts say harvests in New York and Michigan are expected up to a month later than usual; Washington anticipates an early harvest with good volume of Western fruit in supply pipelines by August 15.

"We suggest a two-tier bulk apple program with 88s and lunchbox-size 130s in an adjacent bulk or satellite freestanding display near the school supplies with signage like 'Great for School Lunches,'" explains Steve Williams, manager of business development for the Raleigh, NC-headquartered L&M Companies Inc. "Promote the smaller apples in multiples according to market pricing, such as three for

99 cents. Kids traditionally like Red Delicious, Gala, Fuji and Granny Smith."

Appeal to parents who create brown-bagged lunches as well as their kids by promoting the Irwindale, CA-based Ready Pac Foods' new Bistro Bowl Kale Apple Veggie Chopped Salad and Bistro Gourmet Baby Kale Apple Harvest.

"Salads stay fresh for days, so they're ideal for pantry loading, making it easy to plan lunches for the entire week," says Tristan Simpson, vice president of corporate communication.

By mid-September, there's a good section of apple varieties available — making it a ripe

time for a full-blown apple ad.

"We suggest a minimum of two ads per month on apples during the months of September, October and November with 4 to 5 varieties in each ad giving shoppers plenty of choice," recommends Roger Pepperl, marketing director for Stemilt Growers, Inc., in Wenatchee, WA.

Each October, 70 independent grocers that are part of Northwest Grocers, in Tukwila, WA, and operate under banners such as Thriftway, Payless Foods, and Red Apple Markets and IGA Market Fresh, hold an Apple Fest promotion.

"We spotlight a new season with all varieties, build big displays, hang banners, put



PHOTOS FROM C.H. ROBINSON



PHOTO COURTESY OF CRANBERRY NETWORK



PHOTOGRAPH BY DEAN BARNES



PHOTOGRAPH BY DEAN BARNES

apples on ad, and the produce staff wears Apple Fest buttons. It's really big," explains Jason Kazmirski, director of produce, floral and merchandising of Northwest Grocers.

This year, Mott's-brand fresh apples distributed by Eden Prairie, MN-headquartered Robinson Fresh (the global produce business brand of C.H. Robinson Worldwide), will be available in Halloween-themed bags during the October holiday.

"Merchandise Mott's bagged apples near caramel and popsicle sticks for homemade caramel apples," advises Gina Garven, category insights manager.

Concord Foods, in Brockton, MA, offers a Halloween-themed shipper that can be placed adjacent to the apple table and holds the company's products such as Caramel Apple Wrap, Candy Apple Kits and Apple Crisp Mix.

For Thanksgiving, "shoppers are looking for apples to eat and to use for display, so go for big bulk displays of fancy apples. Also, Golden's and Granny's get some additional movement at this time for pie-making," says Stemilt's Pepperl.

**CRANBERRIES.** Thanksgiving is the biggest cranberry holiday of the year, but retailers shouldn't wait until the November holiday to start marketing this tart red fruit.

"New varieties will become available in the next one to two years that will begin harvest a week earlier than normal," explains Bob Wilson, owner and managing member of The Cranberry Network, in Wisconsin Rapids, WI. "This year, we'll start shipping cranberries by September 21 in 12-ounce bags, 3-pound club packs, and in a new 2-pound pack. Data shows that 55 to 60 percent of the register ring of cranberries happens between the last week of October and the beginning of November."

Joe Watson, director of produce for Rouses Supermarkets, a 37-store chain headquartered in Thibodaux, LA, doesn't wait until Thanksgiving to sell cranberries.

"We used to sell one to two cases of cranberries. Now, from October through December, some of our stores will sell up to a pallet in an eight- to 10-week period. People are learning how to use cranberries and

hearing the positive media about their health benefits," says Watson. "We also change our display tactics. We used to put the cranberries next to the celery since celery is a big seller for Thanksgiving, plus it made a nice color break. Now, we merchandise cranberries in with the berries."

Industry professionals advise promoting fresh cranberries at least once during October. This doesn't need to be a deep discount. Fifty-cents off the purchase of a 12-ounce bag can help to drive incremental sales.

"In November, the turns are much higher," says Scott Simmons, senior manager for global produce and commodity at Lakeville-Middleboro, MA-based Ocean Spray Cranberries International, Inc. "Fresh cranberries are very durable and can be displayed outside of refrigeration at this time. Large displays will create impulse buys. In addition, merchandising cranberries near other Thanksgiving staples like sweet potatoes, squash, asparagus and carrots will also encourage purchases."

This year, Concord Foods is teaming up with Ocean Spray Cranberries to support sales of Cranberry Bread Mix and Cranberries during the 2014 holidays.

"We are offering a themed shipper display, recipe cards and on-pack instantly redeemable coupons for \$1 off fresh cranberries," says Concord Foods' marketing manager, Samantha McCaul. "Retailers should order displays of the Cranberry Bread Mix and place them as close as possible to the fresh cranberries."

**GRAPES.** Back-to-school is synonymous with grapes at Rouses Supermarkets. "Grapes are a high velocity item for us during this holiday because Moms and kids both love them. We sell grapes multiple ways: clamshell, bi- or tri-color clamshells, tissue wrapped and in the new stand-up bags," Watson says.

Last fall, Robinson Fresh and Associated Food Stores, a retail cooperative based in Salt Lake City, UT, which serves over 400 independent grocers, partnered to help drive produce sales by challenging retailers to create back-to-school-themed displays featuring

Welch's-brand fresh grapes.

"Around 50 Associated Food Stores retail members participated in the promotion during which retailers were given a promotional price for a three week period," says Drew Schwartzhoff, director of marketing, products and services at Robinson Fresh.

"The displays not only increased the winning store's category sales by 63 percent, but also successfully drove store level excitement."

Robinson Fresh will offer Welch's-brand fresh grapes as well as Mott's-brand fresh apples in back-to-school-themed bags for a limited time throughout the fall season.

Halloween is a huge grape holiday too. Sunlight International Sales, Inc., in McFarland, CA, offers its seasonal, point-of-sale Harvest Hobgoblin marketing program.

"The eye-catching program combines high-end-graphic display pieces and premium table grapes to create a compelling impulse sell," says Nick Dulcich, co-owner and president. "We want the grapes to scream: 'We are healthier than candy!'"

Thanks to current planting, cultural and repacking practices on the part of the California grape industry, the fall right up through Thanksgiving, is the biggest single-selling season for grapes.

"The mind-boggling assortment of 20 to 30 varieties of grapes makes the fall a great time for grape-a-rama promotions," says John Pandol, vice president of special projects for Pandol Brothers, Inc., in Delano, CA. "The popularity of pouch bags with barcodes makes it possible to put more than one variety of green, red and black grapes on sale and to get the correct ring."

**KIWI.** The California kiwi harvest kicks off late-September to early-October, making Halloween potentially the first holiday of the fall to promote this goblin-green fruit.

"Some years we have great volume and pricing for Halloween, and other years the harvest is late, and we're pushing it to pick, pack and ship by late October," says Jason Bushong, the Wenatchee, WA-based division manager for The Giumarra Companies, head-



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## “Thanksgiving placement in store is huge. We suggest merchandising clamshells of kiwi in with the berry display.”

— Jason Bushong, , *The Giumarra Companies*

quartered in Los Angeles, CA. “However, Thanksgiving placement in store is huge. We suggest merchandising clamshells of kiwi in with the berry display.”

Bushong says the company is looking at packing some kiwi in 1-pound, pouch-style bags with handles that provide nutrition information and recipe links.

“Promote kiwi by the pound rather than the each to make the fruit look like a value compared to many of the other fruits in the department priced this way,” Bushong adds.

**PEARS.** The seasonal excitement of new crop makes pears ripe for promotion from Back-to-School through Thanksgiving and beyond.

“We expect a nice crop after last year’s record size,” explains Cristie Mather, director of communications for the Pear Bureau Northwest, based in Milwaukie, OR. “Promotional volumes start in early to mid-August, and from October to March we have all 10 varieties available. This is a good time to do taste demos, especially for some of the lesser known varieties. Sales can increase 300 percent with a demo and remain increased for weeks afterward.”

It’s wise for retailers to sync pear ads with fall holidays. “Run a bulk pear ad with a liner for our bagged Lil Snappers as a kid’s item for Back-to-School,” says Stemilt’s Pepperl. “Varieties such as Bartlett and Red pears as well as



PHOTOGRAPH FROM PEAR BUREAU NORTHWEST

Gala apples are available by the first of September. We’ll also offer Bosc and Anjou pears in the Lil Snappers line, and these will be available in September. We have full-color graphic pop-up display units and cartons to merchandise the Lil Snappers in-store.”

The Pear Bureau Northwest’s regional marketing managers assist retailers to create customized promotions such as display contests for Halloween.



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## THE PULSE OF CALIFORNIA TABLE GRAPES

BY BOB JOHNSON

California table grapes are so renowned and inviting that, when well displayed, they practically sell themselves.

“Keep the display fresh, do not pile them on top of each other, and sample and promote often,” advises says Jon Zaninovich, president of Jasmine Vineyards, Delano, CA.

Some retailers value distinctive varieties, but the three colors reign supreme in the category. “You need to have three varieties: a red, a green, and a black,” says Anthony Spinelli, sales representative at Anthony Vineyards, Bakersfield, CA. “Reds are about 60 percent of the table grapes, greens are about 30 percent, and black are about 10 percent.”

The one specialty item that has captured a significant and growing public is organic table grapes. “The organic category is outstanding. The growth is unbelievable, and demand is exceeding supply,” says Spinelli.

This year the question with table grapes, as with all things in California produce, is how the drought will affect supply. “The drought will affect specific suppliers with specific lots,” says John Pandol, director of special projects at Pandol Bros., Delano, CA. “We saw vineyards removed in the spring. There will be less volume than many people claim; we’re seeing slightly lower yields.”

California table grapes are irrigated with a combination of state and federal water sent from Northern California to the Central valley in aqueducts, local water from smaller reservoirs, and private wells.

Ask your supplier about availability, because some growers have enough local water for this year, while others have been devastated by the shut down of the state and federal spigots.

“The drought is going to affect some growers but not others, it’s still an

display skirting and recipe pads to create eye-catching displays. Cross-merchandise caramel dip too,” suggests Mather.

Most pear promotions during Thanks-

giving have a culinary emphasis. “This is the time for pear-o-rama promotions to encourage shoppers to try different varieties. Pear-o-rama features can produce up to a 20

unknown. We should be able to get through this year fairly easily with district and well water,” says Spinelli. “If we don’t get wet weather this winter it’s going to be worse next year. We need multiple years of wet weather to fill the reservoirs and the underground water.”

Large shippers source the impressive harvest from vineyards extending as far south as the desert area of Riverside County east of Los Angeles, up north through the Central Valley, which keeps product available in promotable volume through the end of the year when the last of the grapes come out of cold storage.

“The California grape deal is 117 million boxes, so we have promotable volume from July through September. There’s always promotable volume,” says Spinelli.

Late in the year, California table grapes face competition, or enjoy complementary supplies, from Southern Hemisphere vineyards with harvests that are growing more abundant and earlier.

“Peru has the capacity to deliver to the U.S. market around Thanksgiving,” says Pandol. “They can, but will they? Chile produces in December, but the question is whether they will take on California or ship that product to other markets.”

Some consumers would prefer the domestic product during this overlap period at the end of the year.

“I think consumers would rather buy domestic grapes. I buy American, and I think it matters to the consumer,” says Zaninovich.

Some consumers may be drawn to displays of American or California grapes, but most just want quality regardless of origin.

“My observation, after looking at it for 20 years, is there is an activist element that cares whether produce is from the U.S., but most consumers don’t,” says Pandol.

A few supermarkets, or maybe more,

have found that specific varieties can add flavor to the standard tri-colored display.

“Some retailers will also add a specialty grape like Concord or Champagne,” says Spinelli.

There is no consensus on whether the variety of grapes matters.

“There is a big question whether we’re going to a variety-driven model,” says Pandol. “There are a few retailers who have anointed some varieties and excluded others. We even find some people requiring a particular variety, while others are excluding that same variety.”

It may be worth taking a deep breath or two as the table grape industry sorts out the possibilities.

“New varieties are being introduced faster than the industry can properly evaluate them, from both production and market potential considerations,” says Pandol. “A variety may exhibit better size but be variable in true seedlessness, or may exhibit good flavor but poor shelf life. It is unfortunate that some varieties get a black eye because a grower tried the wrong thing that season. We often ‘Perlette’ new varieties, that is, take a potentially wonder variety, like Perlette, grow it or pick it wrong and destroy the reputation.”

In the meantime, differences among grape varieties generally matter more in the vineyard than the kitchen.

“There are new varieties because you get bigger yields and they are cheaper to grow. I want a variety that is easier and cheaper to get into the box,” says Zaninovich. “You can compare Thompson seedless and Flame seedless. A Thompson seedless is touched five or six times before it goes into the box. You hand-thin the vines and tip them, or cut off the tendrils from every bunch. If you have to touch every bunch five times, it’s expensive. If I can send a crew in one or two times, it’s a lot less expensive.” **pb**

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percent category lift. Cross-merchandise pears by bagged salads, cheeses and wine. Offer recipes at point-of-sale or put recipes in ad circulars,” recommends Stemilt’s Pepperl.

**PEPPERS.** Labor Day is the last grilling holiday of the year in many parts of the nation.

Bins of melons, corn on the cob, the largest-size russet potatoes are great for grilling displays. “Peppers, such as traditional bells as well as sweet mini peppers, are also great for grilling whole,” says L&M’s Williams. He also

says stuffed peppers or peppers chopped in salads make great recipes for Labor Day ads.

Bell peppers are available year-round; however, “there is broad distribution and good volumes out of coastal California in September and October, Coachella in October and November, and Baja California from October to December,” says Mike Aiton, director of marketing for Coachella, CA-headquartered, Prime Time International. “Sometimes in the fall, we are shipping out of



PHOTOGRAPH BY DEAN BARNES

Side Note

## SWEETEN FALL SALES OF SWEET POTATOES

BY CAROL BAREUTHER, RD

**T**hanksgiving remains the largest single-selling holiday of the year for sweet potatoes. Yet, year-round supply means that this November holiday now represents only 25 percent of annual sales, according to industry sources. Plus, greater availability means there are more opportunities to promote these spuds — especially in the fall.

“Labor Day is the great holiday to promote sweet potatoes on the grill,” says George Wooten, owner and president of Wayne E. Bailey Produce Co., in Chadbourne, NC. “New crop comes in strong for October and November, but we usually have enough from the prior year to have available for Labor Day and into September.”

Large sweet potato displays are the rule during November at the 70 independent grocers that are part of Northwest Grocers, in Tukwila, WA, and operate under banners such as Thriftway, Payless Foods, and Red Apple Markets and IGA Market Fresh.

“Displays include bulk and bagged, organic and conventional, and microwaveable sweet potatoes,” explains Jason Kazmirski, director of produce, floral and merchandising of Northwest Grocers.

Varietals are seeing double digit growth as the overall interest in sweet potatoes grows. “We’re seeing many retailers now carry three different varieties, whereas before they typically just offered one,” says Mac Johnson, chief executive officer of Category Partners, LLC, in Aurora, CO, marketing partner for Idaho Falls, ID-based Wada Farms Potatoes Inc., the exclusive seller of Wada Farms and Dole branded sweet potatoes in North America.

Orange-fleshed sweet potatoes still

form the base of the category, especially at Thanksgiving time where shoppers are keen to follow traditions.

“White, red and purple sweet potatoes are lower in volume but growing as many customers cook more in the fall — when people like to experiment with something new during the holidays,” tells Chris Wada director of marketing for Idaho Falls, ID-based Wada Farms Potatoes.

Sales of Stokes Purple sweet potatoes were so robust last fall that Frieda’s Inc., in Los Alamitos, CA, ran out by the beginning of January.

“The crop harvests in northern California in late August (or early September), and we’ll be stepping up production,” says Karen Caplan, president and chief executive officer. “The mouth feel and flavor is different from a traditional sweet potato. We suggest having the product on display with informational signage.”

White sweet potatoes are also gaining a place on the shelf. “We’re seeing more interest in these each year,” says Autumn Campbell, in sales at the Wynne, AR-based Matthews Ridgeway Farms. “They are sweeter and starchier than orange sweet potatoes, but can be used in the same recipes.”

Baby sweet potatoes, available from September to mid-February, have piqued consumer interest. “They are the size of fingerlings and are a good convenience item because cooking time is short,” says Robert Schueller, director of public relations for Melissa’s/World Variety Produce, in Los Angeles, CA.

Suppliers offer creative display pieces to showcase this bounty to shoppers in the run-up to Thanksgiving. For example, Wada Farms offers a shipper display that

can hold up to four different products such as bulk, bagged and microwave singles in yellow flesh and bulk in white-fleshed sweet potatoes. The company also offers a half-bin display that holds 3-pound bagged sweet potatoes and 5-pound bagged russet potatoes.

Cross-merchandise sweet potatoes with other ingredients to increase basket ring. “In addition to a sweet potato casserole with marshmallows, nuts and brown sugar, sweet potatoes can be baked, roasted, mashed, fried. Offering recipes ideas will expand the number of eating occasions,” says Category Partner’s Johnson.

Fresh washed, peeled and cut/cubed and ready-to-use Sweet Potato Crinkle Cut fries and Cubes, from Mann Packing Co., Inc., in Salinas, CA, will be on promotion at select retailers nationwide throughout the fall season. The need to refrigerate these products offers the perfect opportunity for Thanksgiving cross-promotion.

“Create a seasonal destination with other holiday veggie favorites and popular dish ingredients — like green & French beans, Brussels sprouts, butternut squash, cranberries, carrots, fried onions, Craisins, currants, nuts and figs,” recommends Lori Bigras, Mann’s marketing manager.

Finally, as for promotion, some retailers use sweet potatoes as a loss leader by selling them for as little as 29-cents-per-pound in the run up to Thanksgiving.

“This isn’t necessary because many shoppers will already plan to buy sweet potatoes at this time of year. However, it’s still important to advertise sweet potatoes in the circular as a reminder,” says Category Partner’s Johnson.

pb



PHOTOGRAPH BY DEAN BARNES

all three locations at once.”

Prime Time doubled its fall acreage of sweet mini peppers this fall to meet demand. In addition, while green bells are still the staple, yellow, orange and red bell peppers, which are sweeter and milder in flavor, are quickly gaining ground, Aiton says.

Red peppers are the feature of an October promotion in the run up to Halloween at Rouses. “We’ll roast red peppers right in front of store where customers can watch. Once roasted, we package the peppers in clamshell packs,” explains Watson.

Promote handled pouch-bags of tri-color sweet mini peppers for Thanksgiving. “They are an easy snack and convenient to cook,” says Prime Time’s Aiton.

**PUMPKIN.** It’s all about pumpkin in the run up to Halloween. “Produce sets the ambience for the store. Therefore, display a variety of pumpkins as well as hay bales and Indian corn either in the front of the produce department, lobby, or on the sidewalk outside in the fall,” suggests L&M’s Williams.

Start early. Industry professionals say the three times for pumpkin sales are the last two weekends of September and the first weekend in October. A prompt start can pay off for incremental sales.

“We bring pumpkins in during September. Many customers find they don’t last until late October, especially if they lose their stem, so we often get a repeat purchase for Halloween,” tells Rouses’ Watson.

There are also several sizes of pumpkins available. “Mini or Jack-be-Little’s are palm-sized,” explains John Carl, key account sales manager at Dan Schantz Farm & Greenhouses, LLC, in Zionsville, PA. “Then there are pie pumpkins that are 3 to 4 pounds, large pumpkins in the 15 to 30 pound range, and giant-size pumpkins from 50 to 200-plus pounds. ‘Guess the pumpkin’s weight’ contests are waning in popularity because of all the excitement around decorated pumpkins, but these competitions are still common in many areas.”

Bay Baby Produce, in Burlington, WA, offers quarter-pallet retail shipper display units for its Pumpkin Patch Pals, paint activity kit, and pie baking kit.

“The paint activity kits are wonderful for Moms to buy for Halloween parties, and also great for retailers who have in-store programs for kids while their parents shop,” says Bay Baby’s president, Michele Youngquist.


**SUN-DRIED TOMATOES.** Back-to-school promotions shouldn’t just center on lunchbox

fixings. Quick-fixing dinner fare is also popular. Mooney Farms, in Chico, CA, markets its Bella Sun Luci-brand 3.5-ounce dry bagged sun-dried tomato varieties as a fast way to turn bagged lettuce into a flavorful salad. In addition, the company’s sun-dried tomatoes in olive oil and Italian herbs can serve as a flavorful addition to a dinner dish like pasta primavera made with fresh broccoli, carrots, zucchini and onions.









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**“Run an ad on non-common varieties of winter squash the first week in November to gain awareness.”**

— Robert Schueller,  
Melissa’s/World Variety Produce



PHOTO COURTESY OF MELISSA’S/WORLD VARIETY PRODUCE

dried tomato destination,” explains owner, Lisa Mooney. “First, we offer a full-color, single 6-pack tray. This is a convenient size that fits virtually anywhere in the store, and it can be filled with any of our five dry varieties. Our two new metal floor displays offer a small footprint, full-color graphic headers, and holds either one case of all four dry varieties or these items and one case of all of our oil-packed products.”

