

# producebusiness

MARKETING • MERCHANDISING • MANAGEMENT • PROCUREMENT

## Supermarket Dietitians Act As Industry Ally In The Fight Against Childhood Obesity



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### INSIDE:

THE PUNDIT LOOKS AT THE CONTROVERSY BEHIND BOOTH BABES  
SPECIALTY CITRUS • CLAMSHELLS • SUPER BOWL MARKETING  
CHILEAN EXPORTS • MEXICAN PRODUCE • MUSHROOMS  
TROPICAL PRODUCE • PEANUTS  
THE NEW YORK PRODUCE SHOW AND CONFERENCE  
POST-SHOW REVIEW





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We'd love to talk to you and share testimonials from some of our satisfied customers. Contact your local DOLE sales representative, or call **831-641-4200** to find out more.







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## THIS MONTH'S WINNER



**Tim Green**  
**Director of Farming and Marketing**  
**Hollar & Greene Produce Co**  
**Boone, NC**

To say Tim Greene has been working in the produce industry for a long time would be an understatement. "I've been in the business since I was born," he says. Tim's father and grandfather, Dale and Lige Hollar, started Hollar and Greene Produce Company in 1963. Now Greene and his two bothers work for the family-owned grower/shipper business based in Boone, NC. "We all participate," he says.

Greene's job as director of farming and

marketing involves food safety as well as sales with major national accounts and organic sales with cabbage and potatoes. "We are considered category professionals when it comes to cabbage," says Greene. Hollar and Greene offers organic and year-round cabbages.

Greene has always been a fan of PRODUCE BUSINESS. "I've been reading it for as long as it's been out," he says. His favorite part is editor-in-chief Jim Prevor's columns. "I go straight to Jim's article before reading the rest," says Greene. "I really appreciate his insight."

**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 March issue of PRODUCE BUSINESS. The winner must agree to submit a color photo to be published in that issue.

### WIN A HEAT AND COLD THERAPY MASSAGER

This handheld massager provides both hold and cold therapy, from 113 to 35 degrees Fahrenheit. The two-speed percussive head generates 2,100-2,500 rpm that penetrates deep into muscles to relieve tightness and knots. The cordless unit has a rechargeable battery that provides up to 45 minutes of massage from a one-hour charge using the included AC adapter.



### QUESTIONS FOR THE JANUARY ISSUE

- 1) Who started Booth Ranches in 1957? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) What are the two contact numbers for D'Arrigo Bros. of New York? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) What third-party agency does New Limeco use for its HACCP certification? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) What is the website for Paramount Citrus' Cuties? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) What are the two sizes offered by Pom Wonderful in its ready-to-eat arils? \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) What variety of orange is deemed by Sunkist as "The Power Orange"? \_\_\_\_\_

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Position \_\_\_\_\_  
 Company \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_  
 State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Photocopies of this form are acceptable. Please send answers to:  
**JANUARY QUIZ PRODUCE BUSINESS • P.O. Box 810425 • Boca Raton, FL 33481-0425**

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\*Source: Nielsen Perishables Group FreshFacts®, 52 weeks ending 03/31/12  
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## NEW REPUBLICANS IN HOUSE AG COMMITTEE BODE WELL FOR INDUSTRY

By Julie Manes,  
director of government relations | **United Fresh**  
PRODUCE ASSOCIATION

**T**he fresh fruit and vegetable industry is gaining some allies as the 113th Congress prepares to be sworn in next January. The newly appointed Republican members of the House Agriculture Committee hail from California, Florida, Illinois, Michigan and New York — all states with robust agriculture production and economies.

In the last session of Congress, the Republicans controlled the House of Representatives, but their House Agriculture Committee presence suffered a lack of members who represented districts with specialty crop production and interests. To be sure, our industry was able to achieve great legislative successes with the help and cooperation of specialty crop champions such as Rep. Steve Southerland of Florida's 2nd district and Rep. Scott Tipton of Colorado's 3rd district, among others. In addition, Rep. Frank Lucas, the chairman of the committee who represents Oklahoma's 3rd district, was receptive and responsive to the needs of the specialty crop industry throughout the process of crafting the Farm Bill that passed through his committee. Representative Lucas will remain Agriculture Committee Chairman in the 113th Congress.

However, in order to balance representation of other agriculture sectors on the Committee, a greater number of members from specialty crop areas were needed. Fortunately, the majority leadership in Congress has responded to that need by appointing new members to the House Agriculture Committee who are well positioned to augment the industry's stance with their own appreciation of the contribution that specialty crops make to the agriculture and broader economies.

Most of the new Republican members of the committee are also new to Congress. Congressman-elect Ted Yoho, who will repre-

**THE MAJORITY LEADERSHIP IN CONGRESS HAS...[APPOINTED] NEW MEMBERS TO THE HOUSE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE WHO ARE WELL POSITIONED TO AUGMENT THE INDUSTRY'S STANCE WITH THEIR OWN APPRECIATION OF THE CONTRIBUTION THAT SPECIALTY CROPS MAKE TO THE AGRICULTURE AND BROADER ECONOMIES.**

sent Florida's 3rd district, has a long background as a veterinarian. Doug LaMalfa, Congressman-elect for California's 1st district, is a rice farmer who was endorsed by the California Farm Bureau for his leadership while a state senator and dedication to the state's fresh fruit and vegetable industry. Congressman-elect Chris Collins (NY-27) has spent 36 years in the private sector as a small businessman, and campaigned with the promise to protect family farms and to maximize the economic impact of agri-business in the district. Rodney Davis, congressmen-elect for Illinois' 13th district, has worked on agriculture, farm policy and rural development issues for most of his career. Congressman-elect Richard Hudson (NC-8) also campaigned boosting the agriculture economy as a top priority, citing the dangerous effects of over-regulation on the industry.

However, several new members of the committee have already spent time in the House and bring their experience and clout to their new appointments. Rep. Jeff Denham, who represents California's 19th district, has an extensive background as an almond farmer and entrepreneur working to address the logistical needs of producers as they get their products to the marketplace. Rep. Dan Benishek also represents an area in northern Michigan with a high concentration of fruit

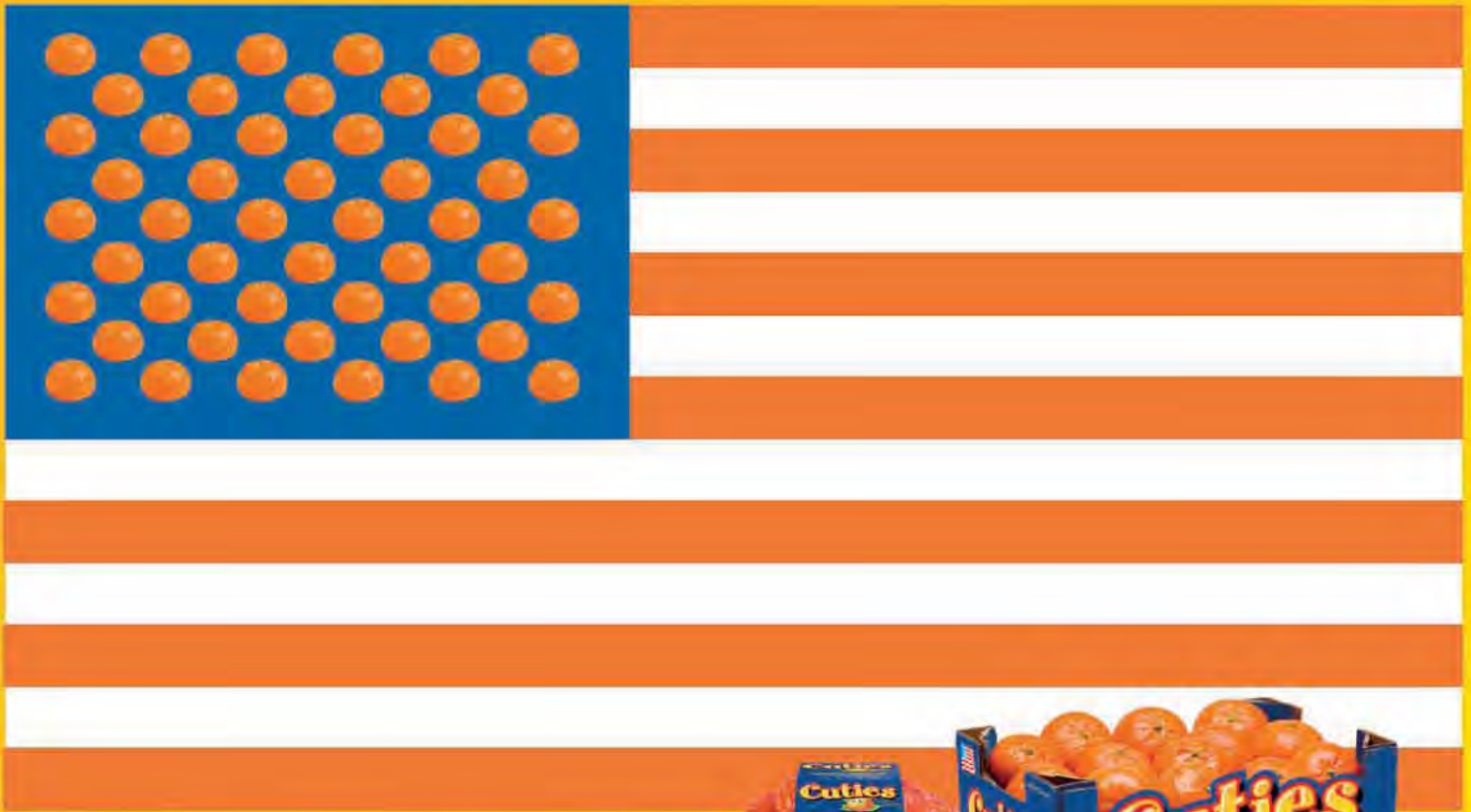
and vegetable production.

"I am pleased to welcome our new Republican Members to the House Agriculture Committee. I look forward to working with all of them in the next Congress as we continue to ensure the health and vitality of production agriculture and rural economies," said Rep. Lucas in a release.

As of press time, Democratic leadership had yet to release their recommendations for members of the House Agriculture committee, but it has been indicated that Representative Collin Peterson (MI), will continue as ranking member, a position he has held since 2011. Peterson has a storied history with the Farm Bill, as he was chairman of the committee when Congress passed the 2008 Farm Bill and has served on the committee through several previous Farm Bills.

If the specialty crop industry is going to be able to build on the successes of the last session of Congress, in light of ever-tightening budget constraints, we need more knowledgeable, experienced voices on the committee most relevant to our needs. The committee appointments announced in December bode well for the industry. United Fresh is ready to work with new and returning members of the House Agriculture Committee to ensure that specialty crop priorities are enacted.





## Cuties® are available in all 50 states. Is this a great country or what?

From sea to shining sea, sweet, seedless, E-Z Peel™ Cuties California Mandarins® are now available for everyone. Which means excitement for consumers. And sweet profits for you. So be sure to stock your produce department with delicious Cuties®. Because united, we sell.

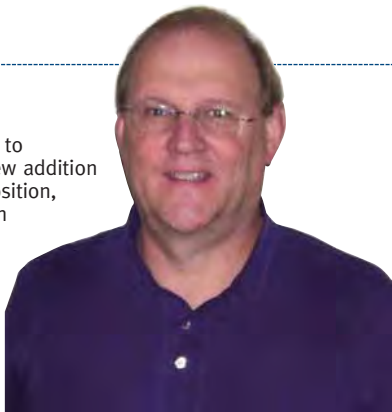
**SWEET • SEEDLESS • E-Z PEEL**

[CutiesKids.com](http://CutiesKids.com)

## TRANSITIONS

### GIUMARRA WENATCHEE LOS ANGELES, CA

Giumarra Wenatchee is pleased to announce **Gene Loudon** as a new addition to its sales team. In his new position, Loudon will manage accounts in Giumarra's North American customer base, specifically working to implement programs in the apple and kiwifruit categories. He will be based in Giumarra's Wenatchee, WA, office.



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### SIMBA SOFTWARE PROVIDES TRACEABILITY FOR FOOD PROCESSORS

Dynamic Systems, Inc., a Redmond, WA, software developer, has announced the release of SIMBA Lite 2012, which is designed to provide food processors the ability to process, label and track their products from "field or dock to customer." The SIMBA (Specialized Inventory Management with Barcode Accuracy) system solves the problem of how to produce and track complete product labeling for fresh food on the fly.



## ANNOUNCEMENTS



### CALIFORNIA AVOCADO COMMISSION ANNOUNCES 2012 AD CONTEST WINNERS

The Irvine-based California Avocado Commission announced the winners of its 2012 "Hand Grown In" retail ad contest. The contest was designed to reward participating retailers for both the number of California ads and the California branding used in their avocado ads. Sprouts Farmers Markets took home a \$1,500 value grand prize package of a Canon Eos Rebel T4i along with additional prizes.



### DISNEY-THEMED READY PAC COOL CUTS SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN HELPS FIGHT HUNGER

Ready Pac Foods, Inc., Irwindale, CA, announced its partnership with Feeding America, one of the nation's leading domestic hunger-relief charity. A Facebook campaign focuses on new Disney-themed Cool Cuts salads and mini-meals for kids. Facebook users are encouraged to "like" Ready Pac Cool Cuts page. For each "like," Ready Pac will donate one dollar — equivalent to eight meals — to Feeding America.

### PURA VIDA FARMS LAUNCHES NEWLY DESIGNED WEBSITE

Pura Vida Farms, Scottsdale, AZ, announced the launch of its newly designed website. The site is designed to reflect the Pura Vida customer-centric culture and features professional photography of Pura Vida fields and products. Visitors are also able to catch a glimpse into the faces behind their Pura Vida name.



### STEPAC LAUNCHING A NEW WEBSITE

StePac, Tefen, Israel, an international packaging distributor, has recently launched a



new website emphasizing the bond between the company and the UK-based DS Smith Plc — a pan-European corrugated packaging leading supplier of recycled packaging. This new layout is part of StePac's ongoing efforts to enhance the quality and availability of information to customers and fresh produce professionals worldwide.

### KINGSTON & ASSOCIATES MARKETING WELCOMES ECUADORIAN MANGOS

Kingston & Associates Marketing LLC, Idaho Falls, ID, announced the company is increasing its volume of imported mangos from Ecuador in response to high customer demand and holiday promotions. With its steady volume increases over the past year, Kingston made the decision to roll out its new mango label.



### PRODUCE FOR KIDS ANNOUNCES NEW YEAR-ROUND DIGITAL STRATEGY

Produce for Kids, Orlando, FL, announced that it will be embracing a new digital strategy to better reach busy shoppers on a year-round basis and during its annual promotional campaigns. The new strategy will include simplified in-store POS displays, a website redesign that includes mobile optimization and more exposure for participating sponsors and retailers, and an aggressive social media strategy.



**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**IFCO INTRODUCES RPC SOLUTIONS**

IFCO, a Houston, TX-based global leader in Reusable Plastic Containers (RPCs), is introducing a suite of innovative RPC solutions that provide its grocery retail partners with the company's Fresh Market Advantage. These solutions successfully combine the right RPC design, efficient supply chain logistics, and impactful retail merchandising support.



**HERNDON FARMS NEW ONION LABEL IS SWEET**

Herndon Farms, Lyons, GA, has announced its new bunch onion label, Lil' Bo's Petite Sweet Vidalia Onions. Its new label is designed to promote their Baby Vidalia crop. Lil' Bo's Petite Sweet are characterized by their sweet but zesty flavor, and budding stalk. They're recommended for use in soups, stir fries, or as raw slices in a garden salad.



**SUPER BOWL SEASON SEES HIGH DEMAND FOR GUACAMOLE MIXES**

Guacamole is one of the most popular food items for tailgating. Stores should prepare for football bowl games and playoffs by creating prominent displays of avocados, tomatoes and popular tie-in items, such as Concord Foods Guacamole Mixes. Concord Foods Guacamole Mixes are available in 18 packs and 144 pack floor shippers. Distribution channels include retail grocery stores, mass merchandisers and club stores in the United States.

**GOURMET TRADING COMPANY WINS THE 2013 WORLDSTAR AWARD**

Gourmet Trading Company, the Los Angeles, CA, distributor of fresh asparagus, blueberries and blackberries, has won the WorldStar Award in the Food Category for its Two Piece Display-Ready Asparagus Shipper from the WorldStar Packaging Organization, in Naperville, IL. The company entered this international competition after winning the Institute of Packaging Professionals 2012 AmeriStar Packaging Competition for its innovative asparagus package.



**JERSEY KIDS LEARN AGRICULTURE FROM AREOFARMS HYDROPONIC SYSTEM**

Students at St. Philip's Academy in Newark, NJ, are experiencing urban agriculture by planting leafy vegetables in a cloth bed, which is irrigated by a mist containing nutrients. AreoFarms of Ithaca Farms designed the system, which was visited by attendees of the 3rd annual New York Produce Show and Conference. Students harvest the vegetables, which are served as part of their meals.

**NEW YORK PRODUCE SHOW CONNECTS INDUSTRY WITH VARIED MEDIA OUTLETS**

More than 32 representatives from the consumer media connected with fresh produce during a luncheon and presentation at the New York Produce Show, held December 5th, in New York City. Journalists from food blogs, cooking magazines, news services and internet TV stations experienced a hands-on demonstration from Duda and Frieda's, gaining new insight into over 50 unique and exotic products. In addition, the media representatives interacted with over 350 produce companies at the exposition and viewed multiple Chef Demos during the day. Several of the attendees also participated in touring produce-oriented venues the day after the show.

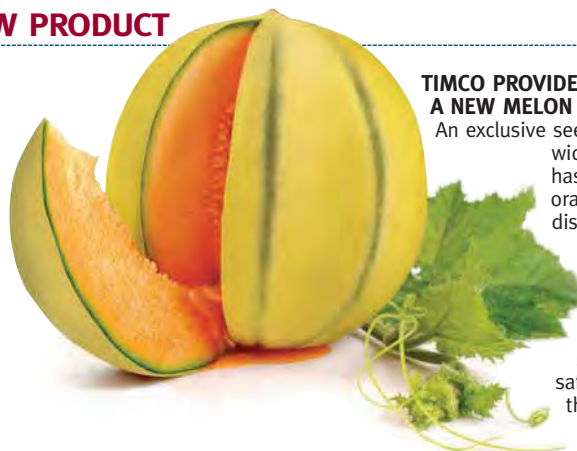


**INTELLEFLEX NEW RFID TAGS MAKE MONITORING PRODUCTS EASY**

Intellex, Santa Clara, CA, provides on-demand temperature monitoring with temperature/condition monitoring RFID tags and readers, and ZEST Data Services. With Intellex, grocers and food service providers can maximize product quality, ensure food safety and traceability, and automate receiving and operations. Intellex provides assurance that the products have been properly refrigerated and have not thawed in transit, helping to reduce shrinkage.