This fall, Mooney Farms will launch its Bella Sun Luci Sun Dried Tomato Snacks. The 3.5-ounce bagged product unites BBQ spice and smoky flavors with sun dried tomatoes.

**WINTER SQUASH.** Baseball-sized

Carnival, Delicata, Golden Nugget and Sweet Dumpling squash, as well as the larger cantaloupe-sized Acorn and Kabocha, are available from late August or early September through January. However, while a few cases of winter squash will sell in the lead up to October, it is in November that sales really peak.

“Run an ad on non-common varieties of winter squash the first week in November to gain awareness,” offers Robert Schueller, director of public relations for Melissa’s/World Variety Produce, in Los Angeles, CA. “Boost trial by demos. All you need is a microwave and condiments like herbs and olive oil or honey

and cinnamon. All of our winter squash are stickered with cooking directions. We can also provide signage and recipes customized to an individual retailer’s needs. Thanksgiving is a time people like to get together, cook and try new recipes.”

Winter squash can be big bulky items to display. Frieda’s Inc., in Los Alamitos, CA, solved this problem with a mixed bin display that holds three to eight varieties of winter squash. “All a retailer has to do is wheel the bin out and set it up in a high-traffic area to create an impressive fall display,” explains Karen Caplan, president and chief executive officer. **pb**

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Marketers agree that conveniently packaged vegetables add color, crunch and texture to tailgate menus.

# Tailgating: The Best Part Of Sport Seasons

How produce is the MVP of any game celebration and key to department sales. **BY KEITH LORIA**

“Are you ready for some football?” Although that familiar expression is the rallying cry for every Monday night football game during season, a more important question might be, “Are you ready for some tailgating?”

It seems every year tailgating grows more popular, so it’s no wonder the number of produce companies marketing to the tailgating audience increases. From a competitive standpoint, retailers need to reach out to fans of professional, college and even high school sports because those enthusiasts enjoy big pre-game spreads — sometimes as much as the game itself.

“During the last decade, everyone from young kids to seniors has participated in tailgating events,” says Sarah Pau, marketing assistant for Pure Hothouse Foods Inc., based in Leamington, Ontario. “As their numbers have grown, so has their desire for eating more-healthy foods.

“These events can no longer only focus on alcoholic beverages and meat consumption. As

demographics are slowly changing,” says Pau. “The demands for more versatile food selections are needed.”

“Tailgaters want fresh, crunchy veggies included with all the meat dishes and carbs they consume,” says Lori Bigras, marketing manager for Mann Packing Co., Salinas, CA.

“Vegetables add color, crunch and texture to what might otherwise be one-dimensional tailgate menus,” says Bigras, and eating them “makes people feel a bit better about all the heavier (perhaps not as healthy) foods they’re consuming on game days.”

“Produce retailers need to remember that health and wellness are factors in the buying decisions of consumers when they shop for tailgating items,” says Dionysios Christou, vice president of marketing for Del Monte Fresh Produce in Coral Gables, FL. “The path to retail victory lies in accommodating their preferences with convenient products.”

## A Touchdown For Produce

Pure Hothouse Foods offers a number of options for tailgating parties, products such as “the Snacking Series’ Aurora Bites mini

peppers and gourmet mini cucumbers are great items for grab-and-go and healthy snacking while tailgaters are at the stadium,” says Pau.

“Fresh veggie trays are at the top of tailgate party menus because they’re convenient, colorful, and healthful options for quick and easy finger-food snacking,” says Bigras.

“Mann has got you covered with fresh vegetable and dip trays, as well as veggie and cheese, and veggies and hummus tray offerings,” says Bigras. “Additionally, we have seasonally themed trays. For example, Mann’s is offering its Summer Fun tray in 18-ounce and 40-ounce sizes, which is available in both the U.S. and Canada. The trays have a 16-day shelf life, which helps tailgaters get prepared and organized before game day and assures them the veggies still have optimum freshness.”

“Many tailgating recipes use fresh produce, such as avocados for guacamole, which plays an important role in pre-game menus,” says Jessica Weaver, marketing and public relations representative of the Irvine, CA-based Hass Avocado Board. “Adding fruits and vegetables to existing recipes can ensure that important

nutrients are being consumed along with traditional game-day fare," she says. "Produce items are generally easy to transport and complement various main dishes popular during tailgating. Lettuce, onion, tomato and avocado, for example, can be easily put into a cooler and pair well with nachos, hamburgers, chili and more," says Weaver.

Veggie trays, corn and potatoes also make excellent sides for game-day meals. Adding diced avocados to potato dishes or serving mashed avocados as a dip are fun ways to pair these popular items.

"Tailgating chefs can put a new twist on old favorites by making avocado 'wings' or Hass Avocado 'Tailgate Tacos,'" says Weaver. "For an easy win, hosts can whip up Cheesesteak Quesadillas with Hass avocado or serve the always-popular pulled pork, with avocado topping. Spreading, layering or mixing fresh avocados into any sandwich recipe is a fun way to spruce up an easy dish."

Christou says Del Monte's fresh-cut sliced tomatoes and onions are great to bring along to add toppings to burgers and sandwiches. "We also recommend our new Del Monte Fresh Guac and Fresh Avocado. We use only

fresh ingredients such as veggies, creamy Hass avocados, and a dash of salt to create our guacamole," he says. "It comes in convenient packaging, and since we are using ultra high pressure, it is preservative-free and always fresh-tasting and ready-to-eat."

### On The Grill

Many tailgating hosts wouldn't have a successful pre-game party without a grill, but today's fans want more than just a plain burger, hot dog or chicken.

"Hamburgers are traditionally one of the top foods grilled at tailgating events," says Weaver. A recent UCLA study found that eating half of a medium avocado with a 90 percent lean burger, rather than eating a burger alone, may curb the production of compounds that contribute to inflammation, a risk factor that may be associated with heart disease."

Mann's Bigras recommends grilled romaine hearts, which are growing in popularity, to enhance grilling options. "The crunchy sweetness of romaine lettuce, combined with the hickory flavor from the grill, will make even the most loyal tailgaters feel fancy with their menu choices," she says. "The flavor is great, and the

grilled lettuce-head halves make great finger-food with a little dressing drizzled over them."

Grilling favorites from Hothouse Foods include Pure Flavor Beefsteak Slicer Tomatoes for burgers, Pure Flavor Sweet Bell Peppers to enhance salads, and Pure Flavor Baby Eggplants as a great substitute for meat recommends Pau.

"Del Monte offers fresh-cut kabob kits, which include Del Monte Gold Extra Sweet Pineapple, green, yellow, and red peppers, or grape tomatoes and red onions, cut into pieces that can easily slide onto a skewer to grill with one's favorite meat," says Christou.

"Our whole fruit and vegetables can be included in the tailgating mix as almost all of them can be cooked on the grill," says Christou. "Some great fresh fruits and vegetables to throw on the grill before a game include tomatoes, bell peppers, onions and potatoes, among others. Grilling Del Monte Gold Extra Sweet Pineapples or bananas is an easy way to add a healthy, sweet, and delicious dessert to the menu. Due to its high sugar content, grilling pineapple caramelizes the fruit, creating a golden brown color with a unique tropical flavor."

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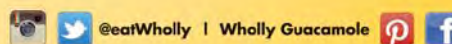
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**“They can try some mango tomato salsa, which is a nice switch from your typical condiment, and grilled mini peppers with Togarashi seasoning (an electrifying Japanese flavoring) that will bring out the best flavors.”**

— Sarah Pau,  
Pure Hothouse Foods

Another convenient option for tailgaters is the company’s mixed vegetable grill trays. They can be placed directly on the grill with virtually no preparation or cleaning needed.

### Ethnic Cuisine

More tailgaters are adding ethnic cuisine to their menus, incorporating Hispanic items featuring fresh avocados, guacamole, bean dips, and pico de gallo. A Mediterranean favorite, hummus served with fresh vegetables, is also popular.

Hothouse Foods’ Pau offers unique ideas for fans looking to add an ethnic twist to their

menus. “They can try some mango tomato salsa, which is a nice switch from your typical condiment, and grilled mini peppers with Togarashi seasoning (an electrifying Japanese flavoring) that will bring out the best flavors,” she says. “Also, instead of beer, they can try a cucumber mojito, a refreshing beverage with or without alcohol.”

“Anything with hummus is big,” says Mann’s Bigras, “because it’s becoming the 21st century salsa. It goes great with fresh veggies, finger foods, dishes and side dishes alike. It is also available in a variety of flavors that range from tangy to downright spicy. Its creamy

smooth texture will jazz up any burger, and it’s good for you.”

“Incorporating ethnic cuisine in tailgating fare is easy,” says Haas Avocado Board’s Weaver, “especially when fresh avocados are involved. This diverse fruit can be used in anything from traditional Mexican cuisine, such as Aji Amarillo Avocado Tostadas, to food with an Italian twist such as Avocado Antipasti Kabobs.”

### Merchandising Matters

Pau suggests retailers combine vegetable products with other tailgating essentials when football season is about to start in August to create double awareness, but she emphasizes that bundles need to have enough food to serve a big crowd.

“A retailer should host demos. Visuals will give a consumer a better perspective of what their creation will become at the tailgating event,” Pau says. “I also think recipe cards are important, and retailers can add ‘to-buy’ checklists to create an in-the-moment purchase.”

Grab-and-go products also are vital because tailgaters don’t want to think too much about buying all the necessary ingredi-

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## A Highbrow Tailgating Party



**A** long-time football fan, restaurateur Michael Mina is responsible for more than 20 restaurants in eight markets across the country, including two Japanese izakaya (a Japanese version of a tavern or drinking houses with a menu of small bites) and sushi restaurants, a ramen bar, and seven steakhouses.

Mina, a James Beard Award-winning chef, also runs the event space at the San Francisco 49ers' new Levi's Stadium called Tailgate, which exudes a tailgating-party environment. Tailgate is a pre-game, members-only club and includes Mina's newest restaurant concept, the Bourbon Steak & Pub. The Tailgate space includes a 13-foot rotisserie for anyone who wants

to roast a whole ox, a 14-foot-tall rotisserie with 12 spits for whole pigs and an 8-by-8-foot wood-fire grill that doubles as a fire pit. There's also a giant glass tank with a crane mechanism and baskets above it to poach up to 100 lobsters or Dungeness crabs at a time.

Of course, produce will be a big part of the party, and Mina expects to include offerings from many of the area's local farmers.

He has even invited famous chefs from the cities of each 49ers opponent and will create dishes using products based on the spirit of the team the Niners are playing. **pb**

ents for their parties. They would rather have it all done for them in one convenient package.

Bigras believes grab-and-go locations are key to attract the tailgate crowd. "Retailers should keep fresh veggie trays stocked throughout the weekend in high-traffic areas and in conveniently located end caps to ensure great visibility and pick-up. Create fun and festive displays incorporating thematic packaging and signage designed to get consumers' attention, while offering up their favorite game-day items," she says. "Consider having a friendly competition in your produce departments, and create a buzz that starts at the store level and extends to the consumers."

"It's essential that tailgate items are both ready-to-eat and available in convenient packaging," says Del Monte's Christou. "Most consumers do not want to have to prepare

multiple items ahead of time, nor do they appreciate excess or difficult packaging," he says. "Our products are very versatile. It is important the consumer is educated on the many ways our products can be used. Del Monte works closely with its retail partners to develop promotional and merchandising activities that will increase sales and educate consumers. This includes the development of eye-catching POS for shelves, in-store demos and improved product information on package labels. Del Monte category managers and merchandisers also constantly communicate with retailers and their produce personnel."

Pairing foods in displays can inspire consumers to create recipes and compel them to buy more products. "Retailers can place fresh avocados, ruby red grapefruit, serrano



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MANN PACKING

peppers, scallions and cilantro together, which provides a one-stop shop in the produce section for avocado grapefruit salsa," says Hass Avocado Board's Weaver. "Providing recipe cards will show how this salsa can be used in game-day hits such as shrimp nachos with white-cheddar sauce and Hass avocado grapefruit salsa."

### Making It Easy

Convenience is the name of the game for a tailgate party, so anything fans can prepare in advance — or anything that's already washed, prepped, ready-to-cook or ready-to-eat — is the perfect tailgate item.

"Combine the convenience of grab-and-go with a tried-and-true tasty meal, as well as snacking must-haves. You're making things really easy for consumers to make purchase decisions and quickly get their game-day shopping done," says Mann's Bigras.

Mann Packing Co.'s two new Snap Pea Sensation kits come complete with the dressing and topping. "A tailgater simply has to mix them together, throw a frying pan on the grill and sauté the snap peas for a hot Mediterranean-style or Asian sesame salad. Or mix the three easy ingredients together to create a tasty and crunchy cold salad," says Bigras.

When it comes to tailgating, consumers are looking for items that are delicious as well as versatile. Produce should be included in a multitude of recipes, as it is fairly cost-efficient and easy to assemble and transport. **pb**



PHOTO COURTESY OF SHENANDOAH GROWERS

Colorful packaging allows for a more attractive herb display. It also provides an opportunity to educate consumers on how to use leftover herbs as well as give storage and usage information.

# Merchandising Herbs To Build Bigger Sales

Marketers and retailers review popular items and advise how to handle product in-store. **BY JODEAN ROBBINS**

**T**he growing popularity of fresh herbs presents significant opportunity for retailers. “There is room to grow both sales and profits in herbs,” says Rick Rutte, produce director for North State Grocery in Cottonwood, CA, with 12 Holiday Markets carrying natural and organic products and seven Sav-Mor price-format stores. “As consumers become more familiar with using fresh herbs the category will grow.”

“While the herb category has shown double-digit growth annually for a decade, the big growth is still ahead of us,” asserts Chick Goodman, vice president sales and marketing for Coosemans Worldwide – Retail Group in Los Angeles, CA. “Our marketing studies show 10 percent of U.S. households are buying 80 percent of the fresh herbs. Just a 1 percent increase in households becoming regular users would represent a 10 percent increase in overall sales. The fresh herb category is in its infancy. After all, the under-30 generation is the first to grow up with cooking shows and fresh herbs instead of the dried herbs of their grandmothers.”

“It’s not a mature category yet,” agrees Paul Kneeland, vice president of produce, floral, seafood and meat for Kings Food Markets in Parsippany, NJ, with 25 Kings and six Balducci’s stores. “A lot of health-conscious

and preferred-gourmet consumers are moving away from dry herbs and into fresh. Promoting fresh herbs gives better profit margins in stores. The profit margin on dry is minimal; whereas you get between 40 to 60 percent margin in

PHOTO COURTESY OF NORTH SHORE SALES AND MARKETING



fresh herbs.”

Continued consumer interest in cooking and health affects fresh herb consumption. Suzette Overgaag, vice president/chief finan-

cial officer of North Shore Sales and Marketing, Inc. in Thermal, CA, explains, “In the past few years fresh herb shelf space has grown tremendously. More people are cooking

Side Note

## EXPLORE THE UNCOMMON

BY JODEAN ROBBINS

Offering unique herbs helps retailers add excitement and ring to the category. “As consumers try new recipes, we see demand increase for herbs traditionally considered less popular, such as Thai basil, tarragon, and marjoram,” explains Suzette Overgaag, vice president/chief financial officer of North Shore Sales and Marketing, Inc. in Thermal, CA.

“Crown Dill is showing some movement in the past few years, but mostly during May through early July,” reports Robert Schueller, director of public relations for Melissa’s World Variety Produce in Los Angeles, CA.

Micro herbs are another unique new trend. “Micro is kind of a mixture of herbs and sprouts,” explains Paul Kneeland, vice president of produce, floral, seafood and meat for Kings Food Markets in Parsippany, NJ with 25 Kings and six Balducci’s stores. “This is a new niche area, and it’s up-and-coming, especially in gourmet restaurants and stores.”

While many varieties of micros exist, the most popular echo the well-liked traditional herbs. “The most popular micro herbs right now are micro basil, micro cilantro, micro thyme and our mustard mix,” offers Kerry Herndon, president of Kerry’s Kitchen Gardens in Apopka, FL. “Preference can be very regional. For example, while micro basil is the hottest seller in most markets, in Miami we see greater demand for micro cilantro.”

“Our spicy mix of different mustards has also been very popular,” adds Herndon. “A little goes a long way, and it really adds robust flavor. The biggest promise is in micro thyme. It is 100 percent usable and really gives customers convenience.”

Health trends and increased gourmet interest bode well for micros. “People want to eat more salads but they also want more flavor,” explains Herndon. “Micro herbs present a tremendous opportunity for retail to merchandise and sell

these items as a flavor-booster for salads and other cooking. It adds flavor and natural nutrition without fat or calories.”

“Micro’s young leaves are so densely saturated with oils and nutrients, they add tremendous flavor to a salad or sandwich,” agrees Michele Henning, vice president key account sales for Shenandoah Growers in Harrisonburg, VA.

Retail can even look to additional uses to spur sales. “Also gaining in popularity are the more fragrant, hearty herbs used outside of cooking,” says Henning. “Pinterest, for example, created a demand of DIY gifts and decorations incorporating aromatic herbs such as lavender, rosemary and thyme.”

Kerry’s is bullish enough on the potential of micro’s to have invested in a one million square-foot facility. “To start we put in 150,000 square feet for food production focusing on higher demand micro herbs and micro greens,” says Herndon.

A major constraint to micro herbs has been consistency and scale with availability but Kerry’s aims to address this challenge. “The biggest complaint at retail is consistency of availability,” says Herndon. “You can’t slot a product and then not have it. We’re growing in glasshouses with floors and full GHP, GAP and USDA organic certifications. We’re taking this [category] to another level and looking to provide the consistency and scale needed to meet retail demand.”

Coosemans is another leader in marketing micros with its Rock Garden division. “We are pioneering the Go Micro brand of organic micro greens nationally,” explains Chick Goodman, vice president sales and marketing for Coosemans Worldwide-Retail Group in Los Angeles, CA. “We pack these in Miami, Jessup, Maryland, Denver, Phoenix and Los Angeles and are fortunate to include multiple divisions of two large national chains as customers.”

pb

**“Retailers should have a full fresh herb category sized to fit their target demographic. We work with our retail partners to identify the category offering to maximize profitability and excite consumers.”**

— Suzette Overgaag,

North Shore Sales and Marketing, Inc.

at home with an increasing awareness of using fresh produce. We see more interest than ever in eating healthy, real food. There is no end in sight to this trend, and fresh herbs fit right in.”

“The herb category is positioned for increasing profit potential as we look to the future,” says Michele Henning, vice president key account sales for Shenandoah Growers in Harrisonburg, VA. She says that as a result of network television shows and bloggers educating consumers about healthy ways to add more nutrition to meals, fresh herbs are getting more attention in produce departments.

Savvy retailers will capitalize on this high-margin category. “Fresh herbs are no longer a luxury,” asserts Overgaag. “They are a produce staple, and all retailers should have them stocked or risk missing sales.”

### Start With Variety

A successful fresh herb program is founded on variety. “It’s hard to manage a category with minimal variety,” says Kneeland. “You must have a base minimum of eight varieties of herbs to have a substantial set.”

“Retailers should have a full fresh herb category sized to fit their target demographic,” advises Overgaag. “We work with our retail partners to identify the category offering to maximize profitability and excite consumers.”

“Virtually everyone carries a basic Top 10,” says Goodman. “Expansion to the Top 14 to 15 items is becoming more prevalent, and many high-end retailers have 20 or more herb offerings.”

Basil, cilantro and parsley are the biggest sellers, but others hold important possibilities. “The most popular herb is basil,” reports Kneeland. “You find basil in many different presentations these days. Cilantro’s popularity



**“About 40 percent of our herb sales are organic. That percentage increased over the past year by 3 to 4 percent. In our holiday format, I carry organic as much as possible over conventional when supply and costs warrant.”**

— Rick Rutte, North State Grocery

is being fueled by the Latino cuisine, both with Hispanic and non-Hispanic consumers. Mint is always a good seller, and rosemary is also really climbing now.”

“Cilantro, parsley, Italian parsley and basil are the big four items for us,” reports North State’s Rutte. “Sage, oregano, chives, mint, rose-

mary and dill sell well for holidays.”

“The most popular fresh herbs today include basil, chives, dill, thyme, mint and poultry blend,” reports Robert Schueller, director of public relations for Melissa’s/World Variety Produce in Los Angeles, CA. “Sage is very strong during fall and winter

months. Rosemary for summertime barbecues is also growing in popularity. Cilantro and parsley are pretty much commodities in stores now.”

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# “Storage, turn-over and shrink are all challenges. Shrink can be high if herbs are not marketed correctly. Show one bad leaf on the facing display and you can destroy the category fast.”

— Robert Schueller, , Melissa's/World Variety Produce

with organic herbs. “About 40 percent of our herb sales are organic,” says Rutte of North State. “That percentage increased over the past year by 3 to 4 percent. In our holiday format, I carry organic as much as possible over conventional when supply and costs warrant.”

“Most of our herbs are organic,” says Kneeland. “The growth of the organic category has been tremendous in our stores. Organic fits in perfectly with the type of customer who normally buys fresh herbs.”

Promotion of organic may be a consequence of space. “Organic herbs continue to grow as a category as both fresh herbs and organics continue on double digit year-over-year growth trajectories,” explains Cooseman’s Goodman. “Historically the category is not big enough to support both a conventional and organic set. Retailers tend to think the conventional customer will still buy organic, but the organic customer may not buy conventional. Thus, organic gets the space so the retailer does not lose the customer.”

Responsible production practices are another positive aspect for consumers. “Companies such as Shenandoah Growers are finding innovative ways to supply our products using more sustainable farming methods allowing us to expand our product lines and grow the overall category,” says Sarah Yoder, Shenandoah’s director of marketing.

“North Shore Living Herbs is right on trend as having the only fresh herbs to be SCS (Scientific Certification Systems) Sustainably Grown Certified,” reports Overgaag. “They are grown in the U.S. year-round on a family-owned and -operated farm. Additionally, the North Shore Living Herbs brand is the only herb brand to still merchandise a living plant in a clamshell — essentially its own mini-greenhouse.”

Living herbs are a growing segment of the category. “We get into potted herbs about the end of May,” reports Rutte of North State. “We do very well with potted basil in a 4-inch pot.”

“Potted herbs are popular with our customers during the spring and summer,” says Kneeland. “Basil is very popular in potted or hydroponic form.”

Stores can count on suppliers for support in marketing potted product. “Our Kitchen Garden starter kit has a pair of herb scissors and a watering tray for two plants,” explains Yoder. “These items are merchandised on the living-herb rack and increase the opportunity

for sales while supporting the living-herb product segment with add-on items.”

“We are now offering North Shore Living Herbs Potted Cilantro and North Shore Living Herbs Potted Parsley,” reports Overgaag.

## Balance Shrink And Availability

A successful herb program must manage shrink. “Storage, turn-over and shrink are all challenges,” says Melissa’s Schueller. “Shrink can be high if herbs are not marketed correctly. Show one bad leaf on the facing display and you can destroy the category fast.”

“There is a fair amount of shrink if a store carries a wide selection,” agrees Rutte. “Shrink can eat up profits quickly.”

“Shrink can be high if you’re not smart



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**“Retailers often offer basil only in small packages. Since many basil recipes require two-ounces of product or more, customers buy multiple packages leaving stores with out-of-stocks on the highest volume seller.”**

— Michele Henning, , Shenandoah Growers

about it,” says Kings’ Kneeland. “To avoid shrink, minimize the pack size as much as possible. Instead of taking 12-pack herbs, try to use 6-pack. You can keep things fresh and add variety this way.”

However, minimizing shrink should not

come at the expense of availability. “A big challenge is getting store managers to order enough so they don’t run out,” reports Cooseman’s Goodman. “The herb customer is what we call ‘the best produce customer’ — the foodie who buys more fresh products than other

customers, especially high margin specialty produce. Herb selection and quality are decision criteria affecting the store’s choice for this customer. If the supply of herbs isn’t consistent, the retailer loses the whole basket.”

“Understanding what sells and what doesn’t sell is crucial,” offers Kneeland. “With that, you can impact your shrink and sales. If you don’t have what the customer is looking for, then it will impact your sales; if you have what they’re not looking for, then it will impact your shrink.”

Shenandoah’s Henning suggests, “Work with suppliers to do a full category review and ensure sets meet customer needs. This is especially important for evaluating packaging sizes. For example, retailers often offer basil only in small packages. Since many basil recipes require



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## “Merchandise herbs together as much as possible. Have an herb section, and make it a destination for customers.”

— Paul Kneeland, Kings Food Markets

two-ounces of product or more, customers buy multiple packages leaving stores with out-of-stocks on the highest volume seller.”

### Take Advantage Of Packaging

Retailers may balance shrink and sales better by understanding the advantages of packaging versus bulk. “The most successful herb programs consist of multiple package sizes as well as both fresh-cut and living herbs,” says Shenandoah’s Yoder. “Retailers have more flexibility to move product around the department, drive impulse purchases and give consumers a wider range of price points.”

Bulk is necessary for high-volume items, but packaging provides multiple benefits for the rest. “The advantages of bulk includes a fresher-looking display and the ability of the consumer to choose the amount of herb needed,” reports Schueller.

“For items such as cilantro and Italian parsley, the majority of sales comes from bunches in the refrigerated case,” says Henning. “For other items, however, colorful packaging allows for a more attractive display. It also provides an opportunity to educate consumers on how to use leftover herbs as well as give storage and usage information.”

Clamshells ensure proper checkout and reduce identification issues. Schueller explains, “Clamshell containers remain the preference of a majority of retailers due to bulk confusion at check out, easy ring and handling of the clamshell package.”

Kings’ Kneeland concurs. “A lot of customers don’t know what they’re looking for. They can’t identify it on the shelf if it’s not packaged, so packaging affects sales through education and identification.”

Retailers can exploit packaging options to attract new sales. “Implementing a planogram set with .25-ounce recipe-size clamshells is one way to entice customers to try more herb varieties,” suggests Henning. “Many retailers use this package size to advertise 10 for \$10.”

“We have had success in carrying a smaller pack,” reports Rutte. “We had the .25-ounce versus 3-ounce packages on herbs (such as bay leaves, rosemary, chives and oregano).”

One new innovation is Cooseman’s “flex-

ible clamshell,” a finalist for new packaging design at the 2013 Produce Marketing Association show. Goodman explains, “By using high-tech breathable bags, we extend shelf life by 20 percent or more. Pre-printed bags allow far superior graphics over any label stuck on a clamshell. We have outstanding results from retailers using these in the Southeast and New York areas. These also use 75 percent less plastic than clamshells and fit well with retail sustainability initiatives.”

### Build The Basket

Merchandising herbs with complementary products increases ring. “Some retailers still underestimate how herbs act as basket builders far beyond their percentage of produce department sales,” says Goodman. “Herbs should be marketed with other specialty produce such as shallots, colored peppers and mushrooms in a high traffic, high-visibility area.”

“Consumers are looking for easy ways to add fresh herbs to their meals,” suggests Yoder. “To capitalize on this, retailers can increase cross-merchandising. Merchandising cilantro close to avocados, chives near potatoes, and basil near tomatoes drives impulse purchases. A customer buying avocados for guacamole can easily remember to pick up cilantro.”

Stores should also put herbs into other departments. “Product in seafood cases is being dressed and made ready to cook with fresh herbs,” says Kneeland. “Stores should cross-merchandise herbs with seafood or meat to capitalize on sales.”

“Run promotions encouraging consumers to ‘make home cooking fancy,’” advises Goodman. “Show them how to do garlic-chive mashed potatoes or rosemary potatoes. Put herbs next to proteins such as dill with salmon.”

### Create A Destination

Creating an herb destination appeals to customers. “Merchandise herbs together as much as possible,” advises Kneeland. “Have an herb section, and make it a destination for customers.”

“The merchandising options we provide create a destination for fresh herbs within the produce department,” says North Shore’s Over-





PHOTO COURTESY OF COOSEMANS

gaag. “This not only helps the consumer know where to go for herbs, it also enhances the fresh appearance of the entire produce department.”

Providing special holiday sets will increase sales further. “Consumers are holiday- or event-oriented with fresh herbs,” explains Schueller. “Retailers should highlight the cate-

gory before major holidays or events through ads and merchandising in a visible location. Thanksgiving, Chanukah, Christmas, New Years, Passover, Easter, Memorial Day, Fourth of July and Labor Day are strong weeks for great growth.”

“During Thanksgiving, retailers who

merchandise living or clamshell rosemary, sage and thyme with the poultry department dramatically drive their unit sales,” reports Yoder. “Mint with berries or lamb in the spring and rosemary, sage and thyme 2-ounce holiday package sizes are also great examples.”

pb

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# Wal-Mart 'Makes Hay' In The Heartland

As Dahl's, Hy-Vee and Target sell produce at prices more than 24 percent higher than Wal-Mart, niche retailer Trader Joe's competes at only 4 percent over the behemoth from Bentonville.

BY JIM PREVOR, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



**F**or Wal-Mart, the Des Moines, IA, market is a return to the good old days — with just a hint of problems to come.

The PRODUCE BUSINESS Wal-Mart Pricing Report has now been underway for more than a decade and includes 26 separate market studies. In the early years, as Wal-Mart rolled its supercenter concept out across America, most supermarkets were uncertain how to respond. Executives felt they couldn't reduce prices, as their cost structure wouldn't support such discounting. Some, such as Safeway, moved upscale, converting store after store in line with its Lifestyle concept. Other retailers simply froze, held their price points, and prayed for the best.

Wal-Mart beat all comers on price with supermarkets regularly showing up with price points 20 percent higher than Wal-Mart on fresh produce.

That differential changed as retailers that survived the onslaught of Wal-Mart have learned more effectively how to compete on price with the behemoth of Bentonville. In fact, since 2010, Wal-Mart has not won a single PRODUCE BUSINESS Wal-Mart Pricing Study. It has been beaten by big chains, such as Kroger in Savannah, GA, and growing specialty chains, such as Sprouts in both Dallas, TX and Tulsa, OK. Growing ethnic chains also pose an emergent problem for Wal-Mart as in Lake Worth, FL, where both El Bodegon and Presidente Super-

**Wal-Mart Supercenter vs 3 Chains**  
**Price Comparison — Des Moines, Iowa**  
 Prices Available To The General Public

PRODUCE ITEM	How Sold	WalMart Supercenter	Dahl's	% Over Wal-Mart	Hy-Vee	% Over Wal-Mart	Target Supercenter	% Over Wal-Mart
Apples - Granny Smith	Lb	1.27	2.49	96.06%	1.99	56.69%	1.39	9.45%
Apples - other variety	5 Lb	4.47	12.45	178.52%	19.95	346.31%	19.80	342.95%
Apples - Red Delicious	Lb	1.27	1.79	40.94%	0.99	-22.05%	1.69	33.07%
Avocados	Each	0.98	1.29	31.63%	1.88	91.84%	1.49	52.04%
Bananas - Yellow	Lb	0.57	0.59	3.51%	0.59	3.51%	0.57	0.00%
Blueberries	6 oz Pkg	2.50	1.50	-40.00%	3.06	22.40%	3.49	39.60%
Cantaloupe - Whole	Each	1.50	2.49	66.00%	2.50	66.67%	1.99	32.67%
Grapefruit - Red	Each	0.78	0.50	-35.90%	0.69	-11.54%	0.42	-46.15%
Grapes - Green Seedless	Lb	3.29	3.99	21.28%	3.48	5.78%	2.99	-9.12%
Grapes - Red Seedless	Lb	2.78	2.99	7.55%	3.48	25.18%	2.49	-10.43%
Honeydew - Whole	Each	2.98	3.99	33.89%	3.99	33.89%	2.99	0.34%
Kiwi	Each	0.46	0.50	8.70%	0.66	43.48%	0.49	6.52%
Lemons - Bulk	Each	0.64	0.99	54.69%	0.66	3.13%	0.59	-7.81%
Mangos	Each	0.88	0.69	-21.59%	1.00	13.64%	1.29	46.59%
Nectarines	Lb	2.48	3.99	60.89%	3.99	60.89%	2.29	-7.66%
Oranges - Navel	Each	0.68	0.84	23.53%	0.84	23.53%	0.79	16.18%
Peaches - California	Lb	2.98	3.99	33.89%	1.99	-33.22%	2.49	-16.44%
Pears - Anjou	Lb	1.77	1.79	1.13%	1.88	6.21%	1.89	6.78%
Strawberries - 1# Pkg	Package	1.78	1.50	-15.73%	3.99	124.16%	2.00	12.36%
Watermelon - Seedless	Each	5.98	3.99	-33.28%	6.99	16.89%	5.99	0.17%
Asparagus	Lb	2.88	3.99	38.54%	3.99	38.54%	3.49	21.18%
Beans - Green	12 oz	2.98	1.49	-50.00%	2.24	-24.83%	1.99	-33.22%
Brussel Sprouts	Lb	2.48	3.99	60.89%	3.99	60.89%	5.32	114.52%
Carrots - baby	Lb Pkg	1.66	1.79	7.83%	1.99	19.88%	2.65	59.64%
Cauliflower	Each	2.98	3.99	33.89%	2.99	0.34%	3.14	5.37%
Celery	Each	1.98	1.29	-34.85%	1.38	-30.30%	1.89	-4.55%
Corn - Yellow	Each	0.20	0.33	65.00%	0.66	230.00%	0.20	0.00%
Eggplant	Each	1.68	1.99	18.45%	1.50	-10.71%	1.99	18.45%
Garlic	3 oz	1.98	0.75	-62.12%	0.56	-71.72%	0.59	-70.20%
Lettuce - Iceberg Bulk	Each	1.18	1.29	9.32%	1.48	25.42%	1.52	28.81%
Lettuce - Romaine Bulk	Bag	3.38	2.99	-11.54%	1.99	-41.12%	1.29	-61.83%
Mushrooms - White Package	8 oz. Pkg	1.28	2.00	56.25%	1.75	36.72%	2.24	75.00%
Onions - Red	Lb	0.88	1.69	92.05%	1.48	68.18%	1.09	23.86%
Peas - Snap	Lb	2.74	3.99	45.62%	7.98	191.24%	5.98	118.25%
Peas - Snow	Lb	2.74	3.99	45.62%	10.64	288.32%	7.97	190.88%
Peppers - Green Bell	Each	0.78	0.99	26.92%	0.77	-1.28%	1.02	30.77%
Peppers - Red	Each	1.48	2.00	35.14%	1.28	-13.51%	1.79	20.95%
Potatoes - Russet Bulk	Lb	0.98	0.99	1.02%	1.00	2.04%	0.99	1.02%
Radishes	Bunch	0.88	1.49	69.32%	0.88	0.00%	0.99	12.50%
Spinach - Bulk	Each	2.98	1.99	-33.22%	1.99	-33.22%	1.39	-53.36%
Squash - Zucchini	Lb	1.58	1.49	-5.70%	1.48	-6.33%	2.99	89.24%
Sweet Potatoes	Lb	0.98	1.99	103.06%	1.29	31.63%	0.99	1.02%
Tomatoes - Grape	10 Oz	2.48	2.49	0.40%	2.50	0.81%	2.50	0.81%
Tomatoes - Plum/Roma	Lb	0.78	1.99	155.13%	1.28	64.10%	1.19	52.56%
Coleslaw - 1# Bag	1 Lb Bag	1.75	1.13	-35.43%	1.88	7.43%	1.69	-3.43%
Fresh-cut Fruit	48 Oz	12.98	17.97	38.44%	14.97	15.33%	5.97	-54.01%
Fresh-cut Veggies	20 Oz	5.98	8.79	46.99%	6.24	4.35%	8.56	43.14%
Salad - Caesar	14.5 Oz	3.38	3.69	9.17%	7.04	108.28%	6.66	97.04%
<b>MARKET BASKET</b>		<b>108.07</b>	<b>134.91</b>	<b>24.84%</b>	<b>151.82</b>	<b>40.48%</b>	<b>135.21</b>	<b>25.11%</b>

RED is adjusted price

markets (two chains with a Latino focus) beat the store.

In Des Moines, however, as the song goes, “Happy Days are Here Again” for Wal-Mart.

Local favorite Dahl’s Foods — “Iowa’s Premier Grocery Store since 1951” — accrued lots of firsts to its name. It is believed Dahl’s had the first supermarket bakery between the

Mississippi and The Rockies. Long before online orders and pick up back in 1963, there was a small brick building in the corner of the parking lot, known as the “Dahl House,”

## How They Stack Up Against Wal-Mart Supercenter

Region	Store	% over Wal-Mart	Store	% over Wal-Mart	Store	% over Wal-Mart
Connecticut-5/02	Super Stop & Shop	.23%	Shaws	.34%	Big Y	.36%
Salt Lake City-10/02	Harmon's	.2%	Smith's	.6%	Albertson's	.12%
South Florida-2/03	Super Target	.22%	Publix	.31%	Winn-Dixie	.52%
Dallas, Texas-10/03	Albertsons	.23%	Brookshires	.7%	Kroger	.19%
	<b>Neighborhood Market</b>	<b>-1.2%</b>	Tom Thumb	.27%		
Portland, OR-3/04	Albertsons	.30%	Fred Meyer	.22%	Haggen	.27%
	Safeway	.37%				
Phoenix, AZ-8/04	Albetsons	.22%	Bashas'	.25%	Fry's	.15%
	Safeway	.17%				
Palm Springs-10/04	Albertsons	.19%	Jensen's	.60%	Ralphs	.16%
	Vons	.20%				
Detroit, MI-1/05	<b>A&amp;P Food Basic</b>	<b>-.17%</b>	Farmer Jack	.24%	Kroger	.28%
	Meijer	.3%				
St. Louis, MO-5/05	Dierbergs	.22%	Schnucks	.14%		
Houston, TX-9/05	HEB	.15%	Kroger	.30%	<b>Fiesta Mart</b>	<b>-.03%</b>
Atlanta, GA-11/05	Harry's	.18%	Ingles	.16%	Kroger	.25%
	Publix	.13%	Target	.3%		
Denver, CO-5/06	Albertsons	.16%	King Sooper	.21%	Safeway	.25%
Portland, OR-10/06	Albertsons	.32%	Fred Meyer	.21%	QFC	.54%
	Safeway	.30%				
Toronto Canada-7/07	A&P	.35%	Brunos	.28%	Loblaws	.13%
	Sobeys	.45%				
Kansas City, KS-10/07	Dillions	.20%	Hen House	.15%	Hy Vee	.18%
	Price Chopper	.13%				
Los Angeles-4/08	Fresh & Easy	.15%	Stater Bros	.8%	Ralphs	.25%
	Vons	.14%				
Orlando, FL-10/08	Publix	.32%	Super Target	.22%	Whole Foods	.38%
	Winn Dixie	.28%				
Phoenix, AZ 4/09	Wal-Mart Markewtside	.23%	Wal-Mart Neighborhood	.7%	Bahas	.30%
	Fresh & Easy	.32%	Fry's	.27%	Safeway	.37%
Raleigh, NC 9/09	Food Lion	.24%	Fresh Market	.31%	Harris Teeter	.35%
	Kroger	.21%	Super Target	.11%		
Philadelphia 4/10	Acme	.17%	Genuardi's	.22%	Giant	.26%
	Super Fresh	.21%	Wegmans	.5%		
New Jersey 10/10	<b>FoodBasics</b>	<b>-.1%</b>	Pathmark	.15%	ShopRite	.8%
Dallas 10/11	Albertson's	.25%	Central Market	.19%	Kroger	.21%
	<b>Sprouts</b>	<b>-.7%</b>	Super Target	.10%	Tom Thumb	.51%
Savannah 6/12	Food Lion	.7%	Fresh Market	.51%	<b>Kroger</b>	<b>-.2%</b>
	Piggly Wiggly	.27%	Publix	.22%		
Lake Worth, FL 11/12	<b>El Bodegon</b>	<b>-.9.5%</b>	<b>Presidente</b>	<b>-.18.4%</b>	Publix	.29%
	Sedano's	.6.47%	Winn-Dixie	.17.4%		
Tulsa, OK 10/13	Resor's	.43.6%	<b>Sprouts</b>	<b>-.1.9%</b>	Target Supercenter	.12.9%
	Warehouse Market	.8.8%	Winn-Dixie	.17.4%		
Des Moines, IA 6/14	Dahl's	.24.84%	Hy-Vee	.40.48%	Target Supercenter	25.11%
	Trader Joe's	.3.98%				

## In The PRODUCE BUSINESS Wal-Mart Pricing Study, Dahl's market basket of produce came in a full 24.84 percent more than Wal-Mart.

which was connected to the store by an underground tunnel and pre-ordered groceries were available for pick up. The world's first grocery purchase using a debit card is believed to have been made at Dahl's in 1981.

Lately, though, Dahl's is retrenching by closing units in Ankeny and Ames, IA, leaving the chain with 11 stores. One reason may be the difficulty addressing Wal-Mart's pricing challenge, for in The PRODUCE BUSINESS Wal-Mart Pricing Study, Dahl's market basket of produce came in a full 24.84 percent more than Wal-Mart.

Yet Dahl's is an absolute bargain compared with the locally headquartered, but much larger, Hy-Vee, "Where there's a helpful smile in every aisle." Hy-Vee is expanding, pushing into the Minneapolis/St. Paul area, having just disclosed plans for a 90,000 square-foot store in Lakeville, MN — its third store in that market. Hy-Vee is the market leader in Iowa. And in our market basket study, it is able to price its produce a whopping 40.48 percent more than Wal-Mart. One wonders if it will be able to sustain such pricing in markets where it is less dominant than Iowa.

Target Supercenters have struggled, as Target has never quite figured out how to translate to the food sector its "Tar-zhay"



## In a one-on-one competition between Wal-Mart and Trader Joe's, we were able to compare more than 50 items, and Trader Joe's is much more competitive with Wal-Mart on these items than any of the other stores.

high design concept at a discount. And in this market basket, its price offer, though a discount to Hy-Vee and on par with Dahl's, still makes Wal-Mart look like quite a bargain. Target's price point on the produce market basket was 25.11 percent higher than Wal-Mart.

### And Then There Is Trader Joe's

There are doubtless many reasons why the market sustained these pricing levels, but our experience is that once the spread between Wal-Mart and other grocers gets beyond 10 percent, it means Wal-Mart has room to grow. Today, however, it probably means that other discount retailers, such as ALDI, would find the market rich pickings.

In fact, we did a little side study, which implies that the price point of the market is likely to tumble. We did a produce market basket of Trader Joe's in Des Moines as well.