**NEW PRODUCT**



**TIMCO PROVIDES CANTABELLA, A NEW MELON VARIETY**

An exclusive seed development for Timco Worldwide, a C.H. Robinson Company, has created a melon with sweet orange flesh, dynamic flavor and distinct aroma. This cross between a traditional cantaloupe and the French melon, Charentais, allows for a unique eating experience with a sweeter, more consistent taste. Its smoother skin minimizes food safety issues sometimes found in the netting of traditional cantaloupes.





1500 NW 95 Ave  
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### **JANUARY 16 - 18, 2013** **PMA FIT LEADERSHIP SYMPOSIUM**

This two-and-a-half-day program is designed for decision makers who currently drive strategy and growth in an organization.

**Conference Venue:** Omni San Diego, San Diego, CA  
**Conference Management:** Produce Marketing Association, Newark, DE  
**Phone:** 302-738-7100 • **Fax:** 302-731-2409  
**Email:** [solutionctr@pma.com](mailto:solutionctr@pma.com) • **Website:** [www.pma.com](http://www.pma.com)

### **January 20 - 22, 2013** **U.S. SWEET POTATO COUNCIL CONVENTION**

The sweet potato farmers of North Carolina will host the 51st annual meeting of the United States Sweet Potato Council.

**Conference Venue:** Westin, Charlotte, NC  
**Conference Management:** United States Sweet Potato Council, Columbia, SC  
**Phone:** 803-788-7101 • **Fax:** 803-788-7101  
**Email:** [cwalker12@bellsouth.net](mailto:cwalker12@bellsouth.net)  
**Website:** [www.sweetpotatousa.org](http://www.sweetpotatousa.org)

### **January 20 - 22, 2013** **NASFT WINTER FANCY FOOD SHOW 2013**

37th Winter Fancy Food Show - The West Coast's largest specialty food and beverage event.

**Conference Venue:** Moscone Center, San Francisco, CA  
**Conference Management:** NASFT, New York, NY  
**Phone:** 212-482-6440 • **Fax:** 212-482-6555  
**Email:** [on\\_line](http://on_line)  
**Website:** [www.fancyfoodshows.com](http://www.fancyfoodshows.com)

### **January 23 - 25, 2013** **TPIE - TROPICAL PLANT INDUSTRY EXPOSITION**

The Tropical Plant Industry Exhibition (TPIE) is the trade event showcasing the latest trends in foliage, floral and tropicals in warm and inviting South Florida

**Conference Venue:** Broward Convention Center, Fort Lauderdale, FL  
**Conference Management:** Florida Nursery Growers & Landscape Association, Orlando, FL  
**Phone:** 407-295-7994  
**Email:** [info@fn gla.org](mailto:info@fn gla.org) • **Website:** [www.fn gla.org](http://www.fn gla.org)

### **FEBRUARY 6 - 8, 2013** **FRUIT LOGISTICA**

The World's Leading Trade Fair for the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Business.

**Conference Venue:** Berlin Exhibition Fairgrounds Hall 1-25, Berlin, Germany  
**Conference Management:** Messe Berlin GmbH, Berlin, Germany  
**Phone:** 493-030-382048 • **Fax:** 493-030-382020  
**Email:** [berlin@exhibitpro.com](mailto:berlin@exhibitpro.com)  
**Website:** [www.fruitlogistica.com](http://www.fruitlogistica.com)

### **February 7-9, 2013** **ORGANICOLOGY CONFERENCE**

This intensive three-day conference will review the basics of how to successfully operate a produce department or buying office that is focused on organically grown foods.

**Conference Venue:** Hilton Portland & Executive Tower, Portland, OR  
**Conference Management:** Oregon Tilth, Corvallis, OR  
**Phone:** 503-378-0690 • **Fax:** 541-753-4924  
**Email:** [organic@tilth.org](mailto:organic@tilth.org) • **Website:** [www.tilth.org](http://www.tilth.org)

### **February 10-13, 2013** **N.G.A. SUPERMARKET SYNERGY SHOWCASE**

The NGA Show: Where Independents Gather. The National Grocers Association (N.G.A.) is the national trade association representing the retail and wholesale grocers that comprise the independent sector of the food distribution industry.

**Conference Venue:** Mirage Hotel and Casino, Las Vegas, NV

**Conference Management:** National Grocers Association, Arlington, VA

**Phone:** 703-516-0700 • **Fax:** 703-516-0115

**Email:** [info@nationalgrocers.org](mailto:info@nationalgrocers.org)

**Website:** [www.nationalgrocers.org](http://www.nationalgrocers.org)

### **February 13 - 16, 2013** **BIOFACH**

The World Organic Trade Fair

**Conference Venue:** Exhibition Centre Nuremberg, Nuremberg, Germany  
**Conference Management:** NurnbergMesse GmbH, Nuremberg, Germany  
**Phone:** 490-911-86060 • **Fax:** 490-911-86068228  
**Website:** [www.biofach.com](http://www.biofach.com)

### **February 20 - 24, 2013** **NATIONAL WATERMELON CONVENTION**

The Centennial Celebration

**Conference Venue:** The Westin La Cantera Resort, San Antonio, TX  
**Conference Management:** National Watermelon Association, Inc., Lakeland, FL  
**Phone:** 863-619-7575 • **Fax:** 863-619-7577  
**Email:** [nwa@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:nwa@tampabay.rr.com)  
**Website:** [www.nationalwatermelonassociation.com](http://www.nationalwatermelonassociation.com)

### **February 28 - March 2, 2013** **SOUTHERN EXPOSURE**

To promote the consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables in Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky and Virginia through good fellowship, cooperation and mutual interest among its members.

**Conference Venue:** Caribe Royal Resort & Conference Center, Orlando, FL  
**Conference Management:** Southeast Produce Council, Inc., East Ellijay, GA  
**Phone:** 813-633-5556 • **Fax:** 813-653-4479  
**Email:** [info@seproducecouncil.com](mailto:info@seproducecouncil.com)  
**Website:** [www.seproducecouncil.com](http://www.seproducecouncil.com)

### **MARCH 3 - 5, 2013** **CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL FOOD & BEVERAGE SHOW**

Canada's foodservice event of the year

**Conference Venue:** Direct Energy Centre, Exhibition Place, Toronto, Canada  
**Conference Management:** Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association, Toronto, Mississauga Canada  
**Phone:** 416-923-8416 • **Fax:** 416-923-1450  
**Email:** [info@crfa.ca](mailto:info@crfa.ca) • **Website:** [www.crfa.ca](http://www.crfa.ca)

### **March 3 - 5, 2013** **INTERNATIONAL RESTAURANT & FOODSERVICE SHOW OF NEW YORK**

The International Restaurant and Foodservice Show of New York is the only comprehensive industry event devoted to the restaurant, foodservice and hospitality market.

**Conference Venue:** Jacob K. Javits Convention Center, New York, NY  
**Conference Management:** Reed Exhibitions, Norwalk, CT  
**Phone:** 203-840-5556 • **Fax:** 203-840-9556  
**Email:** [inquiry@internationalrestaurantny.com](mailto:inquiry@internationalrestaurantny.com)  
**Website:** [www.internationalrestaurantny.com](http://www.internationalrestaurantny.com)

### **April 3, 2013** **NEW ENGLAND PRODUCE & FLORAL EXPO**

**Conference Venue:** Boston Convention & Exhibition Center, Boston, MA

**Conference Management:** New England Produce Council, Burlington, MA  
**Phone:** 781-273-0444 • **Fax:** 781-273-4154  
**Email:** [nepc2@rcn.com](mailto:nepc2@rcn.com)  
**Website:** [www.newenglandproduce.com](http://www.newenglandproduce.com)

To submit events to our Forward Thinking calendar, please email [info@producebusiness.com](mailto:info@producebusiness.com)





**SAVE  
THE DATE**  
**DECEMBER 10-12, 2013**



**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**  
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# Ethnic Produce Marketing: Perspectives of Intermediaries

A Q&A WITH ISAAC VELLANGANY, PH.D., PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND BUSINESS ECONOMICS, RUTGERS UNIVERSITY, NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ, CONDUCTED BY MIRA SLOTT

**PRODUCE BUSINESS:** At The New York Produce Show and Conference, which took place December 4-6, 2012, you presented an analysis of your study, *Ethnic Produce Marketing: Perspectives of Intermediaries*, a collaborative effort with Dr. Ramu Govindasamy, Professor of Marketing in the Department of Agricultural, Food and Resource Economics, at Rutgers University and Dr. Kathy Kelley, Associate Professor of Horticultural Marketing and Business Management at Penn State. What led you to this most recent research?

**Isaac Vellangany:** This is the third project in a series of ethnic produce research through USDA's Specialty Crops Initiative, covered consecutively at the prior two New York Produce Shows. The first two were mainly concerned with demography and ethnic populations, and related characteristics. This project looks at the intermediaries. It covers a wide area from Maine to Washington, D.C.

**PB:** What was the key purpose for the study? Did you have a hypothesis? What did you hope to achieve?

**IV:** The main objective was to survey the intermediaries, wholesalers, retailers and distributors to find out what are some of the bottlenecks they face sourcing, selling, packaging, advertising and marketing; what difficulties they face and how different institutions can be of help to them. The main goal was to help the economics of small and medium farmers.

**PB:** How has the farm sector changed? Could you describe industry dynamics and the impact on small and medium farmers?

**IV:** As the farm sector in the U.S. has become much more consolidated and the land for agriculture has been diversified in developments, it has had severe impacts on small and medium farmers and the need to find niche markets for ethnic populations.

**PB:** Is purchasing potential related more to income levels or to diet?

**IV:** The Indian population is the highest spending because their diets depend a lot on produce compared to Chinese and Mexicans. The majority of the Indian population happens to be vegetarian, which is why

Indian and Asian stores sell a lot of lettuces, vegetables and herbs.

**PB:** What is the availability of top ethnic items at retail? Are there gaps that need to be filled?

**IV:** Our research showed a big problem. Eighty-eight percent of managers said they experience difficulties in finding ethnic greens and herbs. There is no availability. To determine this, we conducted a study involving a series of questions. There was a focus group meeting, which led to more specific surveys. We contacted retailers, brokers and distributors and had 51 participants: 18 retailers, 16 wholesalers, 17 distributors and brokers.

In addition to data collection, we developed 25 open-ended questions; more probing, so that managers could give us a better idea of their issues.

We also collected data on pre-selected items, recoding volumes and prices. When the data collector goes to the store, he physically sees the produce of the presorted selection, how much quantity, the prices, and gets an indication of how fast the produce moves through the store, to validate what the manager says, if it's fresh, etc., and to get an accurate assessment, even if the manager is not giving the right information.

**PB:** With ethnic population growth rates rising, won't availability issues just get worse?

**IV:** There is huge demand for these products, not just from ethnic groups, but other people want them because they are tired of the same foods, and greens are healthy and nutritious. There is a growing awareness of obesity problems and desire to change eating habits and increase produce consumption.

The supply chain is finding it very hard to source them. The supply constraint is problematic. If companies try to import, they have transportation costs and safety issues.

**PB:** What actions can be taken to increase availability of ethnic crops?

**IV:** Our research not only set out to find out

the difficulties people face and to understand constraints. It was also to remedy the situation. So this also becomes beneficial to small and medium farmers in the U.S., who can grow and supply these products. Trust issues are less of a problem if product is domestically grown because it has to go through all the safety routes. Therefore, people will have much more confidence and increase demand, and in turn, this will result in growers increasing their production. Then instead of niche, it begins moving in the mainstream.

**PB:** Where do you see the best production opportunity for these specialty crops? Haven't you begun trials in different states? What is the status of this work?

**IV:** The emphasis is on the East Coast. Experimental plots are underway. There is one in Florida, two in New Jersey and one in Massachusetts. We selected 10 herbs and vegetables already on trial for production. These trials have been viewed as successful.

The other part of this discussion is the difficulty retailers are having in meeting demands. The major problem is in sourcing. At the same time, trials are ongoing to determine which of these products can be grown domestically by small and medium farmers. There is huge potential for your readers. If they haven't looked at the ethnic market, it is time.

**PB:** What is the next stage in this on-going project? For those attendees whose interest has been sparked, what is in the pipeline?

**IV:** The field trials have been very successful. As for our time frame, pilots have already been harvested and product has been sent for all forms of testing; analyzing attributes, quality, taste, nutritional content, texture...Biological testing is being done for the first two trials. We want to determine what contributed to the results. Is it because of climate or nutrients provided or pesticides used, etc.? When the product meets all the requirements, then we will contact the farmers and they can start to cultivate.



The Department of Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics (DAFRE) at Rutgers University supports society's agricultural, agribusiness, food, environmental, and natural resource needs for economic analysis through an integrated program of teaching, research, and outreach activities designed to improve the quality of public and private decisions.



# Opportunities In Unusual Places

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

It is an optimistic and earnest attitude toward business and life to go out and survey those active in the trade, find out what the obstacles are to doing business, then solve those problems and thus see business flourish and prosperity expand. It is beautiful, yet raises its own questions.

If, in fact, retailers are unable to secure the products they want in the quantity they desire, they would normally bid up the price. This high price would present a substantial profit opportunity and would cause the rest of the supply chain to fall in line to increase supply. Importers would seek out overseas production, distributors would bid up the prices for domestic production, farmers would plant more; in time, price would come down as supply increased.

This project seems to focus on an abnormality of sorts that the researchers believe exists in the marketplace. Where this abnormality exists is not 100 percent clear.

Perhaps because these products are not native to the United States, domestic farmers don't have the technical knowledge of how to grow them. Perhaps the small volume in which these products are so far consumed has not attracted the interest of commercial seed companies. Because the predominant sources of overseas production are in developing countries that have not yet cleared phytosanitary standards, importing the product is very difficult.

If so, focused intervention by our land grant colleges might well serve to "break the dam" on some of these ethnic specialties and allow for their swift entry into the mainstream, while also creating a profitable market opportunity for small eastern growers.

It is, of course, also possible that the market is telling us something else — perhaps that these particular products are not in such demand that people are willing to pay higher prices for them and thus pull through the production. Perhaps, sentiment aside, the consumers are willing to trade off and give up their sentimental favorites in exchange for less expensive let-

tuces and vegetables that are produced on a mass scale.

One bit of wisdom that is undeniable that the project presents is that members of the trade would be wise to look for opportunities in unusual places.

The produce industry is highly fragmented. Typically, industry firms are small, so niche opportunities can be substantial when viewed from the prospective of an individual company.

In addition, such opportunities are more likely to be overlooked or disregarded by the "big boys," and so the competition is less stiff.

Another advantage this research suggests is that of focusing one's business on growing sectors. Then, not only can a trade member have a profitable niche, but also it can grow with the market.

These markets, though small, are complex because they are like a four-legged table: First, you have the first generation immigrants, for whom these are staple items. Second, you have later generations of immigrants for whom these are often nostalgic specialties. Third, you have those who happen to see the displays placed out to entice ethnic buyers and who find themselves willing to experiment. Then you have foodie aficionados who want these specialty items to try favored cuisines or to add variety and health to their diets.

Another issue is how to keep the business as the market grows. Many specialty distributors gain fame for introducing new items, but ultimately stop carrying the item as mainstream shippers can work on lower margins and mainstream growers often sell direct.

One wonders if small growers actually realize what a friend they have in the nation's ag schools. Here is a project where the researchers start by identifying a market — ethnic produce, especially Indian items — go on to research the obstacles to getting it to market and then even develop and test various varieties and how they will grow in different places. It is really quite a

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contribution and quite extraordinary.

Yet there is still the gnawing question of supply and demand. If demand is growing so dramatically, and this project proves through field trials that these products can be grown profitably to serve this fast growing market, isn't it likely that the giants in Salinas and Yuma will catch on?

Perhaps more than focusing on specifics of this project, the project teaches smaller growers, distributors and specialized retailers that they need always be alert to special opportunities. They can't be big, so they must be facile. They are not the most efficient, so they must be the most innovative.

The opportunity is not so much ethnic produce or serving the Indian immigrant community; it is being smart and quick and flexible. It is learning to turn on a dime and live in the space between the giants.

That is a pretty substantial lesson to gain from an ag research collaborative.

# TESCO, FRESH & EASY AND THE PRICE OF BEING ALONE

By James Prevor  
President & Editor-in-Chief



No joy should ever be taken in the failure of a business, for each business represents jobs, and every business is a customer to others. Each business, whether a small operation or a division of a giant corporation, represents some person's dream, and for a dream to be extinguished is always a sad thing.

Yet the astonishing reaction to Tesco's failure in America — the announcement that Fresh & Easy was not long for this world — is how many people are glad to see them go. Its own employees have been calling saying that, as Americans, they felt like second-class citizens working for the venture. Its own vendors call not with sadness over the loss of business but with ribald humor about how arrogant Tesco executives were and how they simply refused to believe anyone could know more than they about doing business in America, even though Tesco had never operated a business in America.

Even the editors of major news outlets call to chat not with sadness at losing a great story, but with little disguised joy that people who treated them so rudely should get their comeuppance.

Online, at *PerishablePundit.com*, we published an extensive piece detailing 20 lessons learned from Tesco's failure — everything from the mistake of building a distribution center before they knew they had a valid concept, to opening without taking the American Express card. Yet, there is something more here, an even larger lesson.

Perhaps it is that all of us in business have to realize that we may think ourselves autonomous — the captain of our ship, the master of our fate — but, in reality, we are utterly dependent on others to create value.

Beyond all the specifics, it seems right to say that Tesco failed in America because, for all its money, all its expertise, all its influence and power, it had no friends.

Employees who feel oppressed don't do their best work; vendors who feel marginalized don't bring their best ideas; and consumer press editors whose phone calls don't get returned don't work hard to find an optimistic spin.

We think of business success as coming from brilliant strategy and exceptional execution, but strategy and execution depends on insight from employees and vendors who are often closer to the ground and

thus able to glean information more quickly. Then there are always problems and how third parties, such as the media, choose to deal with your problems often determines how things come out.

One insight from the Fresh & Easy collapse is how unimportant most of our traditional levers are in gaining the allegiance of those we need to make our businesses a success. We have heard bitter anger at Tesco from employees, but not one complaint about salaries being too low. We fielded loads of complaints from vendors and, though some said that the issue was that volume was too low to bother dealing with Tesco's nonsense, it wasn't the nonsense — and vendors typically used a more explicit word for nonsense — that was the problem. The core of the complaint was a lack of respect. Even when the editors of major media complained about the executives at Tesco and Fresh & Easy, they didn't complain that Tesco didn't advertise; they complained that they were not treated respectfully.

Think of how many hours are spent determining compensation plans and how many meetings are held to hash out business terms between vendors.

Think about how many dollars are spent arranging for press releases and PR agents to get material in the hands of the media. Then think about how little effort is exerted to make sure that everyone feels valued, that everyone has authentic opportunities to say their piece and that these contributions are taken seriously.

Tesco's failure in America is shocking to many because Tesco had it all — money, expertise, influence. Perhaps the failure of Fresh & Easy stands as testimony to the danger of having it all. A less powerful and self-sufficient organization would have had little choice but to listen to investors urging it to hire local talent or avoid excessive capital expenditures.

Organizations with less self-sufficiency would have had to turn to vendors for expertise and market knowledge. If a company can't pay its people so well, it has to make the work environment more satisfying by giving the employees a say, and if one knows one isn't all powerful, well, if the local newspaper calls, you call back and hope to turn that reporter into a true believer in what you are trying to do.

The paths to success are doubtless many, but it is a great irony that the best interpretation is that Tesco did not fail in America because it lacked for resources. It failed because it had such an abundance of resources it thought it needed no one, and, in the end, it had no one in its corner when the last bell sounded.

pb

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# Pundit's Mailbag – Booth Babes Issue Rolls On With Discourse About Beauty, PMA Exhibit Policy, Marketing Tactics And Proper Attire

FROM JIM PREVOR'S PERISHABLE PUNDIT 12.2.2012

- W**e've run four pieces in this conversation so far:
- 1) Pundit's Mailbag — Booth Babes And The Disconnect With PMA's Position On Women's Careers
  - 2) Pundit's Mailbag — Nothing Wrong With Booth Babes!
  - 3) Pundit's Mailbag — "Booth Babes," Professionalism and Hypocrisy: What Should PMA's Policy Be?
  - 4) Pundit's Mailbag — United Fresh And Others Weigh In On Booth Babes

And the perspectives proliferate:

*Wow, the subject that just won't die.*

*I find the booth babes often fill some form of necessary work — be it handing out samples or pamphlets or keeping a potential customer occupied — while the primary sales people finish their conversation with the person who was in the booth first. To eliminate the local talent would either require the company to have additional workers fly across the country at great expense or do without and not be able to staff their booth to the level they need.*

*As for the looks of the local talent, I suppose one could request unattractive people, but I am sure we all know that the staffing companies don't have binders full of those. I have sat in the reception lobbies of many companies, and I never see a receptionist who is unattractive.*

*Granted, they may not be aspiring runway models, and I am sure that their ability to perform the job is essential, but is it somehow OK to hire people who look attractive and can do the job for the front office, but not those who can do the job and are exceptionally attractive for the trade show?*

*Is it odd, though, that so many people would say this is degrading without asking the allegedly degraded for their opinion? Here are all forms of management discussing this issue involving labor without asking for any input from said labor. Not one "booth babe" has sent any feedback or apparently was even asked for their input.*

*Maybe they don't find it degrading or maybe they would rather be degraded than be unemployed. The same thing could*

*easily be said of anybody who works at "Hot-Dog on a Stick" at the local mall or twirls a "Tax Refund" sign dressed as Uncle Sam on the side of the road every April.*

*— Mike Poindexter, General Manager, Poindexter Nut Co., Selma, CA*

In fairness, we don't think the issue is whether to hire local people or not, and the question of hiring attractive people, though an issue in itself, is not the one we have been addressing.

Here the issue is what kind of dress is appropriate.

The photo Dan'l Mackey Almy used on her blog, *The Core*, of women dressed in Daisy-Duke-type outfits was objectionable to many of our correspondents not because the women were attractive but because they were not dressed professionally. In other words, the same exact women in business suits or even Khakis and logo-ed golf shirts in the now common fashion would not have raised an objection.

**"I think my main point has gotten lost in the debate. I've met a few watermelon queens and had the opportunity to march on Capitol Hill with them. There were no bare midriffs to be seen. They were dressed quite elegantly. Most importantly, they were well versed on public policy and were exceptional, well-trained spokespeople. There's a big difference between a watermelon queen and a booth babe."**

*— Lorri Koster, Mann Paking Co.*

The issue of whether people subjectively feel degraded is more complicated than it seems. We could go into Marxian theories of False Consciousness, which basically holds that people don't realize how oppressed they actually are. We can also discuss social justice issues and note that some would question whether the fact that the world is so organized that some people have few options, makes it OK when they want to do desperate things.

The issues are complicated and, in fact,

the woman who started this conversation thinks it has gotten off track:

*I guess Dan'l and I struck a chord with all the booth babe feedback you've been getting. I suppose it's been vetted enough, and I certainly have more important things to be doing... but I think my main point has gotten lost in the debate. I've met a few watermelon queens and had the opportunity to march on Capitol Hill with them. There were no bare midriffs to be seen. They were dressed quite elegantly.*

*Most importantly, they were well versed on public policy and were exceptional, well-trained spokespeople.*



*There's a big difference between a watermelon queen and a booth babe.*

*I also have an appreciation for historic produce labels that reference women. To say we were advocating these companies get rid of their labels and marketing materials is a classic case of jumping from one extreme to the other.*

*I've been to Fruit Logistica, and most of the "hostesses" are dressed in clothes native to their country. Fruit Logistica is different from Fresh Summit. There is more of a social atmosphere. Most of the exhibits are actually bars with alcoholic beverages flowing all day long. I didn't mind the hostesses at all at Fruit Logistica — it fits the occasion and atmosphere of the show.*

*My point is: Fruit Logistica doesn't have young college female students walking their show with people trying to "mentor" them into the produce industry. PMA does. Fruit Logistica also doesn't have a Women's Leadership breakfast and upcoming educational conference promoting women leadership in business. PMA does.*

*As CEO of a certified Women's Business Enterprise and a member of the Network of Executive Women, I applaud PMA for focusing on these important initiatives. All I'm suggesting is PMA's exhibit policies support their educational programs — not contradict them.*

*— Lorri Koster, Chairman/CEO, Mann Packing Co., Salinas, CA*

Lorri copied Dan'l on her letter, and Dan'l quickly concurred:

*I agree wholeheartedly that PMA must choose how they want their event to evolve. All things to all people will not work with the majority of paying members in the long run. It's easy to justify any behavior or marketing tactics for any occasion; the more difficult task is for PMA and other event organizers to focus on how they want their events to be defined and how they hope to progress. Booth sales (at any cost) must not be the single measurement of an event's success, and when I see the imbalance as described by Lorri in her letter, I can't help but to question that fact.*

*Relative to individual companies, my issue is with the tactics, not with freedoms. Majestic [Produce in McAllen, TX] was not the only company or person that utilized the "booth babe" tactic. Mr. Thomas has*

**It seems beyond argument that PMA, and any other organization, has to decide what it represents and what it wishes to be known for. It also seems obvious that consistency in imaging is a wise idea and an effective branding strategy...Perhaps what this is all about is just the changing mores of a society in flux. Things that used to be acceptable just are not acceptable any more. Equally, things in other areas that used to be unacceptable are acceptable now.**

*been forceful in his justification for his actions, but with Two Big Misses in his replies to the Pundit:*

*1. Complete disregard to the fact that his booth personnel were signing their centerfold headshots, and*

*2. The same booth personnel were positioned in front of a booth that did not represent Majestic, but rather Texas Produce Association.*

*In my opinion, neither of these tactics are representative of a strategy that was well planned or executed with a productive outcome in mind, thus weakening impact of Fresh Summit for attendees.*

*I have appreciated all the opinions on this topic.*

*— Dan'l Mackey Almy, President and Managing Partner, DMA Solutions, Inc., Irving, TX*

In the end, what this conversation is really about is brand-building, and Lorri and Dan'l are really providing some free consulting, directly to PMA and more broadly to the whole industry about consistency of presentation.

Of course, even acknowledging the importance of such matters, turning it into policy is more difficult.

Would the "Daisy Duke" characters be OK if they weren't signing their centerfolds? Is the midriff the problem or the short shorts? What if they were wearing sequined gowns and pointing to the produce as if it were a Ferrari at the auto show.

Instituting policies, as many trade shows have, requiring professional attire is

less helpful than it might seem. Policies are useful to give show management the opportunity to force someone to stop if there are too many complaints.

It seems beyond argument that PMA, and any other organization, has to decide what it represents and what it wishes to be known for. It also seems obvious that consistency in imaging is a wise idea and an effective branding strategy.

The problem on a trade show is that business is traditionally mixed with fun, and for many men, seeing a "Dukes of Hazard" showcase is fun.

It is, perhaps, an unprofessional distraction, but so are many things at trade shows.

But, in the end, today, most organizations wouldn't allow the kind of fun things that offend people to go on. You wouldn't let an exhibitor have an Al Jolson Blackface character at its booth, although that might have been perfectly acceptable at some point in time.

Perhaps what this is all about is just the changing mores of a society in flux. Things that used to be acceptable just are not acceptable any more. Equally, things in other areas that used to be unacceptable are acceptable now.

The most interesting part of these exchanges is why do so many care so much and, surely, it is a clash between two different visions. But only one will own the future.

Many thanks to Mike Poindexter, Lorri Koster and Dan'l Mackay Almy for helping us think through this important issue.



# Supermarket Dietitians Act As Industry Ally In The Fight Against Childhood Obesity

A cadre of health professionals helps retailers and educators get kids and parents focused on fresh fruit and vegetables.

BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD

“**E**at your veggies” is age-old advice Moms impart to their kids. This parental guidance is even more important today in light of the childhood obesity epidemic. According to the Atlanta, GA-headquartered Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately 17 percent or 12.5 million 2- to 19-year-olds are obese. Moreover, this statistic has nearly tripled since 1980. But today, there is a growing presence of professionals in the supermarket who can help Mom accomplish her goal. What’s more, supermarket registered dietitians (SRDs) are a ripe resource for the produce industry to tap into, too.

It was once the communications departments or consumer affairs advisors that traditionally served as the prime conduit between a supermarket chain and consumers. Gary Caloroso, the Escondido, CA-based director of marketing for Giumarra Agricom and Giumarra Borquez, who worked with supermarket dietitians in his former position as executive director of communications firm, GolinHarris, explains, “As consumers had more questions about health, retailers began hiring dietitians to field these questions as well as work in an active partnership with suppliers to seek assistance, such as content for various communication vehicles and product for demos.”

Today, SRDs work in-store (33.3 percent), regionally (52.4 percent),

corporately (85.7 percent) and as consultants (4.8 percent), according to the Arlington, VA-headquartered Food Marketing Institute’s Survey Report: *2012 Retailer Contributions to Health and Wellness*.

The potential of SRDs to work on the side of the produce industry to increase consumption and fight childhood obesity is huge. According to Annette Maggi, MS, RD, LD, FDA, chair of the 400-plus member supermarket subgroup of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (formerly the American Dietetic Association)’s food and culinary professionals practice group, “Supermarkets provide an ideal location for nutrition education and health promotion for a variety of reasons. These include frequency of repeat visits by shoppers, customer loyalty to a store, and relationship with a pharmacy to name a few. Perhaps most important is the fact that the grocery store is where consumers make decisions about foods such as fresh produce that meet their health needs.”

## Stumbling Blocks

SRDs have the unique advantage of being able to communicate directly with supermarket shoppers. As such, observes Suzanne Wolter, director of marketing for the Selah, WA-based Rainier Fruit Co, “They have first-hand knowledge of consumers’ needs and what the barriers to purchase are for fresh produce.”



One of these obstacles is confusion, notes Katy Magoon, RD, LD, one of 22 registered dietitians who works for Hannaford Supermarkets, a 180-plus store chain based in Scarborough, ME. "Moms wonder about GMOs and pesticides and whether it's okay to buy fresh produce that isn't organic," she says.

Jennifer Egeland, MS, RD, LD, dietitian and natural foods buyer for Hen House Markets, a 13-store chain based in Kansas City, KS, acknowledges another hurdle: intimidation. "I hear shoppers say they feel overwhelmed by the sheer number of selections in the produce department," she says.

As a result, some daunted families prefer to stick with the staples. Becky Varner, MS, RD, LD, corporate dietitian for Buy For Le\$\$, a 12-store chain based in Oklahoma City, OK, explains the consequences. "If parents are unwilling to stray from their staple green beans, potatoes, corn, peas and one or two others and try something new, then their children won't either," she warns.

Tight budgets can also magnify a lack of adventure when shopping. Lorena Kaplen, RD, LD, one of three dietitians employed by the San Antonio, TX-based H-E-B Grocery Stores, reveals, "Money is tight for some of our customers. Therefore, they get in the trap of always buying the same things like tomatoes, peppers, onions and iceberg lettuce. They don't want to take a chance and spend hard-earned money on something their family might not like."

In addition, children themselves can be hesitant to try unfamiliar fruits and vegetables. Melanie Dwornik, MA, RD, retail dietitian supervisor at ShopRite, a 240-plus store chain in Keasbey, NJ, explains, "Parents may also be reluctant to offer a new snack that may not go over very well, or they may be unsure how to prepare or cook them. For these reasons, nutrient-rich, yet less mainstream produce, such as jicama, spaghetti squash, mangos, Pummelos and sunchokes may not find their way into the average shopping cart."

"Another reason why Moms stick with the mainstays is that they lack the knowledge of how to prepare something new or different," says Stephanie Schultz, RD, CD, health and wellness director and one of three dietitians employed by Skogen's Festival Foods, a 17-store chain based in Green Bay, WI.

Time is also a constraint. Amy McLeod, RD, LD, the healthy living spokeswoman for Brookshire Brothers Food and Pharmacy, a 72-store chain headquartered in Lufkin, TX, explains, "Working Moms with busy schedules are searching for easy and practical solutions to put healthy meals on the table fast for their families."

**“Supermarkets provide an ideal location for nutrition education and health promotion for a variety of reasons...Perhaps most important is the fact that the grocery store is where consumers make decisions about foods such as fresh produce that meet their health needs.”**

— Annette Maggi, MS, RD, LD, FDA, Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

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**Jennifer Meyer, RD, LMNT, a dietitian for Bag n' Save and No Frills Supermarkets, speaks to an elementary school classroom about the importance of healthy eating and meeting MyPlate's standards.**

PHOTO COURTESY OF BAG N' SAVE/NO FRILLS SUPERMARKETS

Price is a problem, too. Hen House's Egeland says, "Some customers view fresh produce as expensive. They would fill their carts with other foods if we didn't teach them how, for example, to buy on sale and buy in season. In other words, letting them know that fresh produce can be as inexpensive as junk food, but with much higher nutrients and fewer calories is crucial."

### Five Ways SRDs Promote Produce

Knowledge of these barriers to produce consumption serves as a foundation on which SRDs plan and implement both in-store and community-based programs. Maggi of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics states, "The challenge is that everyone knows produce is healthy. They know they should eat more, but they don't. What many SRDs do is to tap into

emotions, which is what people buy with, rather than with science or logic. Thus, it's important for produce companies to gain an understanding of the focus of individual retailers when it comes to health and wellness. Instead of saying, 'I want to communicate these three points,' figure out how to fit in and partner with the SRD's strategy and game plan."

Many of the SRD's programs involve kids, yet speak directly to parents.

Elizabeth Pivonka, Ph.D., RD, president and CEO of the Hockessin, DE-based Produce for Better Health Foundation (PBH), says, "The role of the SRD is to help parents, especially young mothers, to come up with solutions for feeding their family healthfully. This includes supermarket tours, demos, classes and information in newsletters, on TV and even through social media."

#### 1. STORE TOURS:

One of the biggest initiatives Hen House Markets has undertaken to stem the rising tide of childhood obesity is to team up with the Field Trip Factory, a Chicago, IL-based company that coordinates free store tours for K through 6th grade school children and other youth groups in the community such as little league teams, day care centers and home-schoolers, for the chain's *Be A Smart*

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Shopper tour.

Egeland details, "Since MyPlate shows half our plates should be fruits and vegetables, we spend the most time on the tour in the produce department. [MyPlate is the current nutrition guide published by the United States Department of Agriculture, which illustrates that half of the plate should be filled with fruits and vegetables.] The main concentrations in produce are eating a rainbow of different colors and sampling. I like to have the kids sample something they likely haven't tried before. For example, 75 percent of the kids have never tried a pomegranate, but 90 percent say they like it and would eat it again after sampling. As an educator, I always tell them I have homework for them at the end of the tour, which is to ask their parents to buy one new produce item. This gives them permission to explore the department and gets parents to buy in, too."

Similarly, yet with a signature twist, Beth Stark, RD, LDN, the healthy living coordinator and one of two dietitians employed by Weis Markets, Inc., a 164-store chain based in Sunbury, PA, created a mystery-themed store tour three years ago named *Case of the Missing Energy*. "Third and fourth graders play detective and search the store for clues on the 90-minute tour," Stark describes. "Along the way, they learn that they will have more energy if they eat fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy and lean protein rather than fast food and snack foods."

Brookshire Brothers takes a different approach by providing store tours with kids in mind, but primarily addressing parents or the gatekeepers. "Produce is always the first stop," says McLeod. "First, we'll introduce the produce managers as the highly accessible experts to find out what's in season and how to pick something that's ripe."

ShopRite's dietitians even lead free one-on-one tours, says Dwornik. "We can shop the store with customers and help them create a balanced meal plan that not only includes their old favorites, but also new, healthy options for their families."

**Produce Industry Opportunities: Coupons** are one way Vernon, CA-based Melissa's/World Variety Produce, Inc. has worked with SRDs is through offering coupons, says Robert Schueller, director of public relations. "For example, when dietitians hold nutrition fairs we've contributed coupons."

Retailers such as Hen House Markets and Brookshire Brothers provide goodie bags to its kids and adults on tour. Coupons, as well as other health-oriented giveaways such as balls,

water bottles, lunch boxes or back packs, as well as games, puzzles and coloring sheets, are a way produce suppliers can directly reach these customers.

**2. TASTE DEMOS:** "Parents are often surprised and pleased when they see their kids are willing to try a fruit or vegetable they haven't tasted before, and then like it," says Kim Kirchherr, MS, RD, LDN, the Itasca, IL-based corporate dietitian for SuperValu's Jewel-Osco, Hornbacher's and Shop 'n Save banners.