We didn't include it in our main price comparison, because the items carried were too distinct from what other supermarkets sell, so when we tried to find items common to all five of the stores we studied — Wal-Mart, Dahl's, Hy-Vee, Target Supercenter and Trader Joe's — the market basket became too small.

But in a one-on-one competition between Wal-Mart and Trader Joe's, we were able to compare more than 50 items, and Trader Joe's



## Wal-Mart SuperCenter vs Trader Joe's Price Comparison — Des Moines Prices Available To the General Public

Produce Item	How Sold	WalMart	Trader Joe's	% Over Wal-Mart
Apples - Granny Smith (PLU #4139)	Lb	1.27	1.50	18.11%
Apples - Sliced	14 OZ	2.98	3.49	17.11%
Avocados	Each	0.98	1.49	52.04%
Blueberries	6 oz Pkg	2.50	2.99	19.60%
Cantaloupe - Whole	Each	1.50	2.99	99.33%
Grapefruit - Red	Each	0.78	0.40	-48.72%
Kiwi	Each	0.46	0.49	6.52%
Lemons - Bulk	Each	0.64	0.49	-23.44%
Mangos	Each	0.88	1.69	92.05%
Nectarines	Lb	2.48	2.07	-16.53%
Oranges - Navel Bag	8 LB Bag:	6.98	8.98	28.65%
Peaches - California	Lb	2.98	2.07	-30.54%
Pears - Anjou	Lb	1.77	1.97	11.30%
Pineapple	Each	2.98	2.99	0.34%
Watermelon - Cut	Each	2.98	3.49	17.11%
Watermelon - Seedless	Each	5.98	3.99	-33.28%
Artichokes	Each	1.78	0.75	-57.87%
Asparagus	Lb	2.88	3.99	38.54%
Beans - Green	12 oz	2.98	2.02	-32.21%
Broccoli - whole	Each	1.98	1.99	0.51%
Brussel Sprouts	Lb	2.48	2.49	0.40%
Carrots - baby	Lb Package	1.66	1.19	-28.31%
Carrots - Organic	Lb	1.66	0.89	-46.39%
Cauliflower	Each	2.98	2.29	-23.15%
Celery	Each	1.98	1.79	-9.60%
Corn - Yellow	Each	0.20	0.49	145.00%
Cucumbers - English	Each	1.98	2.49	25.76%
Eggplant	Each	1.68	1.79	6.55%
Garlic	3 oz	1.98	1.49	-24.75%
Lettuce - Iceberg Bulk	Each	1.18	1.29	9.32%
Lettuce - Romaine Bulk	Bag	3.38	2.49	-26.33%
Mushrooms - White Package	8 oz. Pkg	1.28	1.43	11.72%
Onions - Red	Lb	0.88	1.45	64.77%
Onions - Sweet	4 Lb	2.88	3.56	23.61%
Onions - Yellow Bag	3 lb Bag	2.48	3.44	38.71%
Peas - Snap	Lb	2.74	3.05	11.31%
Peas - Snow	Lb	2.74	4.07	48.54%
Peppers - Green Bell	Each	0.78	0.99	26.92%
Peppers - Red	Each	1.48	0.99	-33.11%
Potatoes - Russet Bulk	Lb	0.98	0.99	1.02%
Sweet Potatoes	Lb	0.98	0.99	1.02%
Tomatoes - Cherry	Pint	2.50	3.98	59.20%
Tomatoes - Grape	10 Oz	2.48	1.56	-37.10%
Tomatoes - On the Vine (PLU 4664)	Lb	1.29	1.83	41.86%
Tomatoes - Plum/Roma	Lb	0.78	3.79	385.90%
Coleslaw - 1# Bag	1 Lb Bag	1.75	2.65	51.43%
Fresh-cut Fruit	48 Oz	12.98	11.97	-7.78%
Fresh-cut Veggies	20 Oz	5.98	4.27	-28.60%
Salad - Spring	5 Oz Bag:	2.98	1.99	-33.22%
MARKET BASKET		116.88	121.53	3.98%

RED is adjusted price

## Perhaps retailers who keep earnings high are just creating an umbrella that will attract new competitors.

is much more competitive with Wal-Mart on these items than any of the other stores. It came in with a price point just 3.98 percent above Wal-Mart. In our experience, that is a price differential that can easily be justified to consumers by touting advantages such as location convenience, shopping experience, product quality, exclusive offerings, pleasant environment, easy parking, etc.

This seems to be the future. Although some substantial chains, notably Kroger, manage to compete with Wal-Mart on price, it is traditional supermarkets that give up market share to not only Wal-Mart but also ALDI, Trader Joe's, Sprouts, Latino and Asian retailers, Internet shopping services, Dollar Stores that add fresh to their lineup, as well as others.

It is common to value retailers by multiples of EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes and depreciation amortization) or other such metrics, but these historical measures may be deceiving in markets in flux. Perhaps retailers who keep earnings high are just creating an umbrella that will attract new competitors. Maybe these retailers would be better off pricing in such a way that profit opportunities in the market are not perceived as lucrative, thus making potential competitors less interested. It may make the profit position less right now, but it may also make markets here more sustainable.

How Wal-Mart and traditional grocers respond to the mushrooming of competitive concepts will become more evident through future editions of the PRODUCE BUSINESS Wal-Mart Pricing Report. **pb**



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(L-R) PHOTOS COURTESY OF COLUMBIA MARKETING INTERNATIONAL



The Washington Apple Commission reports that Red, Golden Delicious, Gala, Fuji, and Granny Smith varieties add up to nearly 90 percent of all the apples coming from Washington.

# Washington Apples: Familiar Fruit Still Packing A Punch At Retail

New varieties keep the category fresh and customers engaged. **BY BOB JOHNSON**

**R**ed, Golden Delicious, Gala, Fuji and Granny Smith add up to nearly 90 percent of all the apples coming from Washington, according to the Wenatchee, WA-based Washington Apple Commission. But that still leaves room for a few newer entries that can make a great difference in the zest of the category.

Little known variants on Honeycrisp that hold their flavor in storage, or Golden Delicious types that pack a taste punch after turning color, may not lead the apple sales parade, but they can keep the apple display exciting.

“New varieties are important to keep people engaged in the category. People are looking for variety,” says Jeff Cady, produce and floral manager for TOPS Markets, Buffalo, NY.

A relative handful of “power apple shoppers” who take the category to new heights is on the prowl for new apples that promise different tastes and textures.

“The power apple shopper drives 44

percent of the dollar sales, but accounts for only 10 percent of shoppers, according to the 2014 Nielsen survey,” says Suzanne Wolter, director of marketing at Rainier Fruit Company, Selah, WA. “This power consumer

is more likely to purchase new apple varieties; the opportunity to sample apples, in-store advertisements, and freshness would increase their motivation to purchase.”

While Honeycrisp captured the hearts of



Consumers have responded well to the Gala apple since its first planting in Washington sometime around the 1980s, and plantings continue to increase.

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## FOR THE HEALTH OF IT

**A**pples were healthy even before healthy was cool, and that remains a focal point in selling Washington apples around the world.

“‘Go Healthy,’ is the promotional driver this year for the Washington Apple Commission in international markets. Health and nutrition is playing a significant role in consumers’ choices, and the Washington Apple Commission focuses efforts on this front,” says Todd Fryhover, president of the Washington Apple Commission.

Good nutrition also underlies most domestic apple promotion. “Health is always a win for marketing a fresh produce item such as apples, and of course, apples are among the healthiest items around,” says Brianna Shales, communications manager at Stemilt Growers, Wenatchee, WA. “We always include nutrition resources approved by the Produce for Better Health Foundation [a nonprofit organization whose mission is to achieve increased daily consumption of fruits and vegetables] on displays and signage for apples. We also put a big focus on the family grower in order to share our story. Consumers want to know who grew their food and where it came from.”

There can be too much of a good sales pitch, however, when it comes to the nutritional value of apples.

“Health is certainly a motivating factor for purchasing apples, however as marketers we choose to focus on the convenience and flavor attributes,” says Suzanne Wolter, director of marketing at Rainier Fruit Company, Selah, WA. “Consumers know apples are a healthy option, they don’t like being sold this message repeatedly.” **pb**

apple lovers, plant breeders are already working on new and improved versions of this latest star variety.

### The Next Generations

Washington growers are playing catch up in their ability to supply newly popular varieties like Fuji, Gala and Honeycrisp, which has enjoyed a meteoric rise to a spot just below the big five.

“Gala, Fuji, and Honeycrisp are the fastest



PHOTO COURTESY OF RAINIER FRUIT

growing Washington varieties in terms of future sales,” says Chuck Sinks, president of sales and marketing at Sage Fruit Company, Yakima, WA. “This past season Gala was in the 25 million box range, Fuji around 16 million boxes, and Honeycrisp around 6 million boxes. These numbers will continue to climb as more acreage is planted and younger plantings come into production.”

Some of the newest stars in the apple category have the fastest-growing volume coming out of Washington orchards. “Honeycrisp, Pink Lady, and the ‘Other’ category showed the highest volume growth respectively for the 52 weeks ending March 29, 2014. Fuji ranked fourth in volume growth coming in just under 10 percent,” says Wolter. “The ‘Other’ category included many of the club varieties entering the market over the past five years, and the volume growth was 60 percent; the ‘Other’ category has been growing at a staggering rate, and we don’t see this slowing much in the near future. These rising star varieties, including Honeycrisp and Pink Lady, are significantly impacting the dollars generated for the category and department overall.”

Unparalleled texture or mouth appeal has made Honeycrisp the leader among the newer varieties. “The consumer favorite, Honeycrisp, is definitely taking off in Washington state as far as new plantings go. We also see new strains of existing varieties like Fuji with better color and qualities going into the ground,” says Brianna Shales, communications manager at Stemilt Growers, Wenatchee, WA.

Because it takes three years for new trees to begin bearing serious loads of fruit, Washington growers are still working to supply enough Honeycrisp to meet the surging

**“The most exciting new variety is Pizazz, which is a Honeycrisp openpollinated variety. It is an apple that has captured the texture characteristic of Honeycrisp. The external appearance is striped, and attractive.”**

— Fred Wescott, , Honey Bear Tree Fruit

demand. “Honeycrisp continues its popularity surge. We’re going to increase in volume over the next few years, and go later into the season with them,” says Bob Mast, president of Columbia Marketing International, Wenatchee, WA. “When the industry first started with them, we had a short season that ended in December. Last year we had some in April and early May.”

But while growers work to catch up with demand for Honeycrisp, plant breeders are already working on a new and improved next generation.

“SweeTango, a Honeycrisp/Zestar cross, is another new apple that Stemilt proudly grows and markets on the West Coast. It comes off our trees before Honeycrisp and is a phenomenal apple to drive apple sales during the late summer and early fall months,” says Shales.

Another new experimental variety could

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improve the ability of Honeycrisp to hold up in storage, which is the Achilles' heel of the variety. "We're working on one that doesn't have a name yet, it's CN 121," says Mac Riggan, director of marketing at Chelan Fresh, Chelan, WA. "It's a Honeycrisp cross. It seems to store better, color better, and size better. It is a little sweeter than a Honeycrisp, and it tastes good coming out of storage."

The creators of Honeycrisp, Honey Bear Tree Fruit Company of Wenatchee, WA, are not satisfied with their miraculously

successful fruit.

"The flavor profile of Honeycrisp immediately starts a slow process of diminishing, and the flavor crashes around March," says Fred Wescott, president of Honey Bear Tree Fruit. "Our company has been heavily sourcing, testing and evaluating for potential new varieties."

One new variety that Honey Bear has already taken from experimental orchards in northern Washington to selected supermarket shelves is a new, improved Honeycrisp. "The

**"We marketed just under 700,000 boxes this year, and will have more than a million boxes next year. Kiku is also growing in favor. Consumers tell us it's like candy apple; It's the sweetest apple we have."**

— Bob Mast,

Columbia Marketing International

most exciting new variety is Pizazz, which is a Honeycrisp open-pollinated variety," says Wescott. "It is an apple that has captured the texture characteristic of Honeycrisp. The external appearance is striped and attractive. It has higher levels of sugar, acid and starch at harvest. The higher level of sugars and acid gives it a more complex and exciting flavor. It has a better appearance and flavor profile than Honeycrisp."

Most importantly, the superior chemistry at harvest should let this variety hold its flavor months after Honeycrisp has gone bland. "The flavor profile of Pizazz is sustainable for a longer period of time than Honeycrisp," says Wescott. "Pizazz harvests in October, about a month later, and carries itself into the summer. We think it is one of the most exciting apples out there. Pizazz is being introduced by the major retailers, and will become more widespread each year. The Pizazz is being planted in multiple sites. It is in the Brewster, WA, area as well as the East and Midwest. The acreage is in the hundreds."

This time around, the firm plans a tight quality control program where its newest variety is grown. "Because Honeycrisp is commercially successful, it is being planted in sites and regions it has no business being [planted in]. Pizazz is going to be a managed variety. We're not going to let it be planted in too many areas," says Wescott.

Honeycrisp is not a pretty apple, and its success may be a sign of taste more than anything. "Down the road, people are going to realize apples don't have to be pretty to taste good. Apples don't have to look like a Red Delicious or a Granny Smith. When you see a cameo of an apple to sell something, it is not a Honeycrisp," says Riggan. "People will be buying with their tastebuds. If it passes that test and is easy on the growers, it can be

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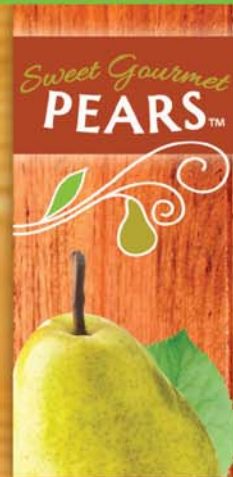
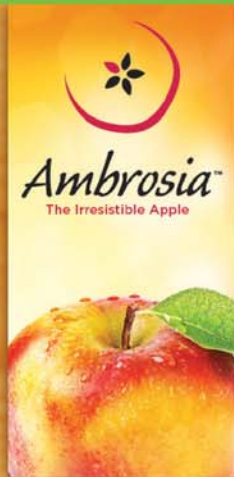
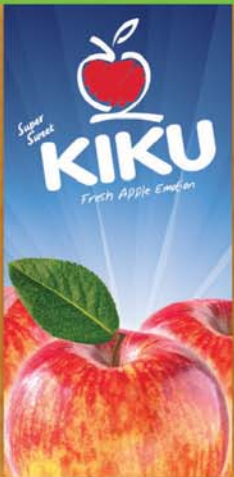
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**“The most effective ways to merchandise these latest varieties are to give them a secondary location utilizing a merchandising display unit, visible front-of-department location, or next to Honeycrisp. Feature them as a ‘Variety of the Month,’ and educate produce personnel about the flavor profile and seasonality.”**

— Suzanne Wolter, Rainier Fruit Company

commercially successful. Honeycrisp are not as available, so they have not penetrated the market as much.”

**The Wows Keep Coming**

Many of the larger Washington apple growing operations have a little something they have been working on in the backroom, waiting for the right time to generate new excitement.

“We feel we have sunk into three varieties that are standalones — Ambrosia, Kiku and Kanzi,” says Columbia Marketing’s Mast. He says Ambrosia continues to wow consumers, and it is the one variety that can change the taste preferences of die-hard Honeycrisp fans.

“We marketed just under 700,000 boxes this year, and will have more than a million boxes next year. Kiku is also growing in favor. Consumers tell us it’s like candy apple. It’s the sweetest apple we have.”

Because the newer varieties command a premium, Mast advises going the extra mile in letting consumers know what they’re getting for the money. “You’re putting them out there at a premium price, so you have to let consumers know what they’re getting. A tasting program is one way you can do it. Packaging and point of sale material is another way,” says Mast.

One larger independent grower gave away thousands of apples at a single event to let

opinion-makers know about a Golden Delicious-type that holds its flavor and texture after it turns golden.

“Opal is such a flavorful variety that once people try it, they are excited. We also spent a significant amount of money on food editors, bloggers and foodies. We handed out 10,000 apples at a show in Seattle,” says Keith Matthews, chief executive of FirstFruits Marketing, Yakima, WA.

FirstFruits is the marketing arm of Broetje Orchard, a family operation started in 1967 by Ralph and Cheryl Broetje. Broetje has exclusive North American rights on Opal.

“Opal is a natural blending of two apples. Seventeen years ago, a breeder in Czechoslovakia crossed Topaz and Golden Delicious,” says Matthews.

The Opal does not brown when you cut it, according to Matthews. But even better, it maintains peak flavor after turning golden.

“When I could pick a Golden Delicious that was just turning, it would taste delicious. You don’t see those in the market,” says Matthews. “We had our first commercial Opal crop three-and-a-half years ago. It’s a uniquely flavorful apple; it’s exceptionally dense. We harvested 150,000 Euro boxes in 2012, and it was cold at

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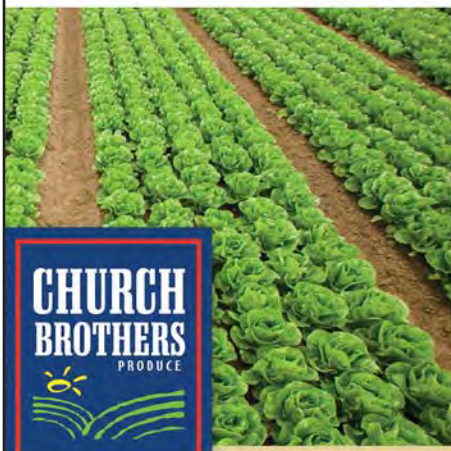
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— Brianna Shales, Stemilt Growers

bloom in 2013, so we had the same volume. This year, we think it will double. In five or six years, we think we will have a million cases.”

One of the largest Washington apple grower-shippers also has a cross that improves on Golden Delicious. “Stemilt’s signature variety, Pinata, is one of the more recent Washington grown varieties to be successfully received across the nation. The apple is a cross between three heirloom varieties, Golden Delicious, Cox’s Orange Pippin, and Duchess of Oldenburg,” says Shales. “This combination gives the apple a phenomenal crisp bite and a flavor that we describe as being classic apple flavor with a tropical twist. It is balanced by sugars and acids with a subtle pineapple finish.”

### Merchandising New Varieties

Retailers should be able to count on their suppliers to do the heaviest lifting in promoting newer apple varieties.

“We’ve partnered with Rainier Fruit to sell Junami and Lady Alice. We do Junami first and then Lady Alice,” says TOPS Markets’ Cady. “The people who are putting these things out have a good program. We park the bin right next to the other apples. The bin has the information on it, so we fill the bin and we roll. It’s pretty easy.”

These two varieties are Rainier Fruit exclusives, and the firm advises letting the customers see and know what they are getting for their premium dollar. “The most effective ways to merchandise these latest varieties are to give them a secondary location utilizing a merchandising display unit, visible front-of-department location, or next to Honeycrisp,” advises Wolter. “Feature them as a ‘Variety of the Month,’ and educate produce personnel about the flavor profile and seasonality.”

Another tip in developing a new apple program is to keep it simple. “We keep it to two or three varieties beyond the main ones. You don’t want to make it too complicated;



PHOTO COURTESY OF FIRSTFRUITS MARKETING

otherwise people get lost,” says Cady. “You try not to overlap.”

The challenge in promoting is greater with new varieties unfamiliar to most consumers. “Introducing a new variety to consumers is no easy feat, especially with more varieties coming out every year. Building large displays during key promotion times is the best way to be successful with a new apple at retail. The display should impact and excite shoppers while also telling them the great attributes and story behind this new variety,” advises Shales. “We think the tropical design for our Pinata apple packaging and merchandising materials is perfect for warming up produce departments during the winter months when the apple is available.”

Visible displays and informative signage are a good place to start with merchandising new varieties. “We recommend clear signage or using secondary displays to call attention to the new variety. Consumers are making choices as they enter the apple destination, and if a new variety is on the rack, the consumer needs to be given a reason to try it,” says Sinks from Sage Fruit. “An apple display needs to be well organized and varieties clearly marked. Many times from a distance a Gala apple may look like a Fuji or Braeburn, so having good color breaks in the displays can eliminate confusion and create an attractive display.”

In the case of a new apple variety, a complimentary taste is a good way to encourage power apple consumers to come back to the produce department. “Demos are always an effective way to increase trial and ultimately the consumer will decide the future of new varieties,” says Sinks. “Take the Gala for example, consumers responded well to this variety. Plantings steadily increased in Washington since the first plantings in the 1980s. If this apple wasn’t well received by consumers, then we would see a reduction in plantings instead of an increase.”

**pb**





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Consumers are investing more time and money to integrate juicing into their lifestyles, and every facet of the food industry is finding ways to accommodate this movement.

# Using The Home-Juicing Trend To Increase Produce Sales

Similar to the inspiration from foodservice, consumers look to replicate juicing options at home, and retailers possess the essential tools to recreate these healthy drinks. **BY MICHELE SOTALLARO**

**M**uch like the sleeper hit we all have come to know as kale, juicing shyly crept into the eating culture of consumers. The trend began as a complicated process only used by strict vegans and eventually transformed into a multifaceted way of life. Now our culture encompasses juice bars, juice food trucks, juices-to-go and home-juicing programs.

Juicing has become more than a cleansing or weight-loss gimmick. Consumers are investing time and money to integrate this form of consuming produce into their lifestyles, and every facet of the food industry is finding ways to accommodate this movement.