Many of ShopRite's dietitians also feature a *Produce Pick of the Month*, which allows them

to educate customers on the health benefits of certain seasonal items. "In addition to health tips," Dwornik explains, "these monthly picks are also included in in-store cooking demos, recipe ideas and sampling."

A *Vegetable of the Month* card is a major dietitian-initiated marketing effort at Hannaford Supermarkets. Magoon details, "We follow a seasonal theme and featured root vegetables in November. Each set of four cards that are perforated and fold into a 3x5-inch size have information on selecting, storing, preparing and nutrition on one card and recipes



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on the other three cards. For November, the recipes were Root Vegetable Haystacks, a play on hashed browns, Roasted Root Vegetable French Fries and a spaghetti sauce made with root vegetables. We'll hand them out at taste demos." The cards are also distributed to customers at point-of-sale next to the vegetable in the produce department.

### Produce Industry Opportunities:

**Sampling** demos are a great way for suppliers, produce staff and SRDs to partner synergistically, says Cristie Mather, director of communications for the Milwaukie, OR-based Pear Bureau Northwest. "Earlier this year, our regional marketing manager arranged a demo and reached out to the chain's dietitian. She wouldn't have known about the opportunity otherwise."

An SRD can put extra energy behind a demo. Hen House Market's Egeland notes, "When we do a taste demo, we'll always post additional simple signage on the item such as cooking instructions and nutritional benefits. We welcome additional POS from vendors, especially produce companies."

Dietitians can also connect suppliers with the chain's buyer. Mac Riggan, director of marketing for Chelan Fresh, the Chelan, WA-based fruit grower/shipper that partnered with the National Football League and National Dairy Council in its in-school nutrition and physical activity program, *Fuel Up to Play 60*, says, "If we can provide information and educate dietitians on what's new or exciting in the apple or pear category, they can influence their retail buyers and lend credibility to our products and programs."

**3. COOKING CLASSES:** Quick, easy, 10-ingredient or less recipes are something Jennifer Meyer, RD, LMNT, an Elkhorn, NE-based dietitian for the 29 Bag N' Save and No Frills Supermarkets, demos in-store. "One of the things I like to do is whip up smoothies," she shares. "You can add in virtually any fruit or vegetable and just blend. It's simple to sample, too."

Likewise, Kristen Johnson, RD, ACE-PT, healthy living advisor and one of five registered dietitians who works at Meijer, a 197-store chain based in Lansing, MI, also prepares recipes in store. "Parents especially like to watch cooking demos," Johnson says. "We'll show them how to put more produce in their family's meals."

*Learn with Lunch or Brunch* is a weekly cooking class offered by Buy For Le\$\$'s Varner. "In one-hour, I'll focus on an uncommonly consumed fruit or vegetable and prepare three or four recipes. For example, I've used red sweet chard in a wilted salad and as a pizza topping in one class, plus I've passed the fresh chard around so everyone could get familiar. It

was so popular that the produce department sold through the chard and had to order more." Varner hosts five or six of these classes monthly in the deli area where there is seating. Eighteen to 20 people, everyone from adults to groups of children, have attended.

Over 100 shoppers during a 4- to 6-hour period during high-traffic hours on Thursday, Friday and Saturday walk by and watch Hannaford's Magoon prepare simple recipes. "I'll often incorporate produce," she says. "Last week, I made tomato pesto with cucumber sticks for sampling."

**4. COMMUNITY PRESENTATIONS:** Meredith Mensinger RD, LDN, corporate dietitian for Redner's Markets, a 51-unit chain based in Reading, PA, takes her cooking demos out into the community. "I'll prepare easy dishes like chicken tortilla soup full of veggies at schools, expos and health fairs, hand out the recipe and let families know all the ingredients are at Redner's."

SuperValu's Kirchherr gives talks in the community and hands out a Kids Club Fruit Card to the children in attendance. "We've always had a cookie card," Kirchherr explains. "Now, kids have the option to get a free apple or banana in the produce department when they come to shop with their parents."

Some of ShopRite's dietitians have taken the *Produce Pick of the Month* one step further with a *Harvest of the Month*. During these events, the dietitian works with the produce manager to select a seasonal fruit or vegetable, Dwornik explains. "Our dietitians then visit local schools to introduce the students and teachers, to a new produce item. Students and faculty are encouraged to sample the *Harvest of the Month* and they learn about where the item is grown, when it is in season, ways to eat it and, of course, its nutritional benefits. In fact, a New York school that participated in the Harvest of the Month program with ShopRite recently received the New York State 2012 Best Practice Award for Excellence in Promoting Healthy Choices/Nutrition Education."

Barbara Ruhs, MS, RD, LDN, corporate dietitian for Bashas' Family of Stores, a 132-store chain based in Chandler, AZ, also takes nutrition education to kids in the community. "We just had a giant booth at the Juvenile Diabetes Walk (JDRF) in Phoenix in November. We provided more than 1,500 apples to walkers, compliments of a Starr Ranch donation."

**Produce Industry Opportunities: Be A Supplier.** Offer to donate fruits and vegetables when SRDs host or participate in community health-oriented events. It puts your



products in consumers' hands and becomes the brand they seek out in-store.

**5. COMMUNICATIONS: ADS, BLOGS & MEDIA:** SRDs have a huge opportunity to connect directly with consumers via a variety of advertising media. One is the chain's weekly ad circular. Festival Food's Schultz remarks, "I sit on our store's advertising committee and get a ½-page to create a healthful family-friendly meal-deal each week. It's affordable this way, and families might not have bought the produce if they weren't part of the deal. We see anywhere from 300 to over 1,000 percent lift on advertised ingredients."

SRDs also write weekly columns in local newspapers, online blogs and contribute to retail magazines with large print runs. For example, Mensinger at Redner's Markets offers at least four healthful recipes, a kid-friendly feature and numerous short bullets of nutrition information in the chain's *HealthCents* magazine. In addition, the dietitians at Weis Markets publish the bi-monthly magazine, *Healthy Bites*, as well as film 2-minute online YouTube videos that show basic preparation techniques targeted to Moms for healthy family recipes such as stuffed peppers and potato nachos. Jewel-Osco's Kirchherr takes this one step further by starring in a live weekly 2-minute recipe demo during the morning news program of the local Fox affiliate.

**Produce Industry Opportunities: Be A Content Provider.** A handful of produce promotional organizations and suppliers have already seized on this opportunity. One is the Pear Bureau Northwest. "We have been engaged with supermarket RDs for about a year," Mather explains. "One way we do this is with a quarterly recipe release."

Chris Christian, vice president of marketing for the Watsonville, CA-headquartered California Strawberry Commission, says, "We provide child education materials and recipes that dietitians can use in newsletters and blog posts."

The Sunkist Nutrition Bureau, a branch of Sherman Oaks, CA-based Sunkist Growers, has continually reached out to dietitians and other health professionals to provide updated news and information about the multiple health benefits of citrus fruits, says spokesperson Liz Wilkins. "We also plan to give these dietitians a chance to sample citrus varieties they may not be as familiar with, such as the Cara Cara Orange or Gold Nugget Mandarins, so that they can share that first-hand knowledge and enthusiasm with their audiences."

Ocean Mist Farms in Castroville, CA, has a Health & Nutrition section on its website dedicated to educating RDs, says

director of marketing and business development Kori Tuggle. "We even go as far as having a Health Professionals sub-section on the site that lists all the related research and sources for them as a reference. We promote this kind of education/content on all of our social media outlets regularly including Facebook and Twitter. Our goal with this section of our website was to create a one-stop resource of content related to the nutrition value of our artichokes."

Finally, in addition to a dedicated website

that provides monthly recipe ideas, Saginaw, TX-based Fresherized Food makers of Wholly Guacamole and Wholly Salsa, have enjoyed a 'guest' spot on a SRD's Twitter Party on Facebook. "The dietitian moderated, and we had 30 to 40 people online in a chat room asking me about guacamole. I talked about the good fats in avocados and different ways to use guacamole. Plus, we offered coupons for free guacamole to those who asked good questions. It was a fun way to educate and share ideas one on one."

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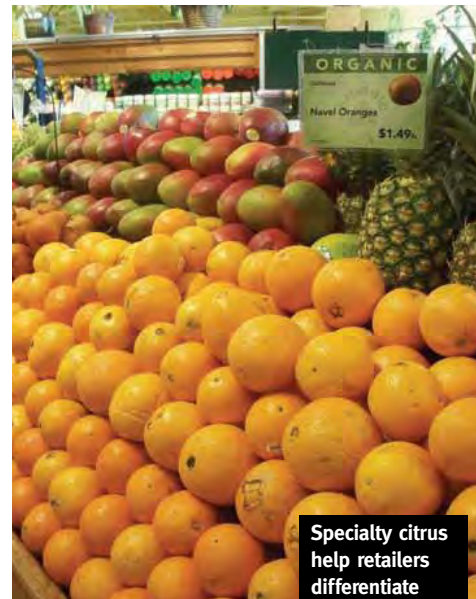
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Specialty citrus help retailers differentiate themselves from their competitors.

# Four Ways To Sell More Specialty Citrus

A short availability window and many exciting varieties make specialty citrus a welcome addition to any produce department. **BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD**

**T**he big four still make up the bread-and-butter sales in the citrus category. Oranges — both Navels and Valencias — as well as red grapefruit, lemons and limes contributed 65.7 percent of retail citrus dollars during the 52 weeks ending September 29, 2012, according to the Nielsen Perishables Group, a West Dundee, IL-based fresh food-consulting firm. Yet times are changing. Clementines, which burst into supermarket shelves in a big way only a decade ago, contributed 24.2 percent of category sales, second only to oranges. As a result of this rise in a once obscure specialty, many retailers today are adopting the marketing strategy, “If you can’t be the cheapest, be different.” In other words, they are differentiating themselves and becoming a one-stop shop by carrying a wide variety of specialty citrus.

There’s definitely a market, says Randy Bohaty, produce director at B&R Stores, a 17-unit chain headquartered in Lincoln, NE, that operates under the Super Saver and Russ’ Market banners. “Customers are

becoming much more interested in trying something new.”

Paul Kneeland, director of produce and floral for Kings Food Markets, a 25-store chain headquartered in Parsippany, NJ, agrees. “Specialty citrus is definitely a growing part of the category. For us, it represents 20 percent or more of sales.”

The recipe for success in selling more specialty citrus calls for giving customers what they want: new flavors, easy peel seedless convenience, snacking and cooking versatility, and health benefits. In turn, retailers can enjoy the final product: higher retail and better margins.

## 1. Define The Category

There is no one universally accepted definition of specialty citrus. However, Kneeland’s explanation accurately sums up much of the industry’s view. “It’s something out of the norm,” he says. “Not a regular Navel or lemon, but instead a Blood orange or Meyer lemon. Clementines or Mandarins are so popular today that they are considered mainstream by

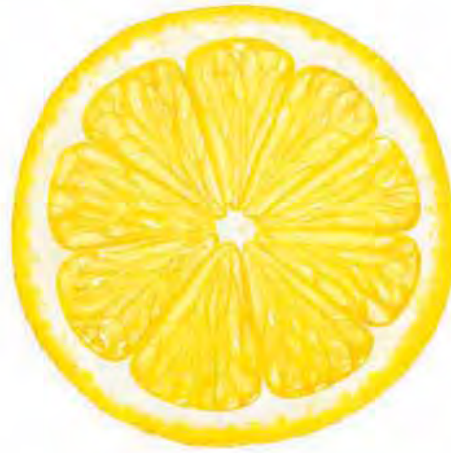
many, but not if they have a stem and leaf. In other words, specialty citrus is something that is unique.”

Karen Caplan, president and CEO of Los Alamitos, CA-headquartered Frieda’s Inc., agrees. “Specialty for me means accessory items like Meyer lemons, seedless lemons and variegated pink lemons, Buddha’s hand, ugli or unqi fruit, kumquats, Key limes, cocktail grapefruit, Finger limes, Mummelos, Mandrinquats, Oroblancos and Melogolds,” she details.

Another part of the definition includes a short window. Or, in other words, varieties that are seasonal specialties and are not available year-round, says Robert Schueller, director of public relations for Los Angeles, CA-based Melissa’s/World Variety Produce Inc. “The peak of the variety citrus season is December to late February and into March. After that, the number of varieties available drop off.”

This point potently shows in citrus contribution to produce department dollar sales by quarter. The highest in the most recent 52 weeks ending September 29, 2012, is Q2 at 7.6 percent followed by Q4 of 2011 at 6 percent.

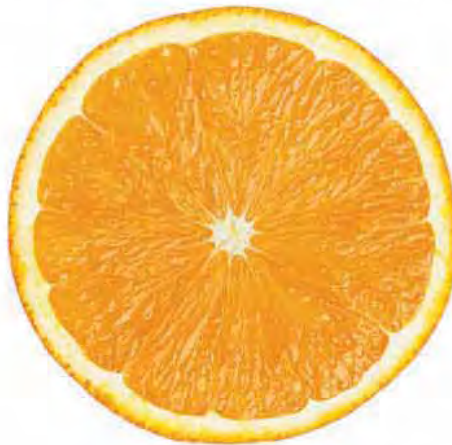




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**“Customers at Kings are becoming more and more interested in Blood oranges and Meyer lemons because you can cook with them. We have a fair amount of consumers who are home chefs.”**

— Paul Kneeland, Kings Food Markets

By comparison, citrus category dollar contribution dropped to 4.7 percent in Q2, and even further to 3.6 percent in Q3 of 2012, according to data supplied by the Nielsen Perishables Group.

## 2. Stock Best-Sellers & Up-And-Comers

Some still consider Clementines a specialty. However, what is new for this best-seller is year-round availability of high-quality fruit. Luke Sears, president and founder of LGS Specialty Sales, in the Bronx, NY, explains, “Clementines are available from a variety of sources such as Spain, Morocco and California, and in the Southern Hemisphere from Peru, Chile and South Africa. The problem has been the window in October and November, and the fact that early Clementines out of Spain in November are not as good. Now, plantings in Chile and South Africa are filling this gap,

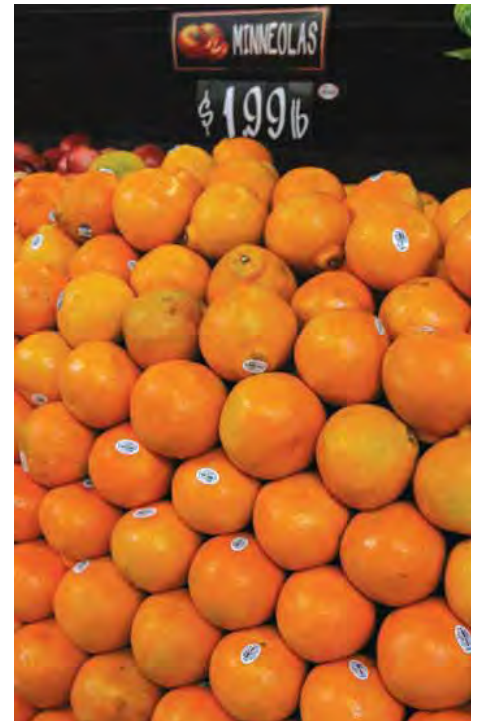
although demand still exceeds supply.”

According to Kneeland, “Customers at Kings are becoming more and more interested in Blood oranges and Meyer lemons because you can cook with them. We have a fair amount of consumers who are home chefs,” he adds.

On the orange front, B&R Store’s Bohaty reports, “Specialty citrus that have become more popular for us are Cara Cara Navels and Blood oranges like the Moros.”

Cara Caras, also sold as Red Navels, have become very popular with consumers, remarks Kathy Hearl, marketing promotions manager for Fort Pierce, FL-based DNE World Fruit Sales. “They look forward to the timeframe when they can purchase and enjoy these specialty items,” she says.

Leland Wong, director of marketing for Sunkist Growers, Inc., based in Sherman Oaks,



CA, agrees. “The Cara Cara now comprise 90 percent of the volume movement in specialty oranges,” she reveals. “The rest are made up of Bloods and other more obscure varieties such

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as Temples, Seville and Shamoutis. The challenge for the retailer is that Cara Caras look nearly the same on the outside as a regular Navel. Therefore, the points to market are a different taste and lower acid profile and health benefits such as an excellent source of vitamin C. That's why we market them with the tag line, "The Power Orange."

Blood orange sales remain limited due to the number of trees planted and the fact that they are alternate-bearing. Wong shares, "This upcoming season will be a positive year. Chefs

have latched on to Blood oranges in cooking and in cocktails."

Spring Navels haven't yet been marketed uniquely in the United States, but they have been in export markets such as Asia, specifically Korea, says Neil Galone, vice president of sales and marketing for Booth Ranches LLC, in Orange Grove, CA. "Spring Navels, which are now available from February into April, have a deep orange color on the outside and more bite, or higher acid, than regular navels. Our export customers recognized this early on

and continue to take just about everything we have at a premium. As our production increases, I see spring Navels becoming a marketing opportunity for domestic retailers within the next five years as volumes increase."

One up-and-comer among Mandarins is the Sugar Belle. The Sugar Belle is a cross between a Clementine and Minneola or Honey Belle. Dave Haller, vice president of sales and marketing for Vero Beach, FL-based Greene River Packing, Inc., reports, "Our production of Sugar Belles is slowly growing. The retailers we sell to now expect them and look forward to receiving them, especially since they have a short three- to four-week window from late November to December. In addition, we package them in a 4-lb. clear clamshell that differentiates them from the Clementines in a 5-lb. box and Sunburst Tangerines in a 3-lb. bag."

Late-season Tangerines and Mandarins are a huge trend and something that didn't exist a decade ago, says Melissa's Schueller. "These include the Shasta Gold Mandarin, Golden Nugget Mandarin and Ojai Pixie Tangerine that run from March into May," he details.

Two grapefruit-like specialty citrus varieties that have caught on with consumers at B&R Stores are Oroblancos and Melogolds. "However, to be successful, we invested more in consumer education with these than with other citrus varieties," Bohaty remarks. Oroblancos are a cross between a white grapefruit and acidless Pummelo, while Melogold grapefruit are bred from white grapefruit and regular Pummelo.

"Another variety gaining consumer interest is the cocktail grapefruit, which is a cross between a Pummelo and Frua Mandarin," adds Schueller. "The cocktail grapefruit is available from November to February and its flavor is sweeter and less acidic than a regular grapefruit."

Lemon varieties seem to be exploding driven by chef demand. Schueller explains, "Meyer lemons, which are a cross between a standard lemon and either a Mandarin or orange, were something we introduced about seven years ago and seedless lemons a year before that, both primarily into foodservice. Now they are finding their way into retail. As for the seedless lemons, these will be the norm in the next five to six years, just as we've seen popularity grow of seedless grapes and seedless watermelons," he predicts.

As for limes, Finger limes have expanded in availability out of California from late August or early September to January, Schueller details, "This is another foodservice favorite



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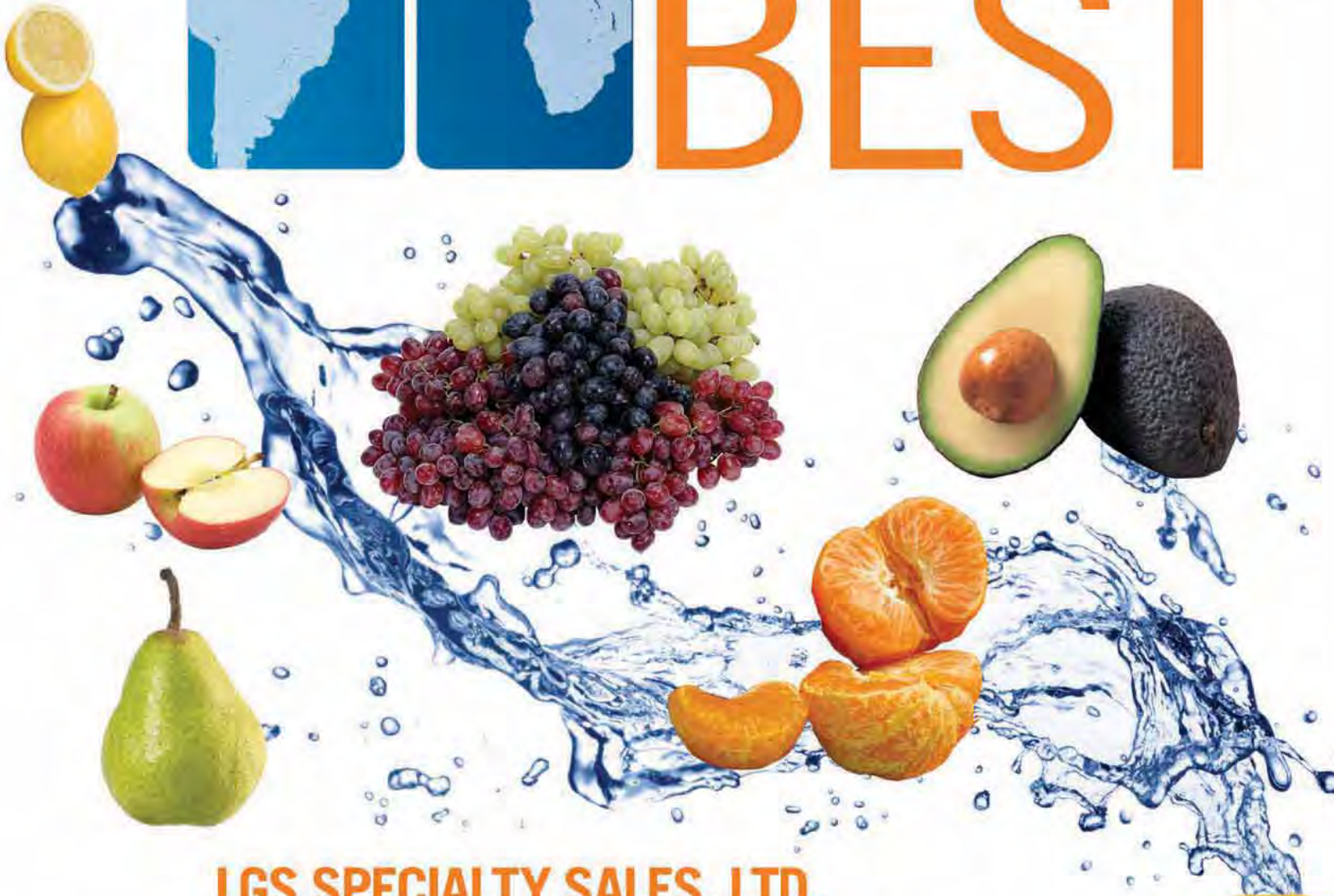
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**“The Cara Cara now comprise 90 percent of the volume movement in specialty oranges... The challenge for the retailer is that Cara Caras look nearly the same on the outside as a regular Navel. Therefore, the points to market are a different taste and lower acid profile and health benefits such as an excellent source of vitamin C.”**

— Leland Wong, Sunkist Growers, Inc.

and we just started selling to a few upscale retailers this year,” he reveals. “The problem is sticker shock. For example, a 3-oz. package with about 20 limes retails for \$8 to \$9.”

Other specialty citrus finding favor are kumquats, now available from November to June, propelled by purchases by Asian customers as well as foodies. The same holds true for yuzu, a golf ball-sized green-skinned citrus fruit harvested in California from October through December that is an essential ingredient in ponzu sauce.

### 3. Keep An Eye On The Horizon

Public and private breeders on both coasts are continuously working on new varieties of specialty citrus. Much of this work is in Tangerines and Mandarins and trying to attain the Big 3 most desirable attributes by consumers: flavor, seedlessness and easy-peel.

The advent of Florida citrus with these characteristics is now on the horizon. Bill Roe of Winter Haven, FL-based Wm. G. Roe & Sons, notes, “While the state and federal breeding systems have established programs that are churning out new selections, the vetting protocols for most of the future selections have yet to be enacted. Even though it will be seven to 10 years before any volume of the next round of publicly funded varieties hit the market with any significant commercial volume under current protocols, two public varieties that have been released and are



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# “We’ll tie an organic chicken in with Blood oranges used in a marinade. It helps customers get their minds around it and leads to incremental sales.”

— Paul Kneeland, Kings Food Markets



PHOTO COURTESY OF GREEN RIVER PACKAGING

currently being planted are the Early Pride and Tango.” The Tango is a seedless Mandarin variety developed at the University of California Riverside and now cultivated in both California and Florida.

Peter Chaires, the Lakeland, FL-based executive director of the New Varieties Development and Management Corporation (NVDMC) explains, “The Early Pride Tangerine has the advantage of being low in seeds at a timeframe, from October to November, when the state mainly produces the Fallgo, which can have 20 to 40 seeds per fruit.”

Grower/packers such as Wm. G. Roe & Sons, which go to market through Noble Worldwide Sales, are planting proprietary varieties that the company expects to take to market in the next couple of years. “Noble expects to have 500,000 5-lb. cartons or more of its proprietary selections available for the 2015 season,” reports Roe. “The salient characteristics of the new Noble varieties will be their

clean and easy-peeling characters. The first variety, which ripens about the first of November is a robust, juicy, high character fruit that is eerily reminiscent of the old school Dancy Tangerine,” he continues “The Dancy was the staple tangerine for the industry’s first 100 years. The second easy-peeling and virtually seedless variety ripens near the first of December. This selection peels clean and easy from top to bottom, and has a delightful balance of sugar and acid. This is a unique selection that could pass for a Clementine with slightly larger size yet from Florida. One of its special attributes is a longer life cycle that will extend throughout the month of January.”

Noble will soon release a very low seed Mandarin, which Brices as high as 14 and offers a uniquely easy-peeling experience and sizing that accommodates single-fruit marketing concepts at retail. “This selection will give the retailer an opportunity to offer its consumers the same single fruit selection from early November through mid-February,” says Roe.

Another area of breeding research is grapefruit-Pummelo hybrids. The NVDMC’s Chaires reports, “We’re tapping into the genetic diversity in the Pummelo to create fruit with good flavor and color. We tested a new grapefruit variety last week that had a nice flavor and an extraordinarily vibrant dark red color that received many positive comments. After all, customers buy with their eyes.”

## 4. Introduce Consumers To New Varieties

How do you motivate a customer out of their comfort zone to try a new type of specialty citrus? The answer is savvy display, educational and promotional techniques. “The first step is being seen,” says B&R Store’s Bohaty. “If something’s not seen, it can’t be sold. We’ll display specialty citrus in a promotional bin or spillover bin so its stands out from the rest of the citrus.”

Shipper display units are a good way to make space for varieties that are only available for a limited time. “So are end-caps,” says Greene River’s Haller.

Group specialty citrus with the rest of the citrus category, recommends DNE’s Hearl. “Displaying an assortment of citrus makes for

a beautiful colorful display and offers consumers a good mix of options,” she says.

In addition, Hearl adds, “Create multiple displays throughout the produce section. As produce departments get larger, consumers may not go through the entire section so it is beneficial to have multiple locations.”

Kings Super Markets accomplishes this by merchandising a secondary display of Buddha’s hand citrus in the middle of a display of Honeycrisp apples. In addition to an eye-catching display of contrasting colors, the placement of a well-known produce item next to one that is relatively unknown also encourages recognition by customers and trial.

Education and awareness are extremely important to growing a strong consumer base. Kim Flores, marketing manager for Vero Beach, FL-headquartered Seald Sweet, acknowledges, “In-store product demonstrations are ideal for educating consumers and providing a first-hand taste sensory experience.”

Bohaty agrees, adding, “The cutting and taste-sampling citrus in-store draws attention. It also takes the risk out of the purchase by customers knowing if they like the produce or not.”

Last February, Schnucks, a 100-store chain based in St. Louis, MO, joined with Frieda’s Produce University to conduct free tastings and consumer education on specialty citrus varieties such as Shasta Mandarins, Cara Caras, Blood oranges, Meyer lemons, kumquats, Melogolds and Pummelos.

In addition, retailers such as Kings uses POS materials like recipes to educate customers. Kneeland explains, “We’ll tie an organic chicken in with Blood oranges used in a marinade. It helps customers get their minds around it and leads to incremental sales.”

Header cards with QR codes are a good way to educate consumers, when retailers want to minimize POS. “Specialty citrus does command a premium price,” recognizes Greene River’s Haller. “Yet some type of price promotion is best. Consumers will try what they think is a good deal.”

Frieda’s Caplan agrees. “Pricing one 10-lb. boxes at cost encourages trial, gets the produce managers on board because they see the product moving, and it’s not a big deal to profits because it’s only one box.”

Specialty citrus has a place in the ad circular at B&R Stores. Bohaty describes, “Having an item on ad guarantees all the stores will carry it. Plus, a promotional retail encourages customers to buy. However, we don’t price it so low that customers will have sticker shock when they come back the next week to buy it at its regular price.”

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Growers, shippers and retailers must carefully consider their packaging choices, as each type is made for a different use.

# Rigid Containers Offer Flexible Options

Innovations and continual improvements of clamshells further all the advances in food safety, while adding to profitability at every level of the supply chain. **BY AMY SAWELSON**

**W**alking among the produce aisles was once a more tactile experience that it is today. Berries were in open pint containers ideal for examining each berry and perhaps swapping out the less than perfect ones. Grapes sat in bunches, inviting a “harmless” sample or two. As for loose baby greens in the bin, just how much handling and sorting by customers did they endure? While some consumers may be nostalgic for the days when they could touch and feel everything in the produce department, packaging has become one of the most important innovations in merchandising fresh fruits and vegetables. Recent years have seen a huge expansion of produce items now merchandised in rigid “clamshell” containers, which may reduce the sense of touch as a tool to purchase produce, but offers advantages in terms of the safety, quality, convenience, attractiveness and profitability of the produce items within.

The term, “clamshell” has become almost generic for clear, rigid packaging. According to Jack Tilley, market research analyst at Inline Plastics Corp. in Shelton, CT, the standard definition of a clamshell is “a one-piece container

with two halves joined by a hinge, which allows the container to fold over to close.” However, two-piece containers and containers that are rigid on the bottom and have some sort of film sealing the top are also commonly included in the clamshell category. Many of the variations on the clamshell have come about in response to the need to reduce costs, become more environmentally friendly by reducing the amount of material in the container or reduce shrinkage and tampering.

The trend toward sealing the top of a rigid container with a film material, “reduces costs by minimizing packaging,” explains David Stanton, director of North American Retail for NatureWorks LLC in Minnetonka, MN.

When asked as to whether clamshells are standardized, Jim Scattini, vice president of sales and marketing at Watsonville, CA-based Sambrailo Packaging, replied, “It depends on the item and its level of maturity in its product life cycle. For example, strawberries are sold in the fairly standard clamshell sizes of one pint, one pound, two pounds and four pounds. Each fits into common footprint trays (6-down or 8-down), which makes it easier for corrugators to mass-produce them efficiently

and at a lower cost. The berry category is well established and has the sales volume to warrant packaging providers — in this case thermoformers — spending big money on molds. Commodities newer to the value-added/rigid plastic clamshells arena generally start by using clamshells from a vendor’s catalog. Shippers’



## SPECIFICATIONS DEPEND ON BUYERS' NEEDS

**W**hen it comes to specifying clamshells, there are several basic characteristics that buyers must consider: clarity, closeability, how it protects the contents and how it looks on the shelf. After that, it all depends on each specific situation and the buyer's goals. "There should be coordination between the grower and the retailer," advises Kurt Zuhlke, president of Zuhlke & Associates in Bangor, PA. "We work with both parties to ensure the right container for the right item. To provide the packaging retailers need to effectively sell product, we respond to what's going on with growers and seed developers."

Roman Forowycz, chief marketing officer of Clear Lam Packaging in Elk Grove, IL, also sees that dialog between grower/processors

and retailers is vital to successfully merchandising produce. "They have to discuss what the visual impact should be," he states. "Whether the containers open and close easily. Is the material renewable? Do they want plant-based or petroleum-based material? Retailers that do private label will design proprietary configurations. Other considerations are: does the retailer want to reduce weight to save money on freight and reduce carbon footprint? In that case, they may specify a peel and reseal lid that not only reduces the weight of the packaging but also hermetically seals the lid to help increase shelf-life. Whole produce versus cut produce is another factor that will dictate the style and configuration of a clamshell."

Raul Gallegos, senior director of produce and floral at Bristol

preferences vary, which initially results in a wide array of package sizes and shapes for the same commodity. Packaging standardization usually doesn't come about until the consumer, retail chain and its receiving warehouse demand it."

One of the things certain about clamshell containers is that with their increased use in the produce industry, there is mostly a lack of standardization. "Clamshells come in all shapes and sizes; vented/non-vented; button lock/hinge lock; 4.4-oz. up to four pounds," points out

Tony Monte, president of Monte Package Co., located in Riverside, MI. We stock around eight variations of pint clamshells alone, each with something different to offer the customer. Clamshells are used to package everything including berries, tomatoes, salad greens, figs, cut fruits and vegetables, you name it."

Roman Forowycz, chief marketing officer of Clear Lam Packaging in Elk Grove, IL, points out another reason for a lack of standardization. "Each package is a marketing tool to create differentiation," he remarks. "Weights

may be standardized, as different produce has different requirements — 5-oz., 11-oz. 1-lb., etc, but there is no standardized look. Retailers want unique designs to differentiate themselves and add perceived value."

### Building A Better Clamshell

The quality of clamshells mostly depends on how they perform for their intended use. Tom Marsh, technical director at Story City, IA-based American Packaging Corp., an integrated flexible packaging converter says, "Any

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Farms, a 14-unit Carson, CA-based gourmet and specialty food retailer, contends, "Size of the clamshell in relation to price point is an important consideration, and if the product is clearly visible after label placement."

Jack Tilley, market research analyst at Inline Plastics Corp. in Shelton, CT, says, "Most whole produce needs to breathe in vented containers to maintain optimal freshness, as opposed to cut fruit and vegetables, where the priorities are preventing leakage and ensuring tamper resistance."

"When specifying produce in clamshells, buyers need to take into account resin performance, design/structure of the container, crush strength, closure, clarity of the material and what kind of produce will be going into it," states Steve Langdon, vice presi-

dent of sales for Precision Packaging in Holley, NY.

When it comes to clamshells, Jim Scattini, vice president of sales and marketing at Watsonville, CA-based Sambrailo Packaging, sums up questions buyers should ask: Will it protect the produce throughout the distribution channel, including harvest? Will it lengthen shelf-life of the product (or at least not promote breakdown/decay)? Does the lid remain closed when handled? Are the vents aligned to allow airflow? Is the clamshell clear and visually appealing to the consumer? Is the company reputable, experienced and have a full line of agricultural packaging items? Do the clamshell and tray maximize cube on the pallet and therefore save money on freight? What material is the clamshell made of and is it recyclable?

pb

sort of packaging from clamshells to pouches must be product-specific. In the case of produce, the material must breathe and it must be clear to display the contents."

Monte contends that what makes one clamshell better than another, "completely depends on what the customers' needs are, what they are packing, how they are packing and how they want to present their product."

Forowycz adds, "A container's quality depends on its performance in operations and distribution. If it's not designed well, is too thin

or of inferior quality, the package can collapse. If it has too many ribs, it's strong but it doesn't show off the product well. Quality in a clamshell or any package is determined by how well it highlights and protects what's inside."

Ray Akol is the produce manager for Vicente Foods, an independent specialty supermarket in Los Angeles, CA. "We don't generally have trouble with the performance of clamshells, but occasionally, some of our cut-fruit containers will be delivered with dents," he says. "We just call the supplier and tell them

the quality is not up to our standards. They'll usually fix mistakes."

Stanton of NatureWorks addresses the characteristics of the two basic materials (petroleum vs. bio-based) used in clamshell packaging, "Design, performance, environmental benefits and cost volatility are a few of the key attributes that determine whether a packer or retailer specifies a petroleum-based polymer material or packaging made from Ingeo, a biopolymer derived from plants," he explains. "Biopolymers offer better price stability, environmental

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impact benefits and performance features that often bode well for produce items. However, because containers made from petroleum-based polymers have been in use longer, right now, there are currently more companies that manufacture them.”

On the subject of what makes the best clamshell, Tilley of Inline Plastics Corp. explains, “It all depends on the application; does the customer need tamper-resistance? Long shelf life? Identifying the needs of the customer determines what type of clamshell is

the best fit.”

Kurt Zuhlke, president of Zuhlke & Associates in Bangor, PA, believes that the quality of the clamshell is largely in “the quality of the material and how it is formed. When you get cracks in the packing line, that’s an indication that the material is grade B vs. grade A,” he points out. “We have been manufacturing PET containers for over 55 years and put a lot of pride and innovation into our products.”