According to Jennifer Zegler, a trends analyst with Mintel, a consumer research agency out of New York City, as recently told in *Food Business News*, “Around half of juice drinkers consume it to increase their servings of fruits or vegetables as well as to improve their vitamin and/or mineral intake, and 24 percent of people who take vitamins, minerals, or supplements do so to compensate for poor eating habits.”

In April, Foxy Fresh Produce, owned by the

Salinas, CA-based The Nunes Company, launched the “Rejuicenate with Foxy” initiative aimed at educating consumers on the health benefits and how-to’s of juicing fresh produce.

“Juicing has been a boom for the produce industry, enabling the public to find a new love for fresh vegetables and fruit,” said Matt Seeley, vice president of marketing, in the company’s press release. “We’re launching this program to show consumers . . . that healthy food can taste great and be enjoyed in a variety of ways . . . and at the same time, help grocers and produce companies all across America sell more produce.”

The program includes juicing demonstrations and samplings at select grocery stores across the country. The company markets its romaine hearts and celery products for in-home juicing by providing recipes of juice blends as well as spreads made using the pulpy byproduct.

Harvest Sensations, the Los Angeles, CA-based specialty produce supplier, created the Kale Blast kit, which is a ready-to-juice fruit and veggie pack. The 12-ounce bag contains two servings of certified organic, pre-cut and pre-washed kale, apples, carrots, beets, celery

and cucumbers.

“The target audience [for the Kale Blast kit] is existing juicers who desire the convenience, and also those who are interested in juicing but do not have the time or knowledge of where to start to create nutritious and flavorful juices,” says Chris Coffman, president of Harvest Sensations.

## Effects Of Home-Juicing Trend In Produce

Industry players agree that retailers would be remiss to dismiss this trend as a fad or simply stock pre-made juices to pacify consumers looking to get involved with the movement.

“We’ve been doing business with Harvest Sensations and their kale items, so when they came out with this product [Kale Blast], we wanted to be one of the first stores to try it,” says Paul Kneeland, vice president of produce, floral and meat for Parsippany, NJ-based Kings Food Markets.

“Juicing has been very beneficial to produce departments as people start to invest more into this healthier lifestyle,” says Robert Schueller, director of public relations for Los Angeles, CA-based Melissa’s/World Variety Produce, Inc. “It’s



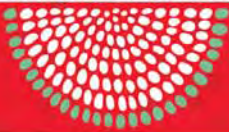
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an alternative to coffee by giving you energy; it's a healthier way to snack. Juicing is a way of life for younger generations, and baby boomers are looking to live longer by improving their eating habits. It's a great way to implement even more produce into your family's diet, because the average American is still not including produce in half their plate, so juicing would be a different way to meet that need."

Ernst Van Eeghen, director of marketing and product development for Salinas, CA-based Church Brothers, supplies a lion's share of restaurants and fast-casual dining establishments with leafy greens and vegetables. He says the requests for produce to use for juicing has "come to life" for the company over the past year or so.

### Merchandising Produce For Home-Juicers

The merchandising and display options for

New York City's Westside Market creates its own juice blends and merchandises them with baked kale chips.



PHOTO COURTESY OF WESTSIDE MARKET

the juicing audience are endless. It's important to offer a balanced mix of fruit and vegetables with displays so people don't over juice with an excess of sugary fruits or cruciferous veggies (belonging to the mustard family of plants).

"I always start people off with mild leafy

greens (such as spinach, romaine lettuce, radish greens)," says Tess Masters, author of *The Blender Girl* cookbook. "Great fruit pairings for beginners are strawberries, pineapple, things that will take the bitterness off the leafy green."

"A juicing display in stores would be

Side Note

## PRIME PRODUCE FOR JUICERS

Recognizing the juicing trend and how it plays a role in the lives of customers is the first step to selling produce to this niche market. The second step is showcasing produce to inspire and allure shoppers.

"Juicing originally focused on a lot of fruit, but within the past year and a half or so, we see more green juices with the leafy greens, ginger and turmeric," says Robert Schueller, director of public relations for Los Angeles, CA-based Melissa's/World Variety Produce, Inc.

The National Mango Board conducted research on juicing blends, and the organization reported that mangos pair well with other orange produce items such as oranges and carrots. Megan McKenna, director of marketing for the Orlando, FL-based Board, says "herbs enhance mango juices as well as ginger, basil, and mint; garam masala and hot peppers can make juices more interesting."

Local, seasonal, and organic produce are prime targets for novice juicers, devout juicers and professional chefs.

"We are currently working on special drinks with seasonal themes and healing factors," says executive chef Aline Faro of Boca Raton, FL-based Juice and Java. "Functional foods are my main focus when creating juice concepts. My menu is really big, and I use a spectrum of veggies. We go through a lot of produce

on a daily basis. I don't shop for everything at Whole Foods because that would be too expensive, but I will get specific items there. I work with different purveyors, which are organic companies that come from [Providence, RI-based] United Natural Foods, Inc. (UNFI) once a week from Sarasota, and then I have daily deliveries for produce." The juice bar also works with Pompano Beach, FL-based Johnny Mugs Wholesale Inc., Lauderhill, FL-based All County Produce Inc. and Delray Beach, FL-based retailer, The Boys Farmers Market.

Chef Faro says it's very helpful to get her shopping done for the restaurant when retailers merchandise by season and origin. "I prefer to work with local vendors, but we can't always get local from Florida — especially during summer time. Some produce does not eat well, so we get produce from California, which is excellent quality. The carrots are great now from California: they are tiny, don't have lots of water, and they taste sweeter. Avocados from Peru are big with nice color. Pineapples from Costa Rica are huge and juicy right now."

"We work with local and national organic producers of each of the items [in the Kale Blast]," says Chris Coffman, president of Los Angeles, CA-based Harvest Sensations. "To ensure availability, we have multiple producers of each input to our blends."

"I'm a seasonal eater, so I always like to buy local foods," says Tess Masters, author

Tess Masters, author of *The Blender Girl*, says cucumber, green apples, lemons and limes form the staples of her juicing repertoire.



PHOTO COURTESY OF TESS MASTERS

of *The Blender Girl* cookbook. "Typically, I'm always on the hunt for some type of leafy green. Cucumber, green apples, lemons and limes form the staple of my juicing repertoire. Papaya and mango are very cleansing foods and add great sweetness to my juices."

Masters feels it's economical to purchase fresh items individually, and it helps to mix things up in her daily juicing routines. "Too much of the same thing is never good. The key is eating seasonally and diversifying your juices. It's not just for culinary pleasure, but it yields the best results."

pb

## RETAIL JUICE TRENDS PROVIDE IDEAS FOR HOME

In March, Dallas, TX-based Red Mango announced the addition of fresh-squeezed juices in its frozen yogurt stores. Seattle, WA-based Starbucks Coffee Co. acquired Bellevue, WA-based juice bar and retailer Evolution Fresh and is rapidly expanding the brand's offerings through Evolution Fresh's retail stores in addition to Starbucks' own network of stores.

Emeryville, CA-based Jamba Juice is the mainstream pioneer that introduced whole-food blending and juicing in its outlets. The custom beverages feature core juicing fruits and vegetables such as kale, apple, pineapple, carrots, beets, orange, chia seeds and wheat grass. Several other food service outlets, such as the Boca Raton, FL-based Juice and Java juice bar and restaurant, added made-to-order juices to the menu.

"I am a chef and a health coach, so helping customers with juicing choices really makes my job complete," says Juice and Java's executive chef, Aline Faro.

Her customers use juices as a supplement to accompany their exercise and health-eating routines.

"My juicing customers are very loyal and most come in every day. They give feedback immediately about what they want and/or like. So I try to accommodate everyone," explains Chef Faro.

"When we first started experimenting with juices, we made orange juice, then we moved to grapefruit juice, and slowly started expanding," says Ian Joskowitz, chief operating office of the Manhattan-based Westside Market grocery chains. "We saw the trend with green drinks and other raw juices, so we tried a few things with kale and saw what customers were going for."

All four of the 24-hour market locations in Manhattan now have dedicated sections to homemade juices. The flagship store (located at the 110th Street and Broadway) has half an aisle of its more than 10,500 square feet of retail space devoted to its

private label, novelty juices.

"We tripled our juicing business from 14 months ago," says Joskowitz. "The feedback has been great, and we're constantly building our juicing options."

Westside Market follows a basic marketing philosophy regarding its juice sales. It does not proclaim certain juices are the best for particular health concerns. The store's two full-time "juice-tenders" make concoctions and let the customers decide. Joskowitz doesn't want to be a "snake oil salesman." He believes in letting consumers do their own research and make educated choices on what they need, and he will provide the products.

"At the end of the day, the consumers are looking for a particular benefit, and they've done their research," says Joskowitz. "We really rely on an educated consumer; they know what juice is beneficial for what they are looking to do with their diet."

pb

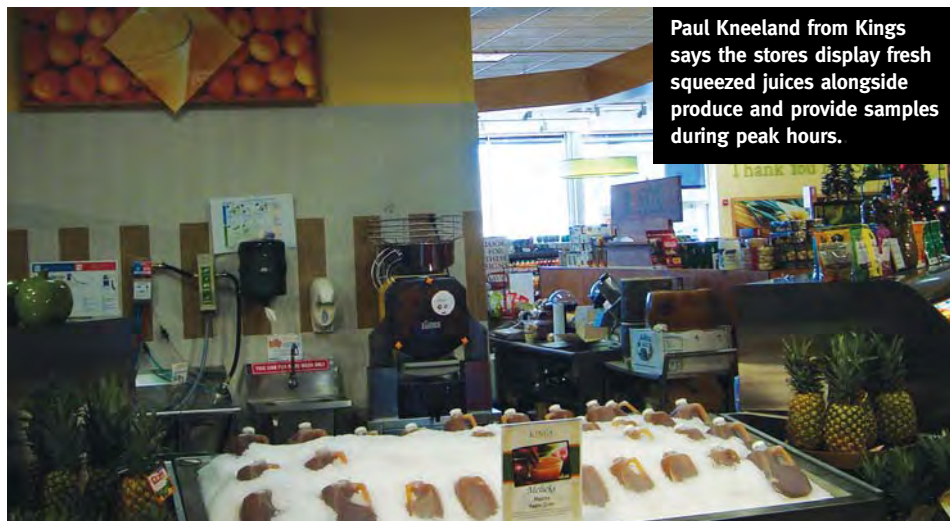
awesome," says Melissa's Schueller. "You can do a display around holidays or events and show how juicing recipes can be used as toppings to desserts, dressing for salads, or seasoning for burgers. Memorial Day through Labor Day is prime time for barbecues, and that would be a good time to showcase juicing items."

Harvest Sensations' Coffman suggests sampling the Kale Blast product with live demo stations during peak shopping hours. "It is sure to result in impulse purchases — since the key to getting consumers to cross-over to self-juicing is allowing them to have the confidence that they enjoy the taste of our blend," he says.

Kings' Kneeland says he is challenging his stores to try merchandising the Kale Blast in different areas of the produce department. "We have most stores display it with the kale section and other stores showcase it with the fresh juices," he says. "It seems to have better traction in the juice section."

If a retailer already has a juice bar in place, Kneeland says the best merchandising option is to have a display case in front of the bar with the homemade juices along with some samples. "Create your own mixes that can be exclusive to the store, then put pre-cut items in containers on display so people can simply grab-and-go."

Westside Market does just that. Ian



Paul Kneeland from Kings says the stores display fresh squeezed juices alongside produce and provide samples during peak hours.

Joskowitz, chief operating office of the Manhattan-based Westside Market grocery chains, developed a combination of popular juice blends from celebrity chefs and juices that he personally researched. The store's own Raw Detox Juice Formula includes beets, carrots, apples, celery, cilantro and ginger. A drink called the Beginner Green Raw Juice Drink contains apple, spinach, celery, orange, lemon and ginger.

"An endcap with signage of the popular juice blends would be great for retailers," says Melissa's Schueller. "People are looking for

alternatives to those 12-ounce bottled juices for \$5 to \$9, and a display like this would provide encouragement for customers to recreate those items at home for a tenth of the price.

"Juicing in store is such an easy demo to do," adds Schueller. You practically need a blender and extension cord. You can even make small batches and customize what people want. This could be one of the most exciting demos to do in a produce department. It's inspiring people to eat more fruits and vegetables in a totally different way." **pb**



Colorful displays created with printed corrugated boxes enhance the farmers-market appeal.

# Trade Packaging: A Produce Sales Partner

Paper or plastic has a whole new meaning these days, and manufacturers are trying to balance between functionality and demand. **BY BOB JOHNSON**

Packaging used to ship fruits and vegetables from the field to the store may not be as sexy as a ripe peach and colorful herb salad, but these containers play a vital role in the overall success of the produce program.

There is an ongoing battle of the brands as the purveyors of reusable plastic containers (RPCs) and recyclable cardboard make their cases to be most efficient and sustainable.

“Wal-Mart has their own RPCs, and they are pushing that,” says Carl Iverson, vice president for product development at LinkFresh, a Ventura, CA, firm that provides enterprise resource planning software, including software for producing traceability labels for produce containers. “Most of the large retailers have a specific RPC. A standard container makes it easier for the retailer to receive and warehouse.”

But many more modest chains still find it adequate to receive produce in corrugated cardboard boxes, which are then recycled.

“We are a small company, and we haven’t gone the ‘Wal-Mart way,’ where you reuse the

container,” says Jim Weber, produce director at Econofoods, Iron Mountain, MI. Econofoods is a small supermarket chain in Michigan and Wisconsin, and a subsidiary of the Nash Finch Company. “We get our produce in cardboard boxes, and we do recycle the cardboard.”



While the debate over the relative merits of paper or plastic continues, the greatest economic contribution packaging can make may be in helping to sell the produce.

## The Displays That Sell

In this age of high-tech traceability and sustainability initiatives, there is still something appealing about putting produce on the floor in baskets that have the farm-stand feel. “I’ve got things out there in baskets like kiwis, mangos and other small items,” says Weber.

Econofoods is not alone in this display approach, as there is a comfort factor favoring the retro feel of peach basket displays.

“The wheel turns around and around, and after 20 or 50 years we’ll be back to what we got rid of,” says Kurt Zuhlke, Jr., president of Kurt Zuhlke & Associates Inc., Bangor, PA. Kurt Zuhlke & Associates, also known these days as ProducePackaging.com, provides a range of corrugated and clamshell packages and accessories for fruits and vegetables.

The appeal of produce displays that evoke simpler times is so strong that even major

**“I think it’s important that mom and pop farmers be able to have their name on the display box so customers know where the food came from. That’s what people look for at the farm stand, and stores are starting to catch on.”**

— Kurt Zuhlke, Kurt Zuhlke & Associates Inc.

purveyors of plastic are doing their best to go retro. “The trend for farmers market-style merchandising is supported by the response to our new all-wood crate display system for reusable plastic containers (RPCs) that IFCO unveiled at United Fresh,” says Dan Walsh, President, IFCO Systems North America, Tampa, FL. “Retailers and growers showed a great deal of interest in this all-natural stacking system that combines the critical product quality and cost benefits of RPCs with real wood displays.”

This firm boasts a worldwide fleet of 165 million RPCs — nearly all of them used for produce shipping and display — and they are going for the old-fashioned wood look.

Some suppliers developed cardboard shippers with eye appeal that can be put directly out on the produce department floor.

“Columbia Marketing International [Wenatchee, WA] has a beautiful cherry display that we put right out on the floor,” says Weber.

Cardboard has one advantage when it comes to recreating in the supermarket the feel of buying from family farmers: It is the package that can easily be used by small farmers.

“As more stores are looking to buy from local farmers, they’re easing up on the other requirements. In the East and Midwest, stores are trying to buy produce from stores within 100 miles. Corrugated cardboard is the resource growers have to get product to the stores,” says Zuhlke. “I still see corrugated cardboard being the No. 1 delivery system for produce.”

While high-tech labels make it possible to trace produce lots as they move from fields of large growing operations to the warehouses of national chain supermarkets and on to the

stores, cardboard boxes are more amenable to bearing the name of a family farm.

“I think it’s important that mom and pop farmers be able to have their name on the display box so customers know where the food came from. That’s what people look for at the

farm stand, and stores are starting to catch on to that,” says Zuhlke.

Some retailers may want the farmer’s name, but they only want it on a product package that comes inside a standardized shipping case.

“There is still an element of wanting to

## GREEN, YES; ORGANIC, NOT YET

Consumers and retailers alike are focusing on going green, but they are not yet prepared to shell out the cash to go organic in packaging.

“As to the need or use of special packaging materials for organic produce, I am not aware of any trend in the marketplace for any such requirement,” says Roy Ferguson, chief executive at Chantler packaging, Ontario, Canada. “The Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI) [a national nonprofit organization out of Eugene, OR, that determines which input products are allowed for use in organic production and processing] has been active in reviewing materials for the packaging of organic produce. It makes sense to me that there should be a connection between organic produce and mandated packaging for organic produce. I personally have not had a request for OMRI-approved packaging — although we are OMRI listed [or approved for organic use].”

An impressive 7 percent of all the strawberries grown in California this year are organic, according to the Watsonville, CA-based California Strawberry Commission, but even in the heart of berry country, there is no demand for organic packaging to carry the fruit to market.

“Organic packaging is a bit more cost prohibitive than people want to commit to. We haven’t received requests for organic packaging, but there are opportunities for evolution of the technology,” says Tom Byrne, vice president for business development at Sambrailo Packaging, Watsonville, CA.

There is, however, interest in resources made from sustainable materials. “There have been packaging materials derived from a more sustainable source,” says Byrne.

In addition to Chantler, there are also other packaging purveyors who received a thumbs up from OMRI for their produce

packaging.

“Since 2008, IFCO RPCs have been OMRI listed as the first produce packaging option (transport or otherwise) to become certified for use with organically grown produce,” says Dan Walsh, president, IFCO Systems North America, Tampa, FL.

When it comes to organics and the environment, it may come down to the familiar battle of paper versus plastic.

“Environmental sustainability is critically important to the average organic shopper, and the IFCO solution generates less solid waste, consumes less water, reduces energy demand and lowers ozone depletion compared with display-ready corrugated boxes. In fact, for every 1,000 pounds of produce shipped in IFCO RPCs instead of corrugated boxes, growers and retailers save about 13 pounds of solid waste, 5 gallons of diesel gas and 360 gallons of water,” says Walsh.

But the cardboard package suppliers also have a thing or two to say about organic and sustainable. “Cardboard is essentially organic. It is made from trees and is naturally recyclable and compostable,” says Rachel Kenyon, vice president of the Corrugated Packaging Alliance, Elk Grove Village, IL.

“I don’t believe we have any organic packaging,” says Jim Weber, produce director at Econofoods, Iron Mountain, MI. “The boxes say the produce is organic, but I don’t think the boxes themselves are organic.”

So far, organic packaging is not a major concern because not many consumers have indicated they really care if the package carrying their produce is organic.

Although organic produce is available throughout the country, retailers are currently not pressured on whether the packaging is organic.

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**“The less the produce team members have to do to set up and replenish the stock, the more time they have talking to customers about the respective merits of fruits and vegetables and engage them in discussion on sourcing, quality and freshness.”**

— Dan Walsh, IFCO

promote produce from local farmers, but the retailers’ desire for efficiency drives what packaging growers use. They may have the farmer’s name on the clamshell rather than the case,” says Iverson from LinkFresh.

Another indirect, but potentially important, way packaging can help sell produce is to save set-up time for department staff so they can do the selling.

“There is a strong trend in grocery retailing to have the in-store staff engage the customer to boost the share of wallet spent with the chain. We are seeing retailers turn to RPCs to quickly and efficiently move product into the store in a way that presents both the product

and the display, so the shopper is engaged with the merchandising,” says IFCO’s Walsh. “The less the produce team members have to do to set up and replenish the stock, the more time they have talking to customers about the respective merits of fruits and vegetables and engage them in discussion on sourcing, quality and freshness, etc.”

Retailer efficiency in receiving and warehousing is a driving force in their packaging demands.

“One of the things large supermarkets are requiring is packaging specifications,” says Ron Myers, executive vice president of LinkFresh.

That means large chains may specify use of certain containers, and particular pallets, and even how the containers are stacked on those pallets.

IFCO has some success with packaging units that can be used to display produce items (such as avocados) next to the checkout lines.

“We see a move to merchandise produce throughout the store, either as stand alone displays to encourage impulse sales or as product in support of another category — for example, lemons placed at the seafood counter,” says Walsh.

**The Sustainability Debate**

Produce shippers and retailers need packaging that is more sustainable, and they need to pay less for it. Suppliers of trade packaging are competing to provide this improbable combination.

“The ultimate form of sustainability is recycle, reduce and reuse,” says Roy Ferguson,





chief executive at Chantler Packaging, Ontario, Canada. “Having packaging degrade in a land-fill site is a waste of an excellent resource. Some major retailers, including Wal-Mart, have found it more resourceful and cost effective to emphasize plastic containers that can be sanitized and used again.”

“There is a growing use of RPCs throughout the industry. Retailers are embracing RPCs more,” says LinkFresh’s Iverson. “They are easy to move, easy to track, and they are hygienic.”

But efforts to recycle paper and cardboard gave major impetus to the sustainability movement decades ago, and those efforts are increasing.

“The overall recovery rate for corrugated cardboard is approximately 90 percent. It has been a steady climb from 54 percent 20 years ago,” says Rachel Kenyon, vice president of the Corrugated Packaging Alliance, Elk Grove Village, IL. “Most grocery stores have balers, and they are recovering cardboard.”