Steve Langdon, vice president of sales for Precision Packaging in Holley, NY, also believes

**“Size of the clamshell in relation to price point is an important consideration, and if the product is clearly visible after label placement.”**

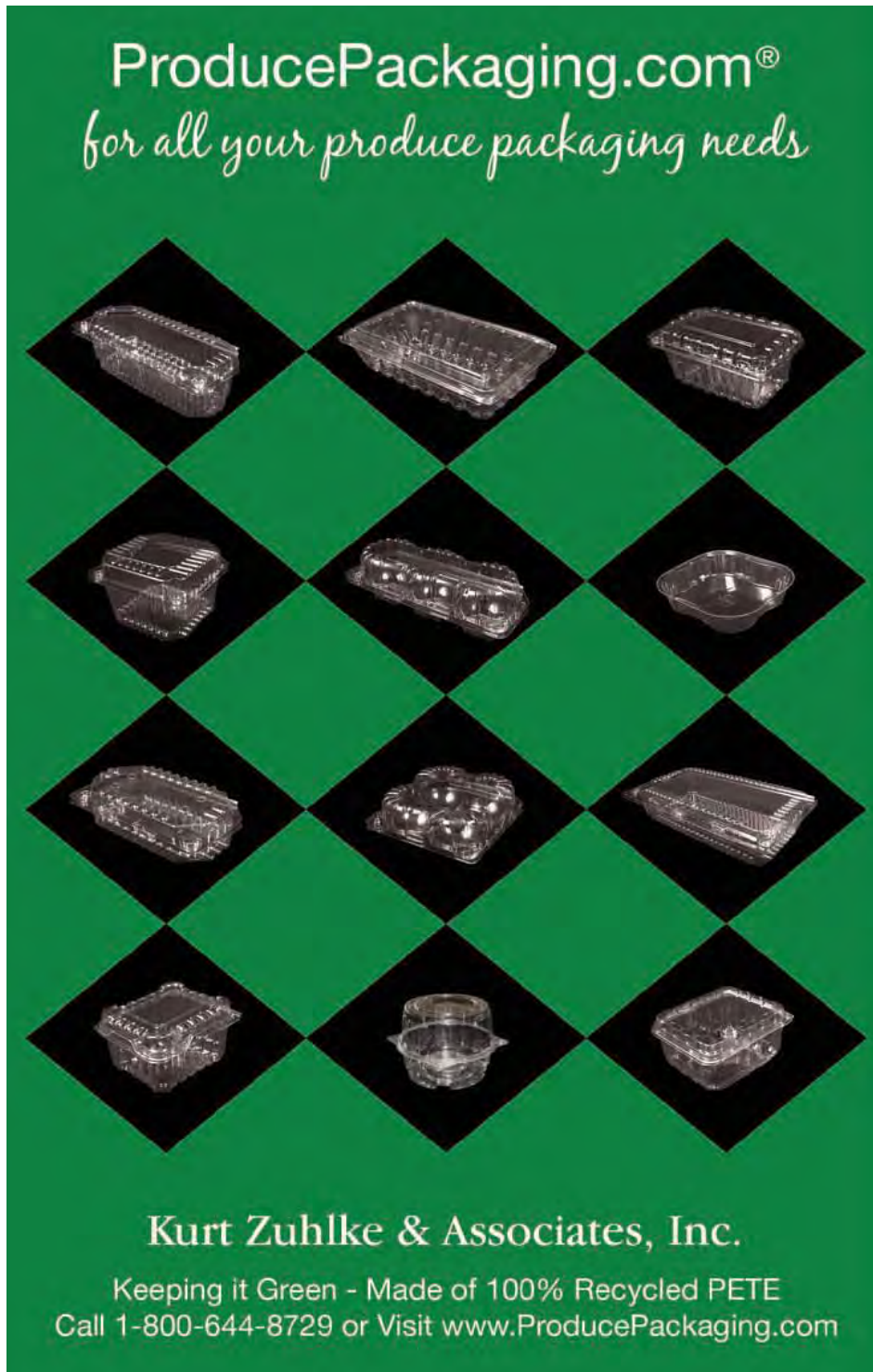
— Raul Gallegos, Bristol Farms

that the quality of the resin is intrinsic to the quality and performance of the clamshell. “Quality is tied to specification of the resin and the manufacturing process,” he states. “Has the material been recycled? What is the intrinsic viscosity of the product? Experienced processors are able to set minimum IV specifications that yield consistent resins, which in turn yields consistently performing products.”

Scattini reports that Sambraio has instituted a number of innovations that contribute to making a better clamshell. “Our MIXIM System family of clamshells possesses features that distinguish it from standard clamshells,” he says. “First, instead of ridges, the MIXIM clamshells have smooth-wall siding, which reduces mechanical damage because ridges can sometimes cut into the fruit. The smooth sides also enhance consumer appeal by showing off the product inside. Next, we’ve designed the clamshells with arched bottoms and hinge-vents, which are strategically aligned with the vents in the trays. This allows for more efficient airflow, faster cooling and increased shelf-life. We’ve also worked hard on having reliable and tight friction lock closures to ensure the packages don’t pop open and make them tamper-resistant. Finally, all of our clamshell containers are made from recycled and recyclable No. 1 PET.”

#### **Tamper-Resistance Is A Top Priority**

Growers, shippers and packers have developed highly sophisticated systems of maintaining food safety from field to store. Many packers have technology to place a bar code on each bin and scan it into their computer system as produce is received at the packing-house. Produce can be tracked through the packing process until a grower code is printed on each packed carton. These systems enable traceability to the specific grove or field, so that upon arrival at the buyer’s location, any issues can be identified to the exact location the fruits or vegetables came from. It’s possible to track a single tomato from its field of origin. However, all that effort and technology is useless if the



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**“For ready-to-eat items like washed greens or salads, having tamper-proof containers is very important. Consumers must have confidence that ready-to-eat produce is not contaminated.”**

— Steve Landon, Precision Packaging

produce can be contaminated once it gets to the store. Tamper-resistant packaging helps eliminate shrinkage, which saves money and contamination, saving retailers the headaches an outbreak of sickness can cause. Inline's Tilley explains, “With the increased focus on food safety in the produce industry, tamper-resistant packaging is highly desired to eliminate unwanted sampling that could cause contamination and shrink at retail level. Inline pioneered tamper-resistant packaging with its Safe-T-Fresh line of over 40 rectangular and round containers. These containers feature a patented Safe-T-Gard tear strip, which alerts a consumer or a retailer if the product has been tampered with after it has been packed and closed.

Clear Lam's Forowycz, agrees that tamper-proofing of clamshells and other packaging is crucial. “Food safety is the No. 1 consideration,” he asserts. “Tamper-proof packaging must be intuitive — consumers have to be able to open it easily and quickly observe if it has already been opened. Scored rigid lids with tear strips and peel/reseal lidding films work very well.”

Raul Gallegos, senior director of produce and floral at Bristol Farms comments, “Tamper-resistant packaging is important but then again, I have experienced some containers that are extremely difficult to open.”

Zuhlke of Zuhlke & Associates has a slightly different perspective on tamper-resistant clamshells. “The importance is on and off in the industry,” he admits. “Some promote tamper-proof characteristics, some don't. Whether the package is a rip-pack or shrink ribbon depends on what the retailer wants. Generally, they are most concerned about preventing sampling so that when a customer buys a container that's supposed to be pound of grape tomatoes, there really is a full pound.”

Tamper-resistant packaging becomes even

more important for the produce items consumers don't customarily wash, like cut fruits and vegetables. Landon of Precision Packaging notes, “For ready-to-eat items like washed greens or salads, having tamper-proof containers is very important. Consumers must have confidence that ready-to-eat produce is not contaminated.” Landon reports his company has developed a welded perforated tear strip for their clamshells to eliminate the shrink band. “If the temperature needs to be 32° - 40°F to keep the product fresh, it doesn't make

sense to put it through a 300°F shrink tunnel. This is the direction the industry is going.”

Monte of Monte Package sums it up. “Consumers like to be able to see exactly what they are buying with the added confidence of knowing that their fruits and/or vegetables haven't been handled by multiple people; clamshell packaging does all of that,” he says.

American Packaging's Marsh agrees, adding, “Tamper-resistant packaging is very important. Everyone's reputation is on the line.”

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Plenty of produce options means healthy snacking choices for the big game.

# Think Outside The Box For Merchandising Before The Big Game

Score a touchdown for creativity and register rings with creative thinking when it comes to Super Bowl, tailgating or home-gating merchandising. **BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD**

**G**uacamole, salsa and nuts are staples, but why not add potatoes, sweet potatoes, onions, apples, grapes and even soy products in promotions? It's not a stretch. Many companies offer merchandising materials and promotional ideas to assure your sales will reach the goal post.

Based on various displays at the Produce Marketing Association's Fresh Summit in Anaheim, CA, which took place October 26-28, PRODUCE BUSINESS discovered the latest tailgating trends.

### 1. W.P. Griffin's BBQ Ready Potatoes



This new tray pack of three triple-washed individually foil-wrapped Russet baking pota-

toes from the Prince Edward Island, Canada-based company comes ready to throw on the grill. The on-pack label announces an ongoing monthly recipe contest that encourages visitors to submit a recipe via the company's website where it will be judged for originality, taste, texture and overall appeal. The Grand Prize is a new BBQ grill valued at \$500.

### 2. Chilean Hass Avocados



Everybody knows that no tailgating party is complete without the requisite guacamole. Retailers can promote avocados for the Big Game or any ball game with a variety of eye-catching, high-graphic merchandising materials available from the Chilean Avocados Importers Association (CAIA). In addition to Grab Some for the Game themed display bins with and without header cards and posters,

CAIA also hosts a retail display contest that runs from October 2012 through February 3, 2013.

### 3. Idaho-E. Oregon Onions



Grilling with a football tailgating and homegating marketing message is the new theme of retail and consumer-direct promotional efforts by the Parma, ID-based Idaho-E. Oregon Onion Committee (USA Onions). The Committee's initiatives, which kicked off at the beginning of its crop season on September 1, 2012, include retail onion/grill display incentives; a special retail display contest for Bowl season; both in-store and Facebook sweepstakes; and a broker incentive program. Weber is providing the grills and accessories for USA Onion's grilling platform.



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#### 4. Simply Spuds Grillables



Simply Spuds Grillables are triple-washed Russet and sweet potatoes sold in a three-pack. The individually foil-wrapped potatoes come grill-ready, but can also be cooked in a conventional oven. Loveland, OH-based Fresh Solutions Network offers a corrugated shipper display unit that looks like a grill, and the product's website provides more than a dozen creative ways to top both types of potatoes. A baked potato bar is a perfect and healthful way to encourage consumers to enjoy the game.

#### 5. CMI Apples & Grapes



Snacking doesn't get any sweeter! Simply set up a football-themed display with premium table grapes packed in a variety of convenient package sizes and wicker-basket-designed paper totes full of Honeycrisp and Fuji apples. Columbia Marketing International's team, based in Wenatchee, WA, knows that everyone loves the Super Bowl and all of the traditions that come along with it. Great food doesn't always come with a low-calorie tag, but CMI proves it's possible to entertain healthfully. Everyone loves sliced apples, which are rich in dietary fiber. Add a dessert element to your apple slices with a caramel dipping sauce. Additionally, including a bowl of sweet cherries on the buffet game table is an easy way to give your guests a boost of Vitamins A, B and C.

#### 6. Orchard Valley Harvest Nuts

Shoppers can go nuts for their favorite sports with this new line of natural products marketed by the Elgin, IL-based company. Gusseted 9-oz. bags of pecan halves, 12-oz.



bags of whole hazelnuts, 8-oz. bags of walnut halves and pieces, and 9-oz. bags of whole almonds stand up smartly on the shelf for attention-grabbing merchandising. Instead of munching on high-calorie chips and candies, why not offer consumers a heart-healthy way to enjoy the game?

#### 7. Wholly Guacamole & Wholly Salsa



Tackle game day hunger the guacamole and salsa way with fresh, refrigerated, ready-made Wholly-brand products from Fresherized Foods, based in Saginaw, TX. Guacamole selections include Classic, Spicy, Organic and Homestyle flavors, plus 100-calorie snack packs in Classic and Spicy. Five new salsa flavors: Pineapple, Pepper Mango, Roasted Tomato, Avocado Verde and Guacamole, and Spicy Pico, join the now 8-item line that also includes Mild, Medium, and Hot. The company's website offers a home-gating section where customers can find recipes, tips and tricks as well as an opportunity to print-out a product coupon monthly.

#### 8. Concord Foods Guacamole Mix



Make it easy for customers to create their own great-tasting guacamole for football tailgating. The Brockton, MA, company offers mixes in five flavors: Mild, Extra Spicy, Classic Mild, Classic Extra Spicy, and Authentic. The products are available in 18 packs and 144-pack floor shippers for retail supermarkets, mass merchandisers and club stores in the United States. Displaying the mixes alongside fresh avocados boosts sales of the category as each mix calls for two avocados.

#### 9. Duda Farm Fresh Foods' Celery Celebrations



Just in time for the holiday entertaining and football games, Oviedo, FL-based Duda Farm Fresh Foods introduces its Celery Celebrations. "This is a new line of seasonal packaging designed with fun and festive graphics," says director of marketing, Nichole Towell. Products include a 30-count Celery Stalk, 18-count Celery Hearts and 8-oz. Celery Sticks, the latter of which is perfect for easy game-day dipping. Pictured are Dan Duda, president and CEO Duda Farm Fresh Foods; Nichole Towell, director of marketing; Sam Duda, vice president of western vegetable operations

#### 10. VOC Is Ready For Tailgating In 2013



The Vidalia Onion Committee, based in Vidalia, GA, will offer consumers a true Taste of Summer beginning in May, 2013, with a new annual program featuring summer-centric promotional partners such as Johnsonville Sausage. The promotion involves elements ranging from a consumer contest for best recipes and outdoor entertaining ideas, national public relations outreach, in-store events, POS material, and packaging. "As consumers heat up the grill and get cooking outside more and more each summer season, the promotional organization for Georgia's famous sweeties feels the ongoing and unique summer-themed campaign will be a tasty way for them and their new partners to reach consumers at retail," says Wendy Brannen, the VOC's executive director.

#### 11. Avocados from Mexico





Turn every game into an opportunity for customers to make a bowl full of guacamole spurred by retail merchandising materials from Avocados from Mexico (APEAM). "There are a variety of merchandising materials available for retailers to use in store this fall and winter when consumers are likely to be planning holiday meals or getting together to watch football games," says Eduardo Serena, APEAM's director of marketing. Materials include sports-themed secondary-display units, display wraps, posters and other POS materials. Avocados from Mexico project a greater than 918 million pound crop for the 2012/2013 season, more than 20 percent over last season.

### 12. Nasoya Pasta Zero Shirataki Spaghetti And Fettuccine



Step up your game-time menu with a low-carb low-cal traditional Japanese noodle that serves up only 20 calories per serving plus absorbs the delicious flavors in a dish. Ayer, MA-based Nasoya Pasta Zero Shirataki Spaghetti and Fettuccine noodles come in 8-oz. packages. Merchandise these products with the company's Chinese style noodles for stir-frys and salads, Japanese style noodles for soups, wraps for pot stickers and dumplings, tofu and even jarred Kim chi — a fast-growing favorite hot dog topping.

### 13. Chelan Fresh: Fuel Up To Play 60



From schools to supermarkets, Chelan Fresh, based in Chelan, WA, has partnered with

Fuel Up to Play 60 (FUTP60), a program launched by the National Dairy Council and National Football League with support from USDA in 2009. The program tackles the childhood obesity epidemic by encouraging kids to eat healthful foods including fruits and vegetables as well as participate in 60 minutes of physical activity daily. The company has taken its partnership with the FUTP60 program to supermarkets by offering retailers fresh apples in FUTP60-themed mesh bags, poly bags, tote bags, merchandising units, half-bin displays and other POS materials.

### 14. Wonderful Pistachios



Encourage customers to get crackin' for healthy snackin' with shipper displays of Wonderful-brand Pistachios from Los Angeles, CA-based Paramount Farms. The company launched two new flavors — Salt & Pepper and Sweet Chili, both in 7-oz. bags — that started shipping to retailers nationwide this fall.



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### 15. Frontera Foods & Mission Produce Restaurant-Style Guacamole Mix



Customers can make guacamole at home just like a celebrity chef by using mixes created by Chef Rick Bayless. Mission Produce, of Oxnard, CA, teamed with Bayless in the creation of a line of

Frontera-branded guacamole mixes that were introduced in 2010. Packaged in single-use pouches, the mixes are best merchandised in the produce department on peg boards, in bin racks, in display-ready trays or with bagged avocados on a unique rack. This year, Mission purchased a 50 percent share in Chilean avocado packer and exporter, Cabilfrut, giving the company vertical integration in Chile. Mission also continues to expand its avocado operation in Peru.

### 16. Hampton Farms Nuts



Get ready to batter-up for summer baseball season with roasted plain or salted in-shell peanuts from Hampton Farms, headquartered in Severn, NC. The company offers Major League Baseball logo packages in 12-oz bags. The bags ship in a display case that can build sales without taking up precious shelf space. All teams are available, so all of your bases are covered. *Pictured are Debi Grimsby, marketing management and product development, and Ben Fueston, Midwest regional sales manager*

### 17. Blue Diamond Almonds



Shoppers who love the playful fun of opening in-shell peanuts or pistachios can enjoy this new kid on the block. The Sacramento, CA, company's Blue Diamond's new fresh-roasted thin-shelled almonds are easy to open and eat — no nutcracker required. The 10-oz. bags of almonds come in two flavors: Unsalted and Hint of Sea Salt. A shipper display unit is available for easy merchandising; the unit also offers customers 75-cent-off coupons to encourage trial.

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# A Fresh Look At Chilean Exports

New options in products, packaging and marketing programs will help retailers further boost this important category. **BY JODEAN ROBBINS**

In just a little over 30 years, Chilean fresh fruit has become a staple in most U.S. winter households. Currently, Chile represents 59.3 percent of the Southern Hemisphere fresh fruit exports consisting primarily of grapes, apples, kiwis, avocados, plums, peaches, pears, cherries and blueberries, according to Chilean export association ASOEX.

“In 1970, Chile exported 1,000 tons of fruit,” states Tom Tjerandsen, managing director, North America for the Chilean Fresh Fruit Association (CFFA) based in Sonoma, CA. “By 1990, that grew to over 1 million tons, and in the 2011-2012 season, Chile exported over 2.5 million tons. Of this, about 35 percent is shipped to the United States and Canada,” he reveals.

Not a country to rest on its laurels, Chile continues to look for new advances. “As a principal supplier in global distribution channels for fresh fruit, Chile remains committed to varietal research in areas including early and late seasons, high sugar, pest- and drought-resistance, and salt soil tolerance,” says Tjerandsen. “Transportation innovations, sustainability improvements, traceability/food safety commitments and packaging breakthroughs also continue to confirm Chile as a

world leader in these categories.”