The relative sustainability of cardboard that can be recycled, or petroleum-based RPCs that can be sanitized and used again, figures to be with us for a while.

“We are coming out with a comparison of the environmental impacts of RPCs and corrugated cardboard. There are some areas where we win, and some areas where we don’t,” says Kenyon.

Both cardboard and plastic package providers are emphasizing how much recycled material is in their products.

“The big trend is going to be a high level of

**“The overall recovery rate for corrugated cardboard is approximately 90 percent. It has been a steady climb from 54 percent 20 years ago.”**

— Rachel Kenyon, Corrugated Packaging Alliance

sustainability. There are new adhesives, and there is a higher use of recycled material in both plastic and corrugated cardboard,” says Tom Byrne, vice president for business development at Sambrailo Packaging, Watsonville, CA.

Another dimension of sustainability is the development of packaging that uses less material.

“There are always requests for less material and for maximum cube utilization. I think there are huge strides being made in designs that require less material. There’s a desire for lower cost. I think there’s always an opportunity for creative designs to drive down the cost and to break the mold with creative engineering,” says Byrne.

There is a desire for packaging that optimizes the use of space extending from the truck, to the warehouse, to the shrinking supermarket floor. IFCO’s Walsh says as the store’s footprint shrinks in size, similar to the trend in Europe and parts of Asia, there is a greater need to optimize floor space.

### **Saving Waste And Space**

Reducing the staggering amount of wasted food is a great challenge facing the produce industry, and package suppliers are coming up with many new wrinkles to help reduce this scandalous shrink.

“Chantler Packaging was prompted by a request from IFCO to design a cover to protect produce packed in RPCs from the drying effects of the sun and wind, as well as dirt and debris in the field,” says Ferguson. “Our latest RPC cover design eliminated the side seals, which were the weakest part of the cover and could break during application.”

Developments in the design of packaging should make it easier to improve efficiency in the use of space on the trucks, at the distribution centers, and in the produce department.

There are efforts to save space in produce packing, but caution is advised that not all of them work with softer fruits and vegetables.

“You see some single layers stacked on top of each other with open sides, but it doesn’t work too well with soft produce,” says Zuhlke of Kurt Zuhlke & Associates.

Packaging ultimately promotes sustainability by reducing waste in transit and on the produce department floor.

“Keep in mind that produce packaging primarily functions to reduce waste, keep the produce clean and germ free, inform consumers of its nutrition value, country of origin, and how to best prepare and serve,” says Ferguson. “Last but not least, it must maintain freshness; everything else is secondary.”

**pb**

# Atlanta Produce



## The diverse market that thrives on local and breeds talented farmers. BY KEITH LORIA

**A**s one of the South's largest cities, Atlanta is not only Georgia's capital, it's known for a thriving business center, world-class sports teams, and a diverse array of people who appreciate the city's fine arts and restaurants. What people might not realize is that it also boasts some of the finest produce in the country, with a full complement of wholesalers, packagers, distributors and retailers doing their part to keep the produce community strong.

"Georgia is such a fresh-market state, there's very little produce that's processed, and when you couple that with the demand of Atlanta, it makes for a very healthy industry," says Gary W. Black, the Georgia Department of Agriculture's commissioner. "Local consumers want to buy local, and I don't think that's a phenomenon in the marketplace. I think that's here to stay."

Interest in Atlanta produce seems to increase every year, says Charles Hall, executive director of the Georgia Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association, based in LaGrange, GA.

"A large number of people are interested in getting fruits and vegetables closer to home, so offering products from your region is a distinct advantage over those coming in from the West Coast," he says. "I think it's certainly on an upward trend."

The 75 members of the Atlanta Produce Dealers Association (APDA), which consists of wholesalers, retailers and distributors of food and produce, as well as associates from the businesses that work closely with them, operate up and down the Eastern seaboard and reach at least 35 states, reports Marcia Thomas, the association's executive director.



It's her job to alert the APDA members about the latest information affecting the produce industry and to provide a forum where matters of general interest could be discussed and acted upon.

"Produce is an important and growing industry for Atlanta, and we have been supporting it for more than 70 years," says Thomas. "I think the commissioner [Black] is doing a wonderful job, and people are getting exposed to what we offer. I think we have the finest produce workers in the world, and it's a family here."

In addition, the APDA is actively involved in legislative issues that affect its members and pursues special-interest community projects.

### The Players

Coosemans Atlanta Inc. was established in the State Farmers Market in 1993, led by Brian Young. Over the past 20 years, he has seen the company grow from three employees to more than 50.

"The city seems to be on a good path toward prosperity — things are very active on the restaurant level, the foodservice level and hotel occupancy. Things are very vibrant in the city, and along with that brings a vibrant produce trade," says Young. "Everyone is looking for variety. Being successful is just about being on top of the market and having good relations with your customers."

The company has long been at the forefront of the specialty produce business. "Coosemans is still all about the specialties, the unusual and the exotic," says Young. "The majority of our business is

the foodservice sector, and all chefs are looking for a distinction on the plate, and we strive to find new commodities for them.”

For more than 75 years, J.J. Jardina Inc., located on the grounds of the Atlanta State Farmers Market, has been a major wholesale-produce supplier for the Southeast, offering a full line of fresh fruits including apples, pears, grapes, berries, melons, stone fruit, citrus and more.

Atlanta’s own Royal Food Service has been distributing produce throughout Georgia for three decades and was one of the first companies to participate in the Georgia Grown program, a marketing and economic development effort to aid the state’s agricultural economies by bringing together producers, processors, suppliers, distributors, retailers, agritourism and consumers into one powerful, statewide community.

Nickey Gregory, president and chief executive of Nickey Gregory Co., which opened its doors in Forest Park section of Atlanta at the start of the millennium, says the company works diligently to take Georgia-grown produce all over the Southeast.

“It’s a center hub; you can connect with many markets within a 12-hour lead-time,” he says. “You can be in Miami, Pennsylvania, Ohio, almost to Michigan, and you can get to Little Rock or Houston out West.”

For the past 14 years, the company has been a full-line distributor, carrying more than 300 commodities in its 50,000 square-

**Currently, 126 businesses operate at the Atlanta State Farmers Market, which generates roughly \$475 million a year, \$50 million of which comes from state products.**

foot Atlanta location and in a 25,000 square-foot location in Miami, FL.

“As part of our many services, we offer a cross-dock operation and retail support with direct store delivery,” says Gregory. “We are able to service many customers with our new fleet of refrigerated trailers delivering within a 750-mile radius.”

### A Distinct Farmers Market

At 150 acres, the Atlanta State Farmers Market in Forest Park, GA, features a garden center, wholesale and retail activities, and is a major marketing hub and distribution point for fresh, locally grown produce in the Southeast as well as throughout the country.

“The market was built in 1959 and has a strong heritage here on the Southeast,” says Commissioner Black. “If you are in a school, a restaurant, at a convention or even at home,

and you live within a couple of hundred miles of Atlanta, there’s a pretty good shot that product came through this market.”

Currently, 126 businesses operate at the market, which generates roughly \$475 million a year, \$50 million of which comes from state products.

“It’s open 24 hours, 364 days a year [closed on Christmas] and has about 4,000 customers going through it every single day,” says Black. “It’s a pretty vibrant place.”

Several of the vendors have taken advantage of the state’s Georgia Grown program. “We believe this branding initiative can help grow jobs locally and expand Georgia products and services,” says Black. “It was important for us to build a business model with high respect for self-determination, so we could harness the power of local producers to help meet the demand of consumers.”

### The Organic Movement

The number of farms in Atlanta has increased in recent years. According to the Georgia Farm Bureau, the average age of a farmer in the state is just shy of 56 years old, but the sustainable, organic movement is attracting more young people to the industry. Membership in the Atlanta-based Georgia Organics (a member-supported nonprofit organization devoted to promoting sustainable foods and local farms in Georgia) has grown from less than 700 in January 2008 to more than 1,400 in 2014, with a great deal of



Chef and restaurateur Ford Fry owns No. 246 and JCT. Kitchen in addition to other Atlanta mainstays. Each establishment sources local and seasonal produce.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY EMILY SCHULTZ



When preparing the menu, executive chef and owner of Miller Union restaurant, Steven Satterfield looks at all local availability first and then builds his menu seasonally to include not only fresh produce, but also nuts, grains, dairy, cheeses, seafood, poultry, pork and beef.

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Chef Andrew Isabella of No. 246 restaurant says his menu includes lots of local and seasonal produce.



PHOTOGRAPH BY EMILY SCHULTZ

## Farm To Table

Atlanta is renowned for its bevy of unique eating establishments, many of which feature produce prominently on the menu.

Steven Satterfield, executive chef and owner of Miller Union in Atlanta, says customer demand for good-quality food with traceability is growing every day.

“We are in a climate zone that is very conducive to growing food,” he says. “There’s lots of sun, lots of vegetation and typically a good bit of rain. There are many local small farms in and around Atlanta, and we have a thriving farmer’s market community as well.”

When preparing the menu, Satterfield looks at all local availability lists first and then builds his menu seasonally to include not only fresh fruits and vegetables, but also nuts, grains, dairy, cheeses, seafood, poultry, pork and beef.

Satterfield is currently working on *Root to Leaf*, a book about cooking seasonal fresh produce at home, which will be published in March 2015.

“Local has become a coined term that is used very loosely these days,” he says. “However, purchasing from local farms is extremely important for several reasons. It supports local agriculture, supports the local economy, you understand where your food comes from and how it was raised. It allows access to fresher foods that did not have to travel across the country and waste fuel — it lets us be a part of the food community.”

historic West End neighborhood. “We are committed to growing produce that is safe and nutritious,” says Norman. “We promote a healthy and safe environment by demonstrating and teaching others how to grow safe foods. We promote healthy eating and encourage the youth in our community to come learn, plant and harvest with us.”

Aaron Jeffries, co-owner of Fresh Roots Farm, an urban farm in Atlanta that grows banana peppers, green beans, basil, melons, bell peppers, cucumbers, tomatoes and okra, says urban farms are important because they are the fabric of the local food movement, its infrastructure and its community.

“Local and urban farms provide heightened food security, increased nutritional value — assuming food is grown organically and naturally — and a better nutritional and ecological

If something is in season, Satterfield will find a way to add it to the menu. In the spring, he features such items as asparagus, nettles, fava beans, English peas, radishes, lettuces, strawberries and rhubarb. Summer brings in cucumbers, peaches, blueberries, watermelon, tomatoes, squash, peppers, new potatoes, eggplant and okra.

“Autumn includes fall squashes, hearty greens, chestnuts, apples, pears, nuts, mushrooms, chicories, and Brussels sprouts,” he says. “Winter includes cabbages, rutabagas, sunchokes, citrus, collards, kale, beets, and parsnips. These are just some examples, but there are more items that we include per season.”

Chef Andrew Isabella of Decatur, GA, mainstay restaurant No. 246 says local is extremely important to him. “There is nothing better to me than seeing the farmers walk right in from the fields bringing produce that was just harvested for you, and to see how proud they are about their product that you are using in the restaurant,” he says. “Atlanta is such a big city and still growing. The fact that a lot of the restaurants can get local produce in such a dense metropolitan area is absolutely an amazing thing.”

On any given day, his menu will include local produce used in different ways. Summer is big for squash, and the restaurant is currently sourcing the squash from three different farmers. **pb**

education for consumers,” says Jeffries.

“An urban farm like ours that may be more traditional, hopefully brings attention to the more terrific diversity of the Atlanta urban produce scene that includes operations like indoor aquaponics and hydroponics, urban mushroom farming, foraging groups, and urban composting companies,” says Jeffries.

Although Gregory, of Nickey Gregory Co., believes the state of Georgia is doing a good job with its Georgia Grown program, he would like to see more advertising and visibility on the national level.

“I think the USDA should put some money aside and do some advertising for us,” he says. “Atlanta is getting more versed with independents opening up with specialty foods, and it’s important that people are aware of all that it can offer.” **pb**

them in the Atlanta area.

The Morningside Farmers Market is the only farmers market in Atlanta that requires all produce to be certified organic. “Atlanta is lucky to have a great group of committed small farmers who are using sustainable and organic growing practices and contribute to an active local food system,” says Emily Nethero Golub, founder of Garnish and Gather, which prepares ready-to-cook meals with locally sourced food for those in the city. “Morningside Farmers Market has an amazing and dedicated following of shoppers who value the diversity of produce and the organic growing practices of the farmers to make it a great market.”

### Urban Produce

Over the past five years, small urban farms have regularly popped up within the city limits, bringing farm-to-table closer than ever before.

“We are seeing a lot of interest in urban farms and gardens, especially in revitalization efforts going on in downtown Atlanta,” says Commissioner Black. “We’ve seen these small businesses start up and supply the smaller markets, and they see some nice successes.”

Patchwork City Farms is a small, multi-family-owned urban farm, run by Cecilia Gatungo and Jamila Norman, in Atlanta’s

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# Onion Sales Are Nothing To Cry About

The produce staple continues to expand its versatility with retailers, foodservice and consumer-chefs. **BY KEITH LORIA**



PHOTO COURTESY OF CURRY & COMPANY

Research shows a basket containing sweet onions is 40 percent larger in sales than the average produce basket.

**Y**ellow, white and red onions are a staple in every produce department and every consumer's pantry, but even though they are a classic produce item that everyone has in their home, many in the industry believe there is so much more that can be done with them.

"A lot of people think an onion is an onion. We want to break that stereotype and help retailers and consumers realize they need to be experimenting and trying more recipes with onions," says Matt Curry, president of Curry & Company, based in Brooks, OR. "Currently there is a number of different onion trends; these trends are broken up by regions and demographics."

He says sweet onions are popular locally, regionally, and nationally. Although they are now available year-round with imports, they remain especially popular during summer.

"The two best known sweet onions during the summer are certainly Vidalia Sweet Onions from Georgia and Walla Walla Sweets from Walla Walla, WA," he says. "Along with these two varieties, many of the other growing regions offer their own locally grown sweet onions."

Sherise Jones, marketing director for the Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onion Committee, says consumers are learning that Spanish variety onions offer sweet natural flavor to cooked dishes. Reds are also gaining popularity for salads, pizzas and dishes that need an extra pop.

"Onions are becoming the 'go-to' when consumers want to put a new twist on classic home dining menu items like hamburgers, grilled cheese sandwiches and more," says Jones. "Home chefs can make totally new creations on old favorites by incorporating onions in their recipes."

Kimberly Reddin, director of public and industry relations for the National Onion Association, shares that less than 1,000 growers produce onions commercially in the U.S., yet onions are grown in more than 20 states, literally border-to-border and coast-to-coast.

U.S. farmers plant approximately 125,000 acres of onions each year and generate about 6.2 billion pounds a year, which represents about 4 percent of the world's annual supply.

"Onions are high in vitamin C and a good source of fiber as well as other key nutrients," says Reddin. "Onions are fat-free and low in

calories, yet they add abundant flavor to a wide variety of foods."

## Onions In Vogue

John Shuman, president and director of sales for Shuman Produce, a leading grower-shipper of Vidalia sweet onions, headquartered in Reidsville, GA, says sweet onions are still the category driver, making up for more than a third of total onion sales.

"Research shows Vidalias are the leader within the sweet onion category with 62 percent of total sales. Their volume growth outpaced both sweet and total onions, and they are the driver behind sweet onion category growth," says Shuman. "The trends we see remain consistent for RealSweet sweet onions with bagged and bulk product splitting our total sales with roughly 50 percent each throughout the year."

Ralph Schwartz, vice president of sales, marketing and innovation for Potandon Produce, headquartered in Idaho Falls, ID, agrees sweet onions are the favorite among consumers during the summer months. Outdoor cooking is typically a catalyst for pulling those sales through the retail channel,





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**“Steady sales in this category help solidify onions as a good anchor portion of the departmental business. If a retailer maintains a clean and well-rotated rack, then onions can be a solid profit and sales contributor.”**

— *Ralph Schwartz, Potandon Produce*



PHOTO COURTESY OF IDAHO-EASTERN OREGON ONION COMMITTEE

and organizations (like the Vidalia Onion Committee) are the catalyst for pushing them to retail — helping create a highly visible

marketing effort.

“Steady sales in this category help solidify onions as a good anchor portion of the

departmental business,” says Schwartz. “If a retailer maintains a clean and well-rotated rack, then onions can be a solid profit and

## The Retailer’s Role In Selling Onions

**R**on Williams, produce manager for Dorothy Lane Markets, a three-store grocery chain based out of Dayton, OH, says the store always runs deep discounts when onions are first in season and has seen this pricing strategy help the category grow.

“By putting it in the circular and promoting it with in-store signage, we can really see onion sales take off, and it maintains itself even when off sale,” says Williams. “When they sell quickly, it’s important to keep the displays looking good and not letting holes exist.”

Many agree, retailers should also make sure they are differentiating their onions from each other, and that will make everything easier for the customer. “A customer should clearly recognize it is sweet onion season when that season is in full swing, and the sweet onion displays need to be set apart from the yellow, red and white onion displays,” says Matt Curry, president of Curry & Company, based in Brooks, OR. “It’s important to understand your customer as well. You might have several stores in one region, but a store on the west side of town could have double the white onion sales as a store on the other side of town. By recognizing your customer base, you will maximize your onion sales.”

Teri Gibson, director of marketing for Peri & Sons Farms, Yerington, NV, says the company works with its retail customers

individually to provide innovative, creative, unique onion promotions to spice up the category. Ideas are well received and generally lead to increased sales. “It can be anything such as: high-graphic and consumer-interactive packaging, our Bloomin’ BBQ promo item, our Pink Breast Cancer Awareness promo packages, special combo bags, etc.,” she says. “Adding value helps retailers realize a higher dollar ring for a staple.”

John Shuman, president and director of sales for Shuman Produce, a leading grower-shipper of Vidalia sweet onions, headquartered in Reidsville, GA, thinks the most important considerations in marketing onions should be consistency in quality and effective merchandising. “Retailers can take advantage of the popularity of sweet onions through stocking a consistent product all year long to keep consumers coming back for more,” he says. “Retailers know displays drive sales. When it comes to sweet onions, those displays should occupy a highly visible space and include both bagged and bulk product to maximize sales for all demographics.”

Sherise Jones, marketing director for the Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onion Committee, says merchandising onions with potatoes is always a great idea because the two go well together; also incorporating menu suggestions (such as grilling sauces placed near the display) can be an easy way to encourage a suggestive sale.

“Grilling is really ‘hot’ right now. More home chefs are using the grill to experience healthy ways to prepare food for their families,” says Jones. “Onions are a perfect fit for this cooking style.”

Retailers can also encourage ethnic dining by simply using place cards to make menu suggestions. Selling onions in bags often forces consumers to take home more than they normally would when buying bulk onions.

As newer ethnic varieties of onions come to market, retailers can use these to bring more category diversity to their onion sets; but without volume, pricing is still relatively high and promotional windows are limited.

“One of the unique characteristics about onions is how their sales react to retail price changes — which is very minimal — since onions are such a key ingredient to so many meals, consumers tend to purchase them with less regard to the retail price than other commodities,” says Ralph Schwartz, vice president of sales, marketing and innovation for Potandon Produce, headquartered in Idaho Falls, ID. “With only dried onions being a close substitute, it becomes more of a necessity than a luxury when the price increases. Lowering costs will generate better short-term sales, but much of that is pantry loading and not increased consumption.”

**pb**

sales contributor.”

Schwartz adds there has been continual research on improving the sweetness of sweet onions through better seed variety selection and improved agronomics from the growing side of the business.

Teri Gibson, director of marketing for Peri & Sons Farms, Yerington, NV, says sweet onions continue to be a favorite. The company spent the past decade developing sweet varieties that will fill the fall and winter time slots — giving the American consumer a choice of a fresh domestic onion that meets food safety and traceability standards.

“The amounts of imported onions, especially from Mexico, that can flood the market definitely pose a problem,” says Gibson. “Imports are competing for market share when there are plenty of domestic supplies available driving the price down. We believe supporting U.S. produce when available is essential to our economy.”

At Curry & Company, yellow onions remain its overall volume leader and continue to be its main staple. However, Curry says, white onions also have a strong following and are a top seller with some of its customers — especially in regions with a strong Hispanic demographic.

Anthony Mazzuca, commodity manager with Tanimura & Antle, Salinas, CA, says the sweet Italian red onions the company offers right now out of Hollister are the best quality of the season.

“Retailers recognize the niche that this onion fulfills in their onion category,” says Mazzuca. “Our strongest business growth continues to be on the retail side with both our consumer bags and loose PLU stickered onions.”

### Winning Display Techniques

As a way to support the efforts of retailers, the National Onion Association provides tips on storage, handling, and merchandising to improve knowledge on the segment and help with category movement and sales.

“Attractive, well lit, and easy-to-access displays full of produce are visually attractive to consumers,” says Reddin. “Since we eat with our eyes first, a few simple tips can help make the most of a display space in the produce department and help maximize onion category profit margins.”

Among the tips the National Onion Association offers for displays are: using loose or bulk displays, placing the onions (not dumping them) in the displays with tops up and the root end down, all loose skins or damaged onions

should be removed, and newer onions should be on the bottom for proper rotation.

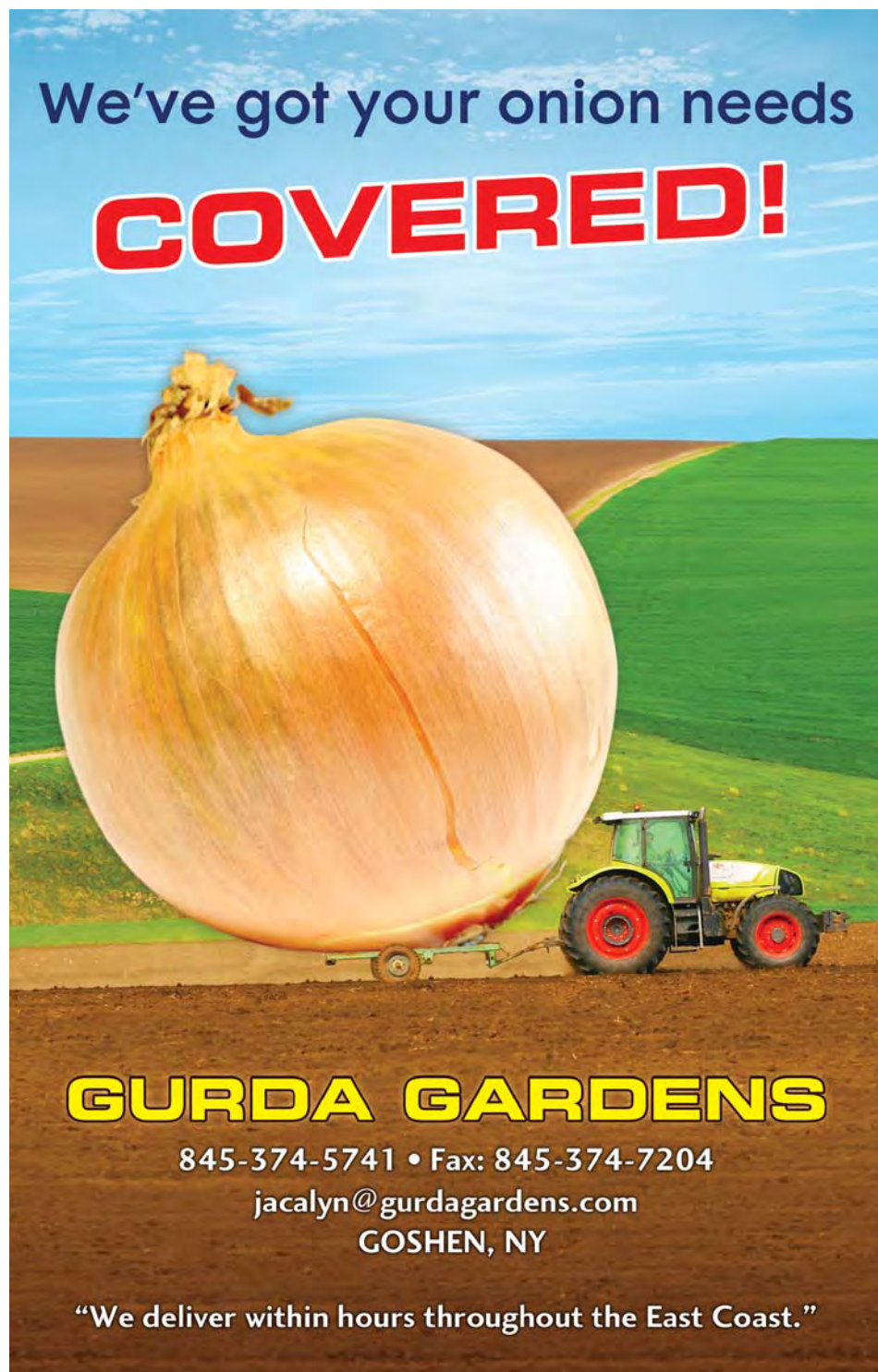
For bag or box carton displays, the Association recommends stacking them neatly, so they are easy to remove. Keep small mesh bags at 3, 5, or 10 pounds and displayed at or near waist level and arranged in an attractive manner with no more than 2 to 3 bags deep on a table. Including small bags of pearl and boiler onions to build specialty onion sales.

As with everything in the produce department, the key is keeping things looking fresh,

well stocked and tended. Many also recommend using dry tables with plenty of air flow, especially during summer months when onions are coming from the fields fresh.

“Using packages of onions to create division between the areas displaying bulk onions can help the display look colorful and clean,” says Peri & Sons’ Gibson. “The more a retailer can differentiate the sweet onions from the yellow onions, whether it’s with signage or separate positioning, the better.”

According to Dorothy Lane’s Williams, in



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**“Consider displays outside of produce to maximize sales during the summer and fall months when grilling is top-of-mind for consumers. Sweet onions make the perfect accompaniment to burgers, sausage and chicken on the grill, and research shows merchandising them together increases sales of both products.”**

— John Shuman, Shuman Produce

the fall, potatoes go through respiration giving off moisture as they cure. Onions don't like the moisture as it creates mold. For that reason, onions store better in dry environments. He suggests displaying potatoes across from onions, but not side by side to ensure optimal shelf life for the onions.

Retailers should also consider secondary sweet onion displays during peak season promotions and holidays to account for additional sales volume.

“Consider displays outside of produce to maximize sales during the summer and fall months when grilling is top-of-mind for

consumers,” says Shuman. “Sweet onions make the perfect accompaniment to burgers, sausage and chicken on the grill, and research shows merchandising them together increases sales of both products.”

This year, Shuman Produce offered retailers a unique opportunity to take its Vidalia sweet onions out of the produce department and merchandise them in additional locations. “We created a new high-graphic display unit featuring imagery of several recipes and our onions fresh from the field, which draws consumers’ eyes and utilizes a small footprint — but creates a big impact,” says Shuman.

**Promotional Ties**

A retailer should be cognitive about how to best cross-merchandise onions and use them in store promotions.

“Onions can be included in nutrition and health promotions as well as seasonal, holiday, and special events,” says National Onion Association’s Reddin. “For example: onion dips and salsas for the Super Bowl, Cinco de Mayo and other parties; onions for burgers/kebabs during BBQ season; recipes featuring onions as a vegetarian main dish; or an alternative to other vegetable side dishes for any day of the week or a holiday.”

Curry of Curry & Company recommends retailers run promotions such as BBQ tips with onions, fresh summer salads with onions, and fresh summer fruit salsas with onions during the summer months. “It is a great time to take advantage of all the flavors and traditions of summer and to figure out how onions can be a part of them,” he says.

According to Shuman, merchandising sweet onions alongside products that can be combined with produce, as an easy meal solution draws consumers in and raises the ring at the register. “Cross-merchandising sweet onions with other produce items such as

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peppers, tomatoes, mushrooms and bagged salads will increase sales,” he says. “Research has shown a basket containing sweet onions is 40 percent larger in sales than the average produce basket.”

For 2014, Peri & Sons launched its Bloomin’ BBQ Onion — a delicious, low-fat alternative to the traditional deep-fried blooming onion. “Our premium colossal yellow onions are individually net-wrapped with a bright, colorful tag,” says Gibson. “The tag invites consumers to scan the QR code or go online to get our

Bloomin’ BBQ Onion recipe. We also provide several low-fat, dipping-sauce recipes on the page as well.”

The National Onion Association conducted a study, which revealed 50 percent of consumers who purchased pre-packaged salads also purchase onions. That’s why yellow, red, and white onions cross-merchandise well with produce items like pre-packaged salads, tomatoes, cucumbers, bell and chili peppers, oranges, mangos, celery, and carrots.

Tin foil, bamboo or metal skewers, roasting

bags, and slow cooker liners are non-perishables that pair well with onions. Knives, onion keepers and cutting boards may also be impulse buys that can be effectively worked into or near the onion display.

Shuman Produce offered a coupon promotion as a turnkey program to retailers in 2014. This strategy was based on research that proved merchandising items for a full meal together can positively affect purchase behavior.

“We partnered with Bubba Foods’ BUBBA burger, Johnsonville Sausage and French’s Mustard to offer discounts on their products in a coupon booklet attached to our RealSweet Vidalia Sweet Onion bags,” says Shuman. “The consumer gets the added value of a meal solution along with discounted ingredients while the retailer sees an increased ring at the register thanks to a larger basket.”

Shuman Produce ships its bags of Real-Sweet Vidalia onions directly to retailers with a coupon booklet attached to the front of each bag. Along with offers from each of the partner products, each retailer-specific coupon booklet provides a recipe utilizing each of the items.

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seems to feel more education for consumers is essential, especially about the large differences in the types of onions one can eat.

“We continually share and update our customer base with our year-round programs. We focus a lot of attention on sweet onions because we know there are still customers out there who haven’t tried them,” says Curry. “I think the co-branding that

## Packaging Trends

**S**ome recent advancement in packaging technology allowed producers and retailers to come up with some new ways to better market onions.

“From convenient pack sizes and unique formats, to environmentally friendly materials, to high-impact graphic floor bins, retailers and producers can partner in creative ways to boost value, movement and profit,” says Kimberly Reddin, director of public & industry relations for the National Onion Association.

In fact, the National Onion Association lists several packaging trends on its website that it uses to educate retailers on the best way to package onions. New trends include: packing loose with small stickers on each bulb; using smaller mesh bags with a header label or wine glass label and carry-fresh bags; utilizing packaging that showcases an onion’s quality and/or has space for product tips or recipes; and taking advantage of QR codes to offer consumers a way to get additional information immediately. **pb**

**“We continually share and update our customer base with our year-round programs. We focus a lot of attention on sweet onions because we know there are still customers out there that haven’t tried them.”**

— Matt Curry, Curry & Company

happened with sweet onions (such as Applebee’s with Vidalia Onions and Burgerville with their Walla Walla Onion rings) help create additional consumer demand.”

As a way to capitalize on the many ethnic varieties of onions and play to the growing trend of experimenting with recipes in the home, Curry believes retailers need to make these opportunities easily accessible. “The use of social media is a great way to do this,” he says. “Capitalize on the various trends and make sure you’re a part of that ‘conversation’ in social media platforms.”

Onions are so versatile that they will continue to be the staple of home cooking. With consumers learning more about the health benefits of onions, it’s a produce segment that should continue to see success.

“We recommend retailers use signage to clearly identify onions on their displays to educate consumers on the traits and uses of each one,” says Shuman. “We offer POS materials that include short descriptions to inform shoppers about how sweet onions are grown and why they are sweet.” **pb**

# Make Room For Mushrooms

Mushroom versatility and high profit-per-square-foot lead retailers to consider maximizing space to meet shoppers' demands. **BY ANTHONY STOECKERT**



It is recommended to keep a good selection of mushroom varieties, packages, sizes and value-added mushrooms based on each store's demographic preferences to increase mushroom sales.

**T**he common perception of mushrooms was pretty simple: They were used in salads and as side dishes, and few people knew the difference between a button and a Portobello.

That's changing. More mushroom varieties are on the market, and shoppers are buying them and cooking with them in new and exciting ways. Experts say that's because mushrooms are flavorful, nutritious, and lead to reductions of red meat usage in meals for protein — making dinner healthier while not sacrificing taste.

“We are seeing a trend toward more plant-based and meatless diets,” says Kathleen Preis, marketing coordinator for the Mushroom Council, based in San Jose, CA. “Consumers are also becoming more adventurous with the cuisines they prepare at home. Many consumer trends trickle down from foodservice menus where we are seeing mushroom blendability take a more prominent role.

“As consumers become more familiar with the mushroom blendability technique, they will incorporate mushrooms into more meals,” adds Preis. “The demand for specialty mushrooms also continues to grow as people cook more diverse and ethnically inspired meals.”

## Growing Demand For Mushrooms

Bob Besix, senior vice president of sales and marketing for Country Fresh Mushroom Co. based in Toughkenamon, PA, says when it comes to mushrooms, consumption is ever-increasing, and usage is increasing both at the foodservice and retail markets.

“The trends are the ‘swapability and blendability’ options as well as the healthiness of mushrooms,” he says.

With blendability progressing as a major



trend, the Mushroom Council is promoting the use of mushrooms with ground meats, such as beef, pork and poultry.

“This [technique] boosts flavor, enhances moisture so the meat doesn't dry out, and reduces calories as well as fat and sodium in the hamburger, meatball, taco, meatloaf, Sloppy Joe, or whatever recipe the blend is used for,” says Joe Caldwell, vice president for Monterey Mushrooms, based in Watsonville, CA.

“This has caught on in a big way in schools and commercial dining establishments across the country. Many restaurants now offer blended meat-and-mushroom items. We expect much more from this concept as it is further developed in all channels.”

According to Caldwell, the growing popularity of cooking shows has led to more “food exploration,” especially among younger people. That factor is leading to more mushrooms sales.

“Mushroom growth trends have steadily increased, especially with brown varieties [Portobello, Cremini and Baby Bella] but also with all specialty mushrooms,” he says. “Organic sales continue to experience substantial growth — doubling in the past five



years. We expect these trends for organics, specialties and browns to continue for several more years.”

### Exploring Varieties

Variety is the spice of life, and it’s the key to selling more mushrooms. Customers are looking beyond the standard button, Shiitake and Portobello mushrooms, and they are seeking different varieties.

“The growth segment in mushrooms is in the specialty mushroom category,” says Meg Hill, director of sales and marketing for

Gourmet Mushrooms, based in Sebastopol, CA. She notes growth is at about 15 percent. That’s especially true at the retail level. “Mushrooms are one of the more popular items for retailers, and it’s a category that’s moving,” she says.

Hill explains Gourmet Mushrooms produces forest mushrooms grown on wood (a mushroom’s natural food source) compared to more common varieties, which she says grow on sterilized fertilizer.

Brian J. Kiniry, vice president and general manager of Oakshire Mushroom Farms head-

**“Cross-merchandising to create meal solutions is one of the most effective choices a retailer can make. Thinking through a specifically designed promotional strategy is another key to year-round success and continued growth in the category.”**

— Joe Caldwell, Monterey Mushrooms

quartered in Kennett Square, PA, which is the exclusive distributor for Dole Mushrooms, says there is a growing demand for brown mushrooms. “Especially Cremini instead of white button mushrooms.”

The growing popularity of these different varieties is a result of mushroom buyers seeking options.

“Mushrooms are one of those things where if you don’t like them, you don’t like them. But if you like them, you’re looking for new experiences in mushrooms,” says Hill.

That thinking, she says, has led to Maitake mushrooms being Gourmet’s fastest-selling variety. “It has a wonderful, almost floral scent and it has complex flavor,” she says.

Caldwell says variety also involves offering consumers choices in packaging size. “Cross-merchandising to create meal solutions is one of the most effective choices a retailer can make,” he says. “Thinking through a specifically designed promotional strategy is another key to year-round success and continued growth in the category.”

### Fresh Ideas For Display

Obviously, mushrooms need to be displayed properly at the retail level so shoppers can find them, but there are additional steps retailers can take to increase mushroom sales. Country Fresh Mushroom’s Besix says retailers should keep mushrooms fresh and rotated. “Consumers buy with their eyes, so fresh, clean and well-stocked sells more,” he says, adding stores should offer promotions and hold demonstrations that share different options for mushrooms.

Oakshire Mushroom Farms’ Kiniry suggests maintaining a temperature of under




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## Promote Flavor And Nutrition Components

**T**he Mushroom Council is promoting a meatloaf in which mushrooms take the place of some of the meat.

“Using finely chopped mushrooms to match the texture of ground meat — or using them in place of some of the meat in recipes to make everyday dishes more healthful and delicious — is taking the foodservice sector by storm,” says Kathleen Preis, marketing coordinator for the Mushroom Council, based in San Jose, CA. “College, commercial and noncommercial chefs are rallying around mushrooms as a way to improve their menus.”

Meg Hill, director of sales and marketing for Gourmet Mushrooms, based in Sebastopol, CA, says substituting half the ground beef in a meatloaf with mushrooms results in a meal that’s healthier and tastier than a standard meatloaf. “It’s going to be juicier,” she says. “It’s going to have more flavor, and it’s going to have less fat. People are catching onto the fact that they can expand their protein. If a serving of meat loaf is 6 ounces, for example, a mushroom meatloaf serving is just 3 ounces of meat, which means less fat.

“Kids actually preferred meatballs and meatloaf made with mushrooms and they didn’t even know they were eating mushrooms,” says Gourmet’s Hill.

“It also results in a healthier meatloaf,” Hill says, noting mushrooms boost immune systems.

Preis says this “blendability” technique was featured in a report by the Culinary Institute of America’s Menus of Change initiative, which focuses on healthy, sustainable and delicious foods. The report noted that blendability is on the rise and included a case study on creating healthy foods people actually will want to eat.

The idea is to take flavor to new levels, which the Mushroom Council is doing by working with chef Jehangir Mehta, owner of New York City’s Graffiti restaurant and a former Iron Chef contestant, to offer dishes that use mushroom blendability in new ways. **pb**

45 degrees for mushroom displays. “When it gets above 50 degrees the mushrooms start to degrade, and the display starts to look old and fragile,” he says. “Try adding a recipe for a mushroom meal to help the consumer find new ideas to use mushrooms each week.”


When asked if retailers are devoting enough space to mushrooms, Kiniry says they generally do. “If the display gets too large, then the produce shelf life starts to suffer,” he says. “As the produce areas in stores are getting larger, I

think including organic sections and good signage can remind people to find and buy mushrooms.”

Caldwell says most stores do a fair job in terms of the space devoted to mushrooms, but he notes space is just one part of a mushroom-promotion program. “Mushroom sales show tremendous growth for retailers who develop a comprehensive category plan that supports their overall objectives,” he says. “Mushrooms are not only versatile in their recipe applica-



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Monterey Mushrooms offers tailored consumer information to meet the needs of shoppers at different retailers. Materials include recipe cards (such as grilled Portobellos), shelf tags as well as nutritional and usage information.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MONTEREY MUSHROOMS

tion, but in how they are used in their merchandising application to meet the stores' priorities. Monterey's Category Development team spends valuable time in discovery with our customers to match their category strategy with their overall objectives, leading to a set design that is right for their shoppers needs."

### They Eat Well

Variety not only refers to types of mushrooms, but also the way mushrooms can be used. Oakshire's Kiniry suggests offering prepared vegetable medleys that include mushrooms. This also taps into the versatility of mushrooms. "Add mushrooms to salads or as a kit with cheese products to make a quick and healthy choice," he says. "The ideal mix is what sells in the region or store. Although sliced product can be perceived as 'value-added,' it has to be fresh and aesthetically pleasing to the eye. I think brown, white and Shiitake mushrooms are a good start. I would focus on whole white mushrooms while offering sliced brown and Shiitake for omelets or to add to a grilled steak or burger."

The Mushroom Council's Preis notes mushrooms also can be displayed with meat, especially during the summer when people are grilling. "Pairing mushrooms next to seasonal produce or grilling meats to encourage consumers to incorporate mushrooms into their summer grilling menus can also improve the excitement around the mushroom display and keep them top-of-mind to the consumer,"

she says.

"It is also recommended to keep a good selection of mushroom varieties, packages, sizes and value-added mushrooms based on your store's demographic preferences to increase mushroom sales."

### How To Market The Modern Mushroom

Making mushrooms noticeable takes some effort because produce sections offer more SKUs than ever. As Preis notes, mushrooms need to stand out in a sea of "color and noise" in the produce section.

Because 75 percent of buying decisions are made in-store, Preis says point-of-sale materials can help shoppers break out of routine habits.

This Mushroom Council is also taking initiative to get stores improving their mushroom displays. For the summer, it's presenting a "Swap It or Top It Retail Display" designed to motivate the produce shoppers, and the entire store. The contest involves using the Mushroom Council's materials and creative efforts from retailers to craft exciting displays.

Preis says retailers generally should work with suppliers to determine the correct space devoted to mushrooms based on the gross profit per-square-foot. "Sales inventory should be reviewed periodically to see how many varieties of mushrooms should be stocked and how much space should be allocated to them," she says. "The retailer should then establish plans with their suppliers for sales, promotions and the selection of merchandise."

When it comes to marketing, Country Fresh Mushroom's Besix says stores can sell more mushrooms through secondary displays that pair mushrooms with other products, leading to more promotional opportunities and cross-merchandising. "Stores need to ensure they are offering the different varieties that meet their consumer demographic," he says.

Besix says produce managers have a fundamental influence on customers in regards to mushrooms that will sell. "The produce managers know the customers and their cultures. They are best-suited to meet needs of the customers," he says. "The produce managers require continual education about the many varieties that are available so they can stay in front of, and in step with, customer demands."

Oakshire's Kiniry says stores should use planograms that highlight the demand for brown mushrooms. "Lead with the Portobello in the summer for grilling and use the Cremini to offer more selections especially around the holidays," he says. "The brown mushroom has a better shelf life than white mushrooms, so the display will look more appealing to the consumer."

### Sharing The Joys Of Mushrooms

Educating shoppers as to the healthiness of mushrooms is another marketing opportunity. Mushroom companies are doing that by offering health information on labels, as Dole Mushroom does. Stores can pitch in by sharing the Mushroom Council's suggestions on the use of mushrooms in everyday life for another marketing opportunity.

"Also as more restaurants are offering mushroom options, the consumer wants to try and make the same meals at home," says Kiniry. "Find or create a similar recipe for a local restaurant meal using mushrooms."