Eric Crawford, president of Fresh Results, LLC, headquartered in Sunrise, FL, confirms, “There is a constant effort to always develop new varieties or make current varieties stronger, more disease-resistant and more flavorful. In addition to cultivar improvements, we’re always striving to harvest, cool and ship more effectively and efficiently.”

## Innovations In Packaging

Packaging is one area where Chilean suppliers look for innovation. “There are a few companies that have advanced and innovated with very creative packaging,” reports Gustavo Yentzen, CEO of Freshfruitportal.com, headquartered in Santiago, Chile. “The Berry Quick packages, created by Estero, FL-based Naturipe Farms, encompass a brilliant idea to put blueberries in a snack format, offering washed and ready-to-eat berries in a single-serve package. Pandol Brothers, of Delano, CA, launched a new packaging for grapes, allowing for both display of the grapes at store-level and for the consumer to wash and drain the product in the same container,” he continues. “These packaging options offer new possibilities to retailers, allowing them to go beyond the traditional displays, generating

impulse buys, as well as improving sales by increasing rotation of the product.”

Coral Gables, FL-based Del Monte Fresh Produce reports continuously researching new and innovative packaging. “We look for packaging advances that not only allow us to keep up with the changing consumer demands and preferences, but that are also sustainable and help retailers reduce shrink as well,” says Dionysios Christou, Del Monte’s vice president of marketing. “We are always looking at ways to help the retailer differentiate and provide innovative ways to merchandise their produce from Chile. For example, we are working on a new configuration for displaying grape clamshells in a display-ready box to reduce handling at the store level,” he reports. “Retailers continue to request new carry bags as they are a big hit with consumers.”

Packaging options in consumer favorites like blueberries and grapes offer opportunity. “The most significant shift in the packaging area is with blueberries,” contends Ronald Bown, president and chairman of ASOEX, located in Santiago, Chile. “Shippers are sending increasingly larger packages, and retailers are finding that shoppers are willing to buy them, in spite of the higher ring.”

“One of the things becoming more popular



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with grapes is a heavier ply bag that is gusseted so it can stand up,” reports Paul Kneeland, vice president of produce and floral for Kings Food Markets in Parsippany, NJ, with 25 Kings and 6 Balducci’s stores. “It’s convenient, durable and easy to merchandise.”

Changes in packaging location are resulting in added benefit. “More production this year will go by bulk shipments than in the past,” reports Crawford of Fresh Results. “We are packing the fruit at destination. By doing so, we’re able to look at the fruit, grade it and pack it according to specific customer requests,” he explains. “This improves quality and gives customers the specific product and packaging they want to feature.”

## Expanding Product Line

Chile is working to expand the variety of its exports. “Retailers know that a way to keep shoppers involved with their produce sections is to constantly change the inventory mix,” says Bown. “It not only enhances their image, but also challenges their shoppers to try items with which they may be unfamiliar.”

“Similar to already high volume products, new items will help fill a year-round program and keep fruit on shelves,” points out Chris Kragie, sales manager for Madera, CA-based Western Fresh Marketing.

Freshfruitportal’s Yentzen adds, “These may not be brand-new products for consumers but they haven’t been available in the counter-



season...so it is an opportunity for stores to surprise their customers.”

New options from Chile may help extend demand for some items. “Emerging products to look for from Chile include pomegranates with a season of March to June, baby figs, prunes and walnuts,” says Bown.

“Pomegranates are still in the initial stages in terms of volume,” states Manuel Jose Alcaino, president, owner and founder of Decofrut Inc., located in Santiago, Chile. “Fresh distribution has stiff competition from the processing industry. It is a niche product right now, but it’s a very healthy fruit with a lot of antioxidants so we envision growth. The season is January through March.”

“We’ve handled a fair amount of pomegranates in the past,” reports Kneeland. “It’s a good product and our customers look for it.”

Increased exports in more specialty items will also help grow exponential sales. “Unique products to look for include Asian pears from February to May, persimmons from April to June, and figs in mostly March and April,” details Kragie.

“Walnuts in Chile are another fast-growing category,” says Alcaino. “The particular combination of weather and soil in Chile results in a walnut of superior quality. There is a tremendous demand for Chilean walnuts; however not so much in the United States due to domestic production and availability.”

“We definitely see potential for these emerging products to extend their seasons,” says Dick Rissman, produce director with Dahl’s Food Stores, an upscale independent chain with 13 stores in Des Moines, IA.

### Information Is Money

A crucial component of a successful season is founded on information. “Timely and accurate information is the key,” says ASOEX’s Bown. “The blueberry industry is doing the best job with this, and soon, the others will follow. Harvest timing is important, as is volume on the water and attendant arrival date.”

Del Monte’s Christou remarks, “Buyers can benefit from beginning discussions with suppliers early, to lock in orders. If buyers are flexible in sizing of fruit and purchase as many products from the same supplier as possible, good returns can be expected for all parties. It is also important to coordinate ads for when fruit availability peaks,” he suggests.

Understanding peak volume timing is essential. “We can maximize returns to the grower and meet retailers needs with communication of the peak availabilities,” says Kragie of Western Fresh.

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“This information is critical for growers to get the return they’re looking for and for retailers to have supply they’re promoting,” agrees Fresh Results’ Crawford. “If the avenues of production, procurement and marketing aren’t in sync, everybody’s going to have a problem. Last year, the information between production and marketing was seamless, and the results reflected that for both the retailer and the grower.”

“Knowledge of availability and peak times to promote is essential,” adds Rissman. “It’s important to know if the season will be long or short so promotions can be planned appropriately.”

Steve Monson, senior sales representative at C.H. Robinson, in Eden Prairie, MN, adds, “When you’re talking about purchasing produce from Chile, you have to take into consideration how weather conditions will affect the supply three to four weeks later in the United States. When buyers work closely with suppliers to understand the supply and price of a specific commodity, they understand the best times to promote that commodity. Planning well in advance is the key in working with Chilean suppliers. Advance planning won’t solve 100 percent of the issues that can pop up during the harvest and shipping period, but they will be greatly reduced because of it.”

Accurate information on taste and ripeness aids buyers in promotion. Kings’ Kneeland explains, “A buyer needs to ensure the experience of eating the fruit is positive for the customer. When it’s at the peak of flavor, suppliers need to let us know so we can share that with our customers, especially now that social media allows us instant communication with customers about what is great-tasting in the store.”

Kneeland continues, “At Kings, we take a photo of the product, and within an hour, we email the photo and a written communication to our customers. We are utilizing this technology more and more. It’s a hugely valuable tool made better by advance communication with suppliers.”

The Chilean industry provides several useful tools for keeping track of production and market information. “The Chilean industry is very much behind the idea of transparency and sharing information,” says Decofrut’s Alcaino. “There is a long-available tool being increasingly utilized by the Chilean industry — ExportData FullCargo. This subscription-based service provides the entire manifest every time a ship or plane leaves Chile with fruit and is available to all players in the industry two or three days after the ship leaves.”

Freshfruitportal.com and Portalfruti-



**“At Kings, we take a photo of the product, and within an hour, we email the photo and a written communication to our customers. We are utilizing this technology more and more. It’s a hugely valuable tool made better by advance communication with suppliers.”**

— Paul Kneeland, Kings Food Market

cola.com are other sources of information as online news outlets. “The site keeps readers informed on the ever-changing world of the export fruit industry in the prime fruit growing nations,” says the company’s Yentzen. “It compiles a collection of original news reporting, press clippings, exclusive harvest trends and market reports from the world produce industry.”

### Touching The Customer Conscience

Chile is also pushing forward into the new frontier of sustainability and social responsibility. Cristou from DelMonte explains, “Some of the most relevant sustainability programs in Chile include Rain Forest Alliance, soil/water/fuel/electricity conservation initiatives at farms and packing plants, reduction in agrochemical use, and recycling programs for packaging materials, organic waste, water, and engine oil.”

Products related to social responsibility hold potential. “These days, more and more consumers are looking to increase their knowledge of the produce they are purchasing,” says Monson of C.H. Robinson. “One of the best things a retailer can do is to take advantage of the consumer marketing programs offered by suppliers that educate consumers about where their food comes from. These programs help create relationships that consumers come back to the next time they shop.”

“With greater access to information than ever before, consumers want to know more about where their food comes from and how it was produced,” agrees Rafael Goldberg, CEO of Interrupcion\* Fair Trade in Brooklyn, NY. “They choose to shop at stores that provide



PHOTO COURTESY OF INTERRUPCION\* FAIR TRADE

**Interrupcion\* Fair Trade has created programs to ensure its growers and workers safe working conditions.**

compelling answers to such questions. Offering sustainably-sourced products demonstrates a commitment to meeting customer needs and those of suppliers, and simultaneously boosts profits and drives sales with shoppers having more reasons to buy and to feel good about their purchases.”

“Tell the story behind the fruit,” recommends Yentzen. “Chilean fruit is grown in perfect weather conditions. Behind every bunch of grapes there is a grower and its family that, on average, has been in the business for three or four generations. They have worked hard in logistics, packaging, cold chain, traceability and much more...all their efforts and their history is not known by the average consumer.”

Fair Trade is an increasingly popular program. “We’re in the process of working with Fair Trade,” reports Crawford. “We hope to be certified very soon.”

Interrupcion\* has extensive Fair Trade and sustainability programs in Chile and the organization is rapidly expanding work there with the creation of its newest office opened in 2011. “Over the past seven years, Interrupcion\* has worked with producer groups throughout

the growing regions in Chile to produce a range of fresh items in both Fair Trade and Fair Trade Organic,” says Goldberg. “Our programs have created market access opportunities for growers and workers as well as safe, dignified working conditions. Additionally, we have created important investments in communities and social programs, such as rebuilding efforts after the Earthquake in 2010, workshops and educational programs, ecological programs and much more.”

Goldberg continues, “We currently have production of Fair Trade and Fair Trade Organic blueberries, cherries, avocados, kiwi, blackberries and raspberries. The near future will bring items such as apples and pears and potentially stone fruits. As an important supplier nation to the U.S. market, Chile represents great opportunities for new Fair Trade products. With these products and supply from other South American producing nations, we can offer availability of sustainable, Fair Trade and organic fresh produce items that complement local seasons and provide the opportunity to maintain values-based merchandising efforts all year-round.” **pb**





PHOTO ABOVE BY CARLI LANDUCCI, FIRST ALTERNATIVE COOP



Bananas and avocados are two of the most popular Mexican produce items.

# Mexico: Continued Evolution Of A Top Supplier

Key developments in Mexico's export sector promise new and unique sourcing opportunities for the future. **BY JODEAN ROBBINS**

**M**exico's established track record in providing supply for the U.S. market continues to grow and expand. "Mexico is a powerhouse fresh fruit and vegetable exporter," says Roberta Cook-Canela, Cooperative Extension Marketing Economist (in the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics) at the University of California in Davis, CA. "In 2010, its total world export fruit value was \$2.339 billion and vegetable export value was \$4.310 billion. The U.S. is the predominant market for Mexican fresh and processed fruits and vegetables, importing an average of 83 percent of Mexican fruit exports and 91 percent of vegetable exports."

The evolution of the Mexican industry has resulted in a wealth of quality, consistent products backed by experienced growers. "Mexico has generations of growers who know what they're doing," says Gonzalo Avila, vice president/general manager for Malena Produce, Inc., in Rio Rico, AZ. "There is a huge commitment to having the right things in place from infra-

structure to food safety programs because they grow specifically for the export (U.S.) market. This benefits the buyer because it means great product at a reasonable price."

"With the variety of microclimates in Mexico, almost any kind of fresh produce item can be grown, and nearly year-round," adds Lance Jungmeyer, president of the Fresh Produce Association of the Americas (FPAA) based in Nogales, AZ. "Mexico has put an emphasis on growing export-grade fresh produce, so buyers are assured of quality product they can put on retail shelves or make a menu item for restaurants."

Mexico is also moving into new genres of production, increasing its organic and fair trade offerings. "This is something we jump on for our market," states Matt Landi, produce director for organic-focused New Leaf Community Markets in Santa Cruz, CA, with seven stores. "Consumers generally want to feel connected to the product and the people who grow it, whether it's local or from further South. This is particularly true when it comes to any kind of social program; it can really have an

impact on people's purchasing decisions."

As Mexico continues to improve its position as a key produce supplier for the United States, buyers and consumers will benefit. "Mexico is a very important part of our supply," says Tommy Wilkins, produce procurement director for United Supermarkets in Lubbock, TX, currently operating 51 stores. "Our partners do a wonderful job of providing excellent safe, quality products for a large portion of the year. Our guests do not realize how important Mexico has become to supplying steady supplies of many items during their production windows."

"The key advantages of sourcing from Mexico include new varieties and an abundance of supplies during the most challenging time of year," says Chris Ciruli, chief operating officer for Rio Rico, AZ-based Ciruli Brothers, LLC. "Mexico's close proximity also allows for fresh product."

"Alternative production windows, reliable volume and enhanced quality are benefits of the evolution of the Mexican industry," according to Andrés Fernandez, Mexico



director of operations for PrimusLabs in Querétaro, México. “New developments also allow for supply chain and logistic efficiencies, along with cost cuts when supplying Texas and eastern U.S.”

### On The Horizon

Advances in varieties add to the increasing supply options sourced from Mexico. “Many companies are working hard via innovation and genetics to differentiate with new produce varieties and gourmet products and packaging,” reports Fernández. “Some new products include colored mini bell peppers, sweet peppers, blackberries from Michoacan, different varieties of tomatoes (grape, cherry, Kumato, Zima, pink) and a special cross of broccoli and cauliflower called Verónica — a quite interesting product. México has recently started producing endive for export, giant carrots, giant cabbage and mini European cucumbers.”

Availability of gourmet and organic items from Mexico may help stimulate the market. “We anticipate continuing to add more farming land, which means our supply of organic bananas continues to increase,” reports Mayra Velazquez de Leon, president of Organics Unlimited in San Diego, CA.

“The increase in availability of Mexican grown organics in recent years has really helped close the price gap,” reports Landi. “Without winter produce from Mexico it would be difficult to offer a full array of organics.”

“Mexico has increased production of seedless cucumbers over the past several years,” reports Alejandro Canelos, director of Apache Produce Imports, LLC in Nogales, AZ. “While the American public has made some headway in transitioning from the traditional ‘slicer’ cucumber to the seedless varieties, there is still a long way to go. The nutrition, flavor, and digestive advantages of the seedless are why most of the world prefers it to slicers. But when consumers are asked to pay two to three times as much for a seedless cucumber as for a slicer it keeps consumption down. I see an opportunity here in the future.”

Growth in mainstream products also adds to retail sales potential. “The growth in the berry category in Mexico is giving retailers more ability to promote these items year-round,” says Jungmeyer. “In the past, there were only certain windows for promoting blackberries and raspberries. Adding Mexico to supply from the U.S. and Southern Hemisphere means there are really no gaps.”

“The Champagne [Ataulfo] mango is a spectacular item for us,” says United’s Wilkins.

## AN INTERVIEW WITH JUAN FERNANDEZ DEL VALLE, ASERCA CHIEF DIRECTOR

**Q: Why is trade between the U.S. and Mexico important?**

**A:** The U.S. is Mexico’s most important trading partner. In recent years, agricultural trade between Mexico and the U.S. has been well balanced, reporting \$17 billion dollars in 2011 in agricultural products imported from Mexico and \$18 billion dollars exported from the U.S. to Mexico. The U.S. represents 78 percent of Mexico’s agricultural exports. Between 2005 and 2011, Mexican exports to the U.S. have grown 83 percent. Mexico represents an important source of fresh products for U.S. consumers. Four out of five tomatoes as well as nine out of ten limes consumed in the U.S. come from Mexico. These are high quality, affordable products U.S. consumers would not have access to otherwise.

**Q: And what about Mexico’s importance for U.S. exports?**

**A:** Mexico also represents an important market for many U.S. agricultural products. For example, it is an important market for U.S. apples, beef, and pork. Mexican consumers enjoy U.S. products given their widespread availability. There is a lot to be said for having one of your top trading partners right next door. Moreover, it is important to recognize the significance of the commercial relationship for both countries. This is a mutually beneficial relationship. Trade statistics show that for many years, the U.S.-Mexico balance of trade has been fairly balanced, meaning we are trading equally with each other.

**Q: What benefits do products from Mexico offer the U.S. marketplace?**

“It is the best eating mango and has sold in all formats extremely well. All berries continue to improve in production and quality. Increased avocado production provides a great value to our guests. Avocados are one of our top items weekly and the new production areas continue to expand, providing better values.”

Avocados present year-round opportunity. Eduardo Serena, marketing director for APEAM, the Mexican avocado association in Michoacán, México, reports, “This year,

**A:** Specifically in agriculture, Mexican exporters are reliable suppliers to the US market. The availability of products from Mexico allows U.S. consumers access to high quality, safe, affordable fresh agricultural products. Without the Mexican supply, there would be lapses in availability and price increases in many fresh produce items during the year. Given the focus on healthy food consumption, Mexico’s produce exports are crucial to helping achieve that goal.

**Q: So Mexican produce benefits the U.S. in more ways than one?**

**A:** Absolutely! U.S.-Mexico trade is a win-win for people in both countries. The benefits for Mexico are fairly obvious, but there are also multiple layers and benefits for the U.S. Behind the direct business of trade, there are different activities and jobs created throughout the entire distribution chain. Any negative effect on trade with Mexico could have repercussions in the U.S. It’s important to understand that we are not just a provider, we are partners. There is also a great deal of U.S. and Canadian investment in Mexico. Lives and businesses on both sides of the border are intertwined.

**Q: So what does the future hold?**

**A:** Mexican exporters are responsible and committed to the U.S. marketplace. It is not about what governments do or do not do; it is about what the market demands. Our industry is not something that happened overnight, it has taken decades to develop and mature. The Mexican industry will continue to grow until it becomes a leader in the global produce industry.

Avocados from Mexico will once again hold its position as the category leader and is projecting to ship more than 918 million pounds of avocados into the United States for the 2012/2013 season — an increase of approximately 20 percent versus last season.”

### Production Shifts

The growth of the protected agriculture sector in Mexico is one of the most significant shifts in production. “More growers are

# México

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## KILLING U.S.-MEXICO TOMATO AGREEMENT DESTRUCTIVE FOR ALL

Within the next few weeks the Obama Administration will make a critical decision affecting U.S. consumers, U.S. and Mexican jobs and U.S.-Mexico relations when it decides the future of the U.S.-Mexico Tomato Agreement. For 16 years this agreement has brought peace and stability to the U.S. market for fresh vegetables. However, for several months now, it has been under attack by a handful of Florida growers seeking to eliminate all competition in the U.S. market through the termination of this constructive agreement.