Caldwell says Monterey Mushrooms offers tailored consumer information to meet the needs of shoppers at different retailers. Materials include recipe cards, shelf tags as well as nutritional and usage information.

"In addition, many retailers are now reaching their shoppers online or through social media," he says. "Monterey partners with the retailer to connect with the online shopper to get them the timely information they need."

Caldwell also notes while variety is important, there isn't a formula that will work in every store. "There are some overall guide rules that consider consumer trends in sales and match with competitive activity," he says. "Stores have to consider their own shoppers and their own department strategy to decide what meets their shoppers' needs."

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# Raising Raisin Profits

The produce department has become a prime and profitable spot for merchandising these tasty bites. **BY LISA WHITE**



**Marketers suggest facing raisin displays adjacent to the produce department to increase incremental purchases.**

**W**ith the advent of healthier eating and the proliferation of dried fruit as snacks and ingredients in the American diet, it is no surprise raisins are no longer just relegated to the grocery aisle.

“Dried Fruit volume has been increasing for the past decade despite higher prices,” says Jane Asmar, vice president of sales and marketing at National Raisin Co., based in Fowler, CA. “The most positive momentum has been with retailers where dried fruit is merchandised in the produce arena. Category velocity is highest in Produce due to low shrink rates and complementing seasonality. Dried fruit sales are strongest after the summer fruit sales peaks.”

In the year ending December 30, 2013, total dollars for dried fruit were up about 2 percent, while raisins increased 3.4 percent, according to Chicago, IL-based IRI’s data and research analysis.

Private Label is 23.2 share of dried fruit dollar sales versus 18 share of total store across all categories.

A growing number of retailers is realizing the potential of this product and capitalizing on its appeal by expanding displays into the produce department.

## Experimenting With Location

At Anaheim, CA-based Northgate González Market’s 39 California stores, raisins are located in both the grocery aisle as well as the produce department. Different brands and varieties are sold in each section.

“We just started carrying raisins in our produce department two years ago,” says Alfonso Cano, assistant produce director for Northgate González Market. “This is more of an impulse item, and customers were asking for them here.”

Dried fruit is merchandised in Produce for retailers representing about one third of the all commodity volume.

“The stigma of the grocery aisle is these items are not as fresh,” says Cano. “Raisins sold in the produce department are perceived [by the consumer] as better.”

There are a number of cross-promotional opportunities in produce departments with other similar and complementary items, which makes this a good fit.

“For example, one chain chose to display raisins in the salad case,” says Chad Hartman, director of marketing at Tropical Foods, headquartered in Charlotte, NC. “We found that, when cross promoted with lettuce, stores can see bigger increases in sales.”

Although Yuba City, CA-based Sunsweet Growers primarily sells prunes, the company also produces jumbo red raisins.

“In terms of location, retailers will often merchandise raisins in the grocery aisle adjacent to the produce department,” says Stephanie Harralson, Sunsweet’s product manager. “When people shop the perimeter of the store, they’ll make an incremental purchase when they see raisins in that area.”

Another benefit to adding raisins to the produce department is related to cost control. Because these items are less perishable, dried fruit has lower shrink and higher profitability than fresh, which is beneficial to the produce department’s bottom line.

Going the specialty route with raisins also can raise register rings. Sun-Maid Growers of California, based in Kingsburg, CA, experiences consistent growth with its organic raisins.

“We have about a third of the total U.S. tonnage of organic raisins, which are roughly 8 percent of our business,” says Rich Paumen, Sun-Maid’s senior vice president, retail sales and marketing. “Most of these items are being sold in retail stores.”

## Care And Handling

One of the biggest benefits of securing a

## Although raisins don't have strict handling requirements or need refrigeration, manufacturers recommend not storing these items by pungent produce, such as onions or garlic.

spot for raisins in the produce department is the ease of care and handling.

"For us, having raisins in the produce department is a luxury, since we deal with perishables, and this item is not classified as one," says Northgate's Cano.

Depending on the product type and packaging, the shelf life of raisins varies from six months to a year and a half. The quality also will depend on how this dried fruit is stored.

"Raisins should be kept in a cool, dry place, ideally in an air-tight container," says Hartman. "Refrigeration can prolong the shelf life, but not by much."

Although raisins don't have strict handling requirements or need refrigeration, manufacturers recommend not storing these items by pungent produce, such as onions or garlic.

Because dried fruit, such as raisins, reduce a produce department's shrinkage amounts, these items can help retailers better manage profits.

Food safety plays a more relevant roll with the quality of this dried fruit.

Sun-Maid incorporated RFID (radio frequency identification) technology, which allows the company to track raisins back to the farm or grower.

"In today's environment, with recall issues, we have the ability to know exactly how the raisin is grown and what pesticides, if any, were used," says Paumen.

Fortunately, to date, there has never been a raisin recall. This is due to the dryness and low PH of the product, which prohibits pathogen growth.

### Marketing And Merchandising

Produce department displays work best when used to remind people about the item and its many uses and health benefits.

The produce departments at Northgate display raisins in 3-foot tables underneath other shelving.

"We usually run them under unorthodox produce tables," says Cano. "We have shelving displays underneath the tables, and that's

where we put raisins."

The stores also include raisin specials in circular ads about every quarter. These items are highlighted for back to school lunches and at the end of the year for baking.

Tropical Foods finds great success in marketing raisins in conjunction with store loyalty cards as well as with tear off recipe cards.

"These items are typically merchandised with dried fruit in the snack mix area, but we try to encourage retailers to cross-merchandise by salads, as well," says Hartman.

The company's Chilean Flame raisin, which is three times the size of traditional raisins, has clear packaging, so the product is visible to buyers.

During winter months, when produce isn't as abundant, manufacturers recommend situating dried fruit and raisins in high traffic transmission points between the grocery aisle and produce department.

"Consumers are more likely to gravitate toward dried fruit in the colder months," says SunSweet's Harralson. "We definitely see

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seasonality with fall through spring being the most popular time for dried fruit sales.”

Sunsweet recommends its raisins be cross-promoted in the baking aisle, but also in the cereal section. In addition, the company provides in-store displays for retailers starting from July through November for back-to-school promotions.

“In terms of merchandising raisins within the produce department, stores we work with have standard shelving as well as displays for back to school, Halloween, the winter holiday

season and then Easter,” says Sun-Maid’s Paumen.

Much of the raisin merchandising focus is on health and nutrition. Sun-Maid works with registered dieticians at supermarkets to get the word out on this dried fruit’s nutritious properties.

“Studies over the past couple of years show daily consumption of raisins help with heart health, obesity and athletic performance,” says Paumen.

Sun-Maid’s most recent successful promo-

## Raisin Varieties

According to Sun-Maid Growers of Kingsburg, CA, about 90 to 95 percent of natural seedless raisins are made from Thompson Seedless varieties, which includes Selma Pete, DOVine and Fiesta, while the remaining percentages are made up of varieties including Flame Seedless, Ruby Seedless and Sultana.

Golden raisins are made from the same varieties of grapes used to make natural seedless raisins. On the vine, the grapes are the same green color, but different processing methods and the treatment of sulfur dioxide give golden raisins their bright, golden color. Also, instead of being dried in the sun, golden raisins are dried inside large dehydrators. **pb**

tion was for its yogurt-covered raisins in pastel boxes for Easter.

The company shifted its marketing efforts to focus more on children. “There are so many options for everyone in terms of raisin snacks, but especially for children,” says Paumen. “Our marketing is geared to bring kids back into the equation.”

Sun-Maid also moved into recipe development to remind consumers how raisins can be incorporated into different dishes.

Raisins are marketed in numerous ways, including with price reductions, ads, displays and other promotional vehicles. “Our data suggests displays are the most effective tool to sell more raisins, probably due to its impulse nature. By comparison, the most effective prune promotions tend to be price driven,” says Asmar.

National Raisin is primarily a private label supplier, so its customers usually specify packaging and labeling. Most retailers include product usages such as recipes, as well as benefit call-outs. The company advises its customers to merchandise around baking tie-ins, in addition to back to school and Halloween.

“Although dried fruit is not an item that’s a top seller or big draw, the growth is there — especially since it’s new to our department,” says Cano. “This is a healthy snack alternative for customers looking for nutritious options.”

Raisins remain a good fit for the produce department, because it is still a fruit and it’s also where consumers expect to find this item.

“Our best sales are in the produce department rather than in dry grocery,” says Paumen. **pb**

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## MERCHANDISING “MAGIC”



In all my years in produce, one of the most common events that happens in the Monday morning staff meeting is a tirade by the operations manager about the “superior” presentation observed at a competitor’s store. He begins by describing this absolutely beautiful presentation of all the commodities and ends with the quote “how can they do that?” The true answer is not something that the operation manager wants to hear — as it

is as simple as the allocation of enough hours to properly display and merchandise the produce. He cannot believe that the answer is that simple and that some sort of “magic” is necessary for such a presentation. In other words, “he just doesn’t get it”.

This type of conversation and comment has become nearly universal throughout the industry. This is due to, once again, the preoccupation of upper management with efficiencies and cost-cutting. Everything done by upper management is designed to streamline the preparation and operation of the department from the hours allocated to the design and functionality of the fixtures in Produce. Every aspect of how the produce department is presented and operated is regulated by the all-powerful concept of efficiency and cost control. Nearly every major retailer has a system designed to squeeze every possible hour out of the operation in the produce department to save costs and ultimately drive profit. Any attempt at innovation and/or creativity is stifled by these constraints on labor. Each employee is required to complete his assigned tasks within this timeframe, and the pressure to accomplish this is intense.

This is why the employees in most major retailers are completely “task-oriented” and do everything to ignore customers, or any other outside influence, so that they can complete their “task” in the time allocated. Additional effort to do anything outside the assigned task is discouraged. Even the design of many newer fixtures is predicated on the ability of the fixture to make the efficient use of time and allow for the building of displays in the most efficient manner. All of this results in basically providing a consistent, sterile look to the produce

department. The lack of hours necessary to add any “personality” to the presentation reinforces this clinical look for the produce department. The customer, as expected, reacts less than enthusiastically to this presentation and provides them with a low level of expectation as well as a lower perception of the retailer.

In contrast, the retailer that possesses merchandising “magic” is one that has a full commitment to providing resources and support to every member of the produce department. This results in proper and innovative merchandise presentations of each commodity. This approach is not rocket science, but simply the best use of the natural appeal of each produce commodity to attract and encourage customers to shop. These retailers are motivated more by selling product to the customer than by making a profit at all costs. They realize that the more produce they

sell, the more profitable they become without sacrificing the presentation and appeal of the department.

This type of commitment and support becomes a culture that feeds and drives superior implementation and execution of innovative merchandising plans. The establishment of this culture is a self-fulfilling prophecy — as success encourages additional innovation and drives creativity. It encourages each member of the team to continually strive to promote the department and improve the presentation. In this process,

everyone learns more about the department and its commodities. Staff is able to provide information to customers, which develops additional motivation for the customer to make more purchases.

This “magic” is not anything new. Highly successful retailers used this approach for many years and earned a strong reputation with the customer for the best presentation of produce. This presentation highlights the beauty of the produce as well as the quality of the items on display. It creates a “halo effect” that reinforces the perception that this particular retailer is the best place in the market to buy produce.

Produce is a simple business: you buy the best quality produce, and you sell the best quality produce. Utilize the natural beauty and freshness of each produce commodity to offer customers the highest quality fresh produce in the most appealing manner. It is a simple formula that can help all retailers to improve their presentation and increase their sales. That’s the reason we are all in the produce business. **pb**

**Produce is a simple business: you buy the best quality produce, and you sell the best quality produce. Utilize the natural beauty and freshness of each produce commodity to offer customers the highest quality fresh produce in the most appealing manner.**

**By Don Harris**

Don Harris is a 40-year veteran of the produce industry, with most of that time spent in retail. He has worked in every aspect of the industry, from “field-to-fork” in both the conventional and organic arenas. Harris is presently consulting on all subjects of retail, category development and sales strategies, among others. Comments can be directed to [editor@producebusiness.com](mailto:editor@producebusiness.com).

# STAN SMITH OF SCOTT FARMS INTERNATIONAL TALKS SWEET POTATOES

Interview by Steven Maxwell



**S**cott Farms International is the European arm of North Carolina-based sweet potato specialist Scott Farms and is responsible for representing and promoting the grower throughout the continent. Based in the U.K., Scott Farms International moved beyond its initial status as an importer and marketer to drive expansion of Scott Farms' business across Europe. Its move into new product areas recently

launched sweet potato chips successfully.

Following a long career in sales and senior management within the fresh produce sector, Mr. Stan Smith established two companies: Harris & Smith Produce Sales and Fast Fresh Distribution. After selling his companies in 1994, Mr. Smith moved on to develop businesses within the financial services sector, but returned to fresh produce in 2006 to head up Scott Farms International as chief executive.

**Q: How did you become involved with Scott Farms, and how was the international business established?**

A: Scott Farms was growing sweet potatoes and was exporting some to the Netherlands and the U.K. Until 2006, the most they had shipped was 30 sea freight containers in one season. They asked me to take a look at their business in 2006, and I very quickly agreed with their view that there was an opportunity here to take things further.

Together, we formed Scott Farms International and started importing sweet potatoes into the U.K. and into the rest of Europe through a supplier. We're now approaching the end of our eighth crop and shipped around 1,250 containers, which is equivalent to 22,500 tonnes.

**Q: What steps were taken to increase sweet potato sales across Europe, given that consumption levels there have never been high?**

A: We rebranded about four years ago, which turned Scott Farms International into a global trade brand. During that time, we introduced the "Love Sweet Potatoes" marketing campaign. Four years ago, when we started the campaign, we conducted a survey and found that only 45 percent of U.K. supermarket shoppers had bought sweet potatoes. We recently did that same survey and found that the figure had increased by 15 percent.

We started marketing into mainland Europe four years ago, originally via a partner in the Netherlands. Consistently, this financial year, over 65 percent of our tonnage will be non-U.K. sales, so we're really developing our international business.

**Q: How has Scott Farms International's private-label sweet potato chips been received by European consumers?**

A: Two years ago, we took the decision to market the Scott Farms' name directly to consumers, so we introduced our first consumer

product: sweet potato chips [in the grocery section of retailers]. During the growth of Scott Farms, we developed a business for industrial use. We were servicing the vegetable chip market; but at that time, no one was doing sweet potato chips, they were just a part of mixed vegetable bags.

Previously, the problem was continuity of supply. We continued to invest year on year in our infrastructure, and we now have the capability to ship our Covington sweet potatoes on a 52-weeks-a-year basis. We could see an opportunity with continuity of supply for 100 percent provenance, single-sourced sweet potato chips.

We carried out a series of roadshows to take the product directly to consumers, and that has been very successful as well as a key component of our international development.

A result of all this investment is that tonnages to the processing industry increased fivefold. Two U.K. grocery retailers (Marks & Spencer and Sainsbury's) are now selling sweet potato chips under their own brands, and Scott Farms International is supplying both. It's helping us to create a market for the product.

**Q: What plans does Scott Farms have to further develop its international expansion?**

A: Over a two-year period, Scott Farms is investing \$7m in new storage facilities and equipment in North Carolina. We're now two-thirds of the way through the construction of the best sweet potato packing facility in the world, which will be totally automated and operational by late October. This investment demonstrates our aim to stay at the forefront of the market and our commitment to increase exports of North Carolina sweet potatoes.

The investment will also help us increase the efficiencies that, like any business, we have to achieve, and it enables us to increase our ability to service the growing needs of our existing customers.

In Europe, we currently have a major presence in the Netherlands, Germany, France, Spain and the Scandinavian countries, as well as the U.K.

**Q: Has the marketing of sweet potatoes in Europe been made difficult due to a lack of understanding among consumers about how they differ from potatoes?**

A: We can't do anything about the fact that our vegetable is called a "potato" even though it is completely different. Sweet potatoes are versatile, they represent good value for money. In terms of nutrition, it doesn't get any better.

They are a standalone vegetable and are totally different from conventional potatoes. However, people are increasingly choosing to eat them instead of normal potatoes. In the U.K., they are called "potatoes." As a result, they are stocked alongside potatoes; but one of my ambitions is to see them stocked as a vegetable in their own right. It's going to take a few seasons, but my ultimate aim is to see sweet potatoes in every customer shopping trolley every week.

**Stan Smith**

Fresh produce industry veteran, Stan Smith, set up Scott Farms International with fourth generation members of the Scott family in 2006. He now holds the position of chief executive for the entire company's international operation, guiding its expansion in Europe and beyond.



# SEPTEMBER IS

## Fruits & Veggies—More Matters Month!

### Top 5 ways to showcase fruits and veggies.

These ideas are great to use not only in September, but year-round!

5

Spread the “all forms matter” message through social media initiatives.

4

Highlight a fruit or veggie of the month through in-store displays and signs.

3

Add a link to your website for [FruitsAndVeggiesMoreMatters.org](http://FruitsAndVeggiesMoreMatters.org).

2

Place the Fruits & Veggies—More Matters logo on labels and packaging.

1

Join the fight against obesity by supporting Produce for Better Health Foundation!



Visit [PBHFoundation.org](http://PBHFoundation.org) for more marketing ideas to promote fruit and vegetable consumption.

# MAN OF THE HOUSE

**G**eorge Tanimura, co-chairman of the board for the Salinas, CA-based fresh vegetable grower, Tanimura & Antle, recently celebrated his 99th birthday, known as his 100th year in Japanese culture. Around 600 friends, family and business associates joined him at his birthday gala.

“George has been an invaluable mentor to three generations of the Antle family, as well as to countless others at Tanimura & Antle,” said Mike Antle, senior vice president and partner of the company. “His generosity with his knowledgeable life experiences will be with us all forever.”

George was born in San Juan Bautista, CA, on July 2, 1915. The eldest of 12 siblings, George attended grammar school in Castroville during the 1920s while also working thinning iceberg lettuce on his father’s small farm.

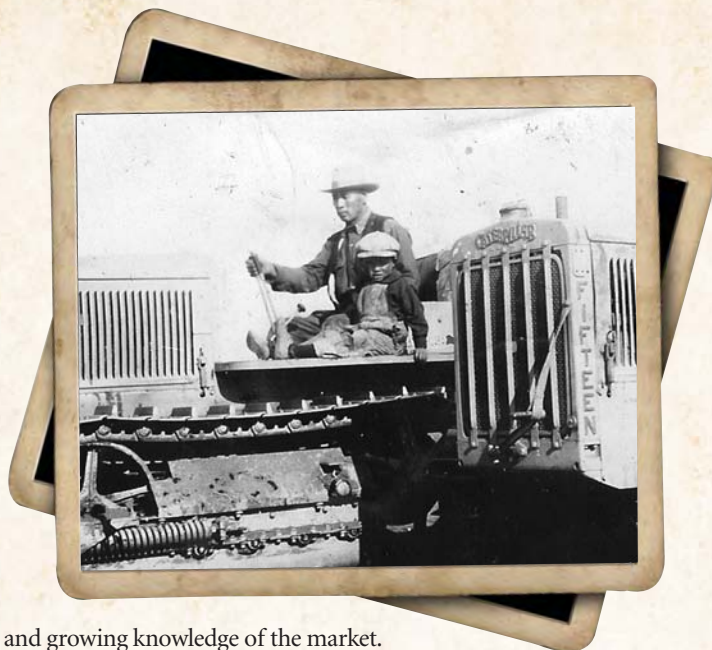
“George was always passionate about lettuce,” says Gary Tanimura, executive vice president and nephew to George.

Both of George’s parents died when he was younger, and by the age of 16 he was entrusted to be the man of the house as well as the family farm. “I didn’t even go to high school; I had to go to work,” says George.

“George learned early that the farmer’s best fertilizer was his shadow,” says chief executive, Rick Antle.

George has come a long way from his humble beginnings perched up on a tractor next to his father, Kichigoro Tanimura — like so in this photo taken in the early 1920’s when George was about 5 years old.

In the late 1950’s, the Tanimura’s began to grow exclusively for Bud Antle. Bud, and his son Bob Antle, began working closely with the Tanimura family. A great partnership began when the Antle’s strong packing and shipping expertise was joined with the Tanimura’s hard working spirit



and growing knowledge of the market.

The Tanimura & Antle families combined years of experience and knowledge to establish a produce company with quality products, innovation and dedication to growers, customers, consumers and employees. Today, as one of the largest independent lettuce growers in the United States, Tanimura & Antle farms more than 45,000 acres of rich, fertile farmland and ships a full line of premium fresh produce products throughout North America, Europe and Asia.

The *Blast from the Past* is a regular feature of *PRODUCE BUSINESS*. We welcome submissions of your old photos, labels or advertisements along with suggested captions. Please send materials to: Editor, *PRODUCE BUSINESS*, P.O. Box 810425, Boca Raton, FL 33481-0425, or e-mail [info@producebusiness.com](mailto:info@producebusiness.com)

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September 8-10, 2014

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**Join your colleagues in Washington to make a real difference on produce industry priorities and shape a better business future!**

**United Fresh**  
PRODUCE ASSOCIATION



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FOOD SAFETY



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## Your Sides

These days, many of your restaurant's patrons crave healthy side options with their entrees.

Del Monte Fresh has the perfect solution with our Fresh Cut Fruits and Vegetables.

Our pre-cut, packaged fruits and veggies allow you to save valuable time in the kitchen and reduce waste.

So cut yourself a break. Let Del Monte Fresh do the work for you.