"The tomato industry is a billion dollar annual industry for both the United States and Mexico," says Mayor Arturo R. Garino of Nogales, AZ. "Suspending the tomato agreement affects not only the economy but also affects trade relations. The elimination of the agreement will not only impact the City of Nogales, but will also the State of Arizona and the entire nation."

The elimination of the tomato agreement would result in a reduction in the supply of fresh vegetables in the United States, tax

consumers already reeling from a difficult economy and eliminate tens of thousands of jobs in the U.S. plus many more in Mexico. As President Obama enters his second term and welcomes Mexico's new president to the NAFTA community, it is critical that he take the high road by rejecting protectionist pleas that will surely harm businesses and workers on both sides of the border.

"Ending this Tomato Suspension Agreement is a lose, lose, lose," states Jan Smith-Florez, retired Judge of the Arizona Court of Appeals, Div 2. "First, the U.S. consumer will lose the dependable and affordable supply of fresh tomatoes which are vine-ripened, nutritionally rich, and delicious. How unwise is it to risk for no good reason the disappearance of this food from our tables? Second, it is a loser for local businesses, such as those in Nogales which have been directly involved in the import of tomatoes for over half a century. Third, Mexico's farmers will lose hundreds of thousands of jobs in the industry, and their economy will tumble...all for no good reason."

While the Florida growers started this current chaos about six months ago, in reality they have been striving for half a century to pressure the U.S. Government into policies that allow them to corner the tomato market. In 1996, they filed one of a string of trade cases trying to impose stiff taxes on Mexican tomatoes. To avoid an all-out trade war, the U.S. Commerce Department and the Mexican growers reached an agreement setting a minimum price for the sale of Mexican tomatoes in the United States. That agreement has worked well for over a decade. No violations have ever been found, or even alleged, and the agreement has successfully balanced the interests of consumers, growers, and the many U.S. and Mexican workers whose jobs depend on keeping an open market.

Unfortunately, the Florida growers now seek to increase protectionist measures by killing this agreement so another trade case can be filed. This would create havoc in the U.S. market and send U.S.-Mexico trade relations into a tailspin. Though it might benefit the four or five families involved in this aspect of the Florida tomato business, it would not be beneficial for the majority of consumers, retailers, workers and others in the U.S. economy.

Such disruption would hit U.S. consumers hard at a time when few families can afford it. One recent study commissioned by the Arizona-based Fresh Produce Association of the Americas estimates that tomato prices could double in the U.S. and more than triple in some regions if Mexican tomatoes are driven from the market. U.S. consumers would also suffer by losing access to the wide variety of Mexican vine-ripened tomatoes that serve as alternatives to hard, tasteless fruit picked early by many Florida growers and injected with ethylene gas to ripen them at market.







"Mexico has become an integral piece in the winter supply to our customers," says Tommy Wilkins, produce procurement director for United Supermarkets in Lubbock, TX. "I have watched our partners invest in food safety, work together with us as a retailer to improve the menu and strive to satisfy our needs to grow sales. Many Florida companies have also invested in product from Mexico because it represents a viable source of great product. Anything that would harm relations with my partners in Mexico is not in the best interest of my guest."

The termination of the tomato agreement would lead to the loss of tens of thousands of U.S. jobs, including those who work in produce distribution, transportation, warehousing, food safety, retail and food service. Killing the tomato agreement could also have enormous employment consequences in Mexico, where the tomato industry employs 350,000 workers – harming families in Mexico and putting security pressure on the U.S. border.

"The economic effect will send concentric circles of devastation beyond the border communities where the tomatoes are imported," says Flores. "Trucking companies, rail traffic, grocery stores, machinery manufacturers, and restaurants all over the U.S. will be affected. This is not a local or border problem; it is on everyone's plate."

On a larger scale, termination of the tomato agreement would likely lead to a trade war between the U.S. and Mexico, harming industries on both sides of the border. "Tomato importers in Texas, Arizona and elsewhere are deeply worried for two reasons," says John McClung, president of the Texas International Produce Association in Mission, TX. "First tomato imports from Mexico are a very large component in our nearly \$6 billion dollar per year produce imports from Mexico and second, Mexico

would almost certainly retaliate if the suspension agreement is voided, and that retaliation would go far beyond tomatoes. Think trade war."

The list of U.S. business groups lined up against termination of the tomato agreement includes the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the U.S.-Mexico Chamber of Commerce, the Fresh Produce Association of the Americas, the National Pork Producers Council, the Food Marketing Institute, the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, the National Foreign Trade Council, the National Turkey Federation, the Retail Industry Leaders Association, the USA Rice Federation and the U.S. Dairy Export Council, among many others including food giants such as Wal-Mart.

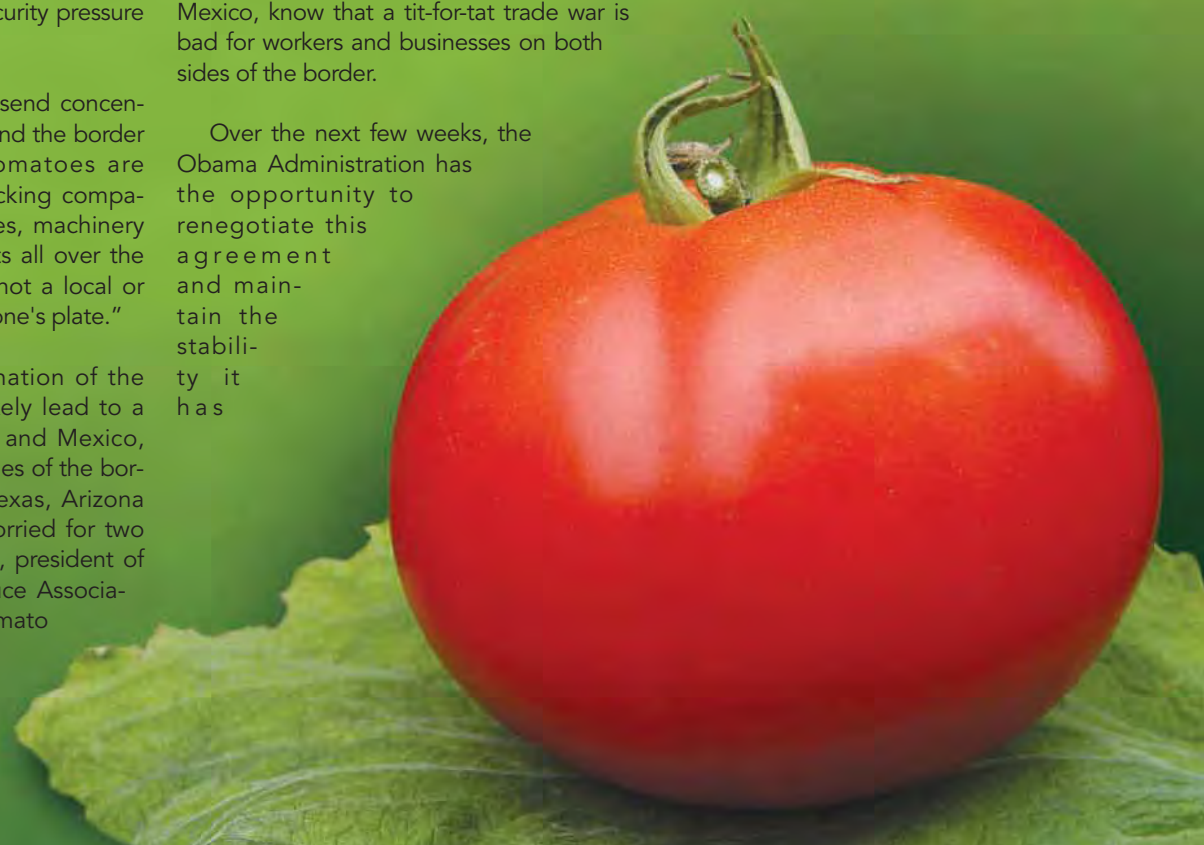
These industries export billions of dollars' worth of products to Mexico each year, accounting for tens of thousands of U.S. jobs. They, as well as their counterparts in Mexico, know that a tit-for-tat trade war is bad for workers and businesses on both sides of the border.

Over the next few weeks, the Obama Administration has the opportunity to renegotiate this agreement and maintain the stability it has

brought to the market for fresh vegetables. Reports indicate Mexican growers have offered to increase the floor price to a level that would keep peace without harming U.S. consumers, U.S. or Mexican workers, and without starting a trade war that could harm the North American economy.

"Mexico has been in talks with the Department of Commerce and has offered to raise the reference price and close the 15 percent loophole that U.S. producers believe has been routinely abused," says McClung. "It is possible the Mexican offer could be the basis for a new five year agreement if Florida and their advocates are willing to negotiate. But, that's the big question."

In these challenging times, there seems little reason to cause additional strife when industry and government should be working together to move our nations and economies forward.





## “Alternative production windows, reliable volume and enhanced quality are benefits of the evolution of the Mexican industry. New developments also allow for supply chain and logistic efficiencies, along with cost cuts when supplying Texas and eastern U.S.”

— Andrés Fernandez, PrimusLabs

investing in protected agriculture to extend their produce season through a better yield and more consistent quality and supplies,” reports Ciruli of Ciruli Bros. “The main items are tomatoes, peppers, eggplant and cucumber, but other items will be grown in protected structures as more seeds are developed.”

According to AMHPAC, the Mexican Association of Protected Agriculture, in Culiacan, Mexico, production area of protected agriculture products has grown by almost 50 percent in the past four years. “In 2008, protected ag consisted of about 10,000 hectares, and by 2010, had reached almost 15,000 hectares,” reports Eric Viramontes, CEO of AMHPAC. “By 2014, we project at least 20,000 hectares dedicated to

protected agriculture.”

“The whole greenhouse and shadehouse category is growing,” adds Malena’s Avila. “Products from essentially four families — tomatoes, cucumbers, bell peppers, and eggplant — are making a big transition from open field to protected ag facilities. The main benefit is in quality. This also enables other growing areas to come into play during months they may not have been big players in previously.”

Not only is protected ag growing in acreage, it is also transiting regionally. “Greenhouse production of tomatoes, cucumbers and bell peppers has grown in many states of Central Mexico like Guanajuato, San Luis Potosi,

Querétaro and Michoacán,” says Fernandez of PrimusLabs. “Significantly more produce is now being exported from these areas through the McAllen/Pharr border crossing.”

### Border Changes

The increase in Mexican shipments through Texas point-of-entries is a growing trend in logistics and transportation. According to a transportation report (*Agricultural Refrigerated Truck Quarterly*) issued by USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), “Traditionally, the majority of produce moved by trucks has come through the border crossing at Nogales, due to its direct highway connection with the Mexican growing region around Mazatlán to the south. However, the Mexican government’s investment in highway infrastructure along the Mazatlán-Durango highway is providing the efficiency gains trucking companies are seeking in the face of rising fuel costs.”

John McClung, president of the Mission-based Texas International Produce Association, explains, “USDA’s AMS reports show a growth in crossings in Texas over the past 10 years and with significant growth since about 2006. We envision 2012 trends to be even more dramatic.

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A lot of prominent Mexican companies are shifting part of their shipments into Texas.”

The AMS report further reveals, “Produce distributors have been investing heavily in cold

storage facilities in Texas, including Chicago-based J. L. Gonzalez Produce’s recently opened 87-acre

Rio Grande Produce Park, Loop Cold Storage’s on-going cold storage expansion in McAllen, and a new cold storage facility in Pharr to serve as headquarters for Vision Produce Partners of Texas. In addition, the City of Pharr recently got approval to construct a third cold produce inspection station at the Pharr-Reynosa International Bridge in anticipation of increased traffic from the Mazatlán-Durango highway.”

“Farmer’s Best has been utilizing the ports of South Texas for the past 24 years,” says Jerry Wagner, director of sales and marketing for Farmer’s Best International, based in Nogales, AZ. “We presently ship from our own facility in Edinburg, Texas, 52 weeks a year. We have seen quite a spike in the percentage of product we sell out of there in the past few years as customers from Texas to the East Coast look to enhance their freight savings by picking up down in the Valley rather than out here in Arizona. We only anticipate that trend will continue.”

Reasons for this shift include economic as well as time considerations. “Products crossing in Texas could lower logistics cost from Texas to the Eastern part of the country,” states United’s Wilkins.

“If you bring product in through south Texas and you’re shipping east of the Rocky Mountains, you’re saving about five hours of trucking time,” explains McClung. “This translates into saving around \$2,500 per truckload

**Side Note**

**QUALITY AND SAFETY**

**M**exican growers are committed to food safety standards. “Companies relying on exports are very aware of the need for staying on top of food safety programs and other emerging industry requirements if they want to remain in business,” says Andrés Fernandez, Mexico director of operations for PrimusLabs in Querétaro, México. “They are placing much more emphasis on these programs than even five years ago. Exporting companies realize food safety has become a must-have to remain in the export business.”

“Mexico’s quality and food safety programs are cutting-edge,” says Chris Ciruli, chief operating officer for Rio Rico, AZ-based Ciruli Brothers, LLC. “Mexican growers must adhere to the same set of standards as U.S. growers to sell to U.S. retailers. Mexican imports are subject to more inspections at the port of entry. According to the FPAA, Mexican imports are subject to roughly nine times more inspec-

tions than domestic-grown products.”

Top exporters look for ways to move beyond the basics. “The same main food safety audit schemes for produce remain,” says Fernandez. “The key is how each scheme strategically evolves to truly satisfy the buyer’s demands and concerns, and at the same time how it remains technically strong and feasible for its implementation in the agricultural sector for both production and handling. It is also critical how the scheme keeps itself up to date and in compliance with regulations and industry practices, or whether or not that scheme is introducing or calling for something more that is a good industry practice.”

Malena has created a Food Safety Department to ensure all growers are in compliance. “Every year we take a step up in our food safety efforts,” says Gonzalo Avila, vice president/general manager for Malena Produce, Inc., in Rio Rico, AZ. “We’ve gone from GMPs to HACCP to Primus GFS to growers doing Global GAP.

It’s a constant on-going effort. You can’t just say, I’m here and I’m staying here. We’re constantly reaching for the next level.”

Avocados from Mexico continues to ensure maximum quality. “Producers and packers adhere to the toughest world-class standards for food safety,” says Eduardo Serena, marketing director for APEAM, the Mexican avocado association in Michoacán, México. “The Dry Matter Standards Quality Program ensures all orchards and packinghouses ship only the highest quality fruit. Executed by a third party company, inspectors test fruit for dry matter content to ensure each orchard meets our requirements. In addition, Avocados from Mexico abide by standards that exceed international standards, including handpicked fruit that never touches the ground, leading-edge food safety technology, independently certified packers, and orchards that abide by strict guidelines for food safety, sanitary standards and product quality.”

**pb**

**Top ten commodities shipped to the U.S. from Mexico (10,000 lbs)**

| Commodity  | 2nd quarter 2012 | Rank |
|------------|------------------|------|
| Tomatoes   | 69,282           | 1    |
| Watermelon | 60,108           | 2    |
| Peppers    | 33,399           | 3    |
| Grapes     | 30,027           | 4    |
| Mangoes    | 28,122           | 5    |
| Cucumbers  | 25,798           | 6    |
| Limes      | 24,960           | 7    |
| Onions     | 20,020           | 8    |
| Avocados   | 19,830           | 9    |
| Squash     | 16,033           | 10   |

Source: Source: Data is obtained from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) through USDA, AMS, Market News

**“This year, Avocados from Mexico will once again hold its position as the category leader and is projecting to ship more than 918 million pounds of avocados into the United States for the 2012/2013 season — an increase of approximately 20 percent versus last season.”**

— Eduardo Serena, APEAM

in transportation cost given fuel and driver expense. You're also in a more desirable location for forward shipment if you're going into Eastern geographic markets”

“More shippers are using the McAllen Port because there is so much production growth in other regions of Mexico,” states Apache's Canelos. “For production east of the Sierra Madre, McAllen is the natural port of entry. Once the new highway through the mountains opens, West Mexico shippers may look at McAllen as a viable option and will ship to both ports according to supply and demand conditions as well as availability of regional transportation in both countries. We currently ship all of our Culiacan production to Nogales and all of our Nayarit production to McAllen.”

The crossing at Nogales, known as the Mariposa Port of Entry, is one of the most significant points of trade for U.S.-Mexico business, and is currently in the final stages of an extreme makeover. “The port is being expanded to eight lanes for commercial crossings, up from four,” explains FPAA's Jungmeyer. “There will be an expanded agricultural inspection dock that will allow trucks to unload their pallets in a single line directly behind the truck. In the old facility, the docks were so small that trucks couldn't be lined up. The port should be fully operational with new features in 2014.”

“The new port in Nogales will be a significant logistics change,” says Malena's Avila. “It will really improve the time the product takes to cross the border. Even now during the construction phase, we have more lanes open than our previous port. We're also looking at lobbying for additional government staffing for

the port.”

“The new port of entry being finalized in the next year or so will mean produce crossings through Nogales will be expedited even better,” adds Ciruli of Ciruli Bros. “This will be the most modern port once it is complete.”

### Working Together

Increasing awareness of social programs in Mexico provide excellent tools for buyers and suppliers to work together. “There is more awareness of social and sustainable farming programs such as Fair Trade in Mexico,” says Ciruli. “This is partly due to evolving requirements from U.S. retailers who are requesting that suppliers implement these types of programs.”

“Fair trade and sustainable farming programs continue to rise,” says FPAA's Jungmeyer. “Not only is it a great marketing tool, it is the right thing to do and Mexican growers put a big emphasis on providing schooling for children of their workers, health care and the like.”

Organics Unlimited offers organic bananas under both the GROW label and the Fair Trade label. “These programs both offer valuable support to communities in Mexico, and both programs provide attractive POP materials for use by retailers,” reports Velazquez.

Retailers can utilize training programs provided by Mexican commodity groups like Avocados from Mexico's S.M.A.R.T. (Storing Merchandising Arranging Ripening Training). Serena explains, “The invaluable hands-on training is available to retailers and includes a training DVD in Spanish and English on

handling and merchandising, backroom posters in Spanish and English, a training brochure and even an opportunity for produce managers to earn the S.M.A.R.T. certificate. In addition, Avocados from Mexico's business development managers work with retailers one on one to develop customized programs to meet individual retailer needs.”

“New Leaf utilizes training materials provided by fair trade organizations or our direct partners,” says Landi. “We supply information about specific growers so our produce teams are armed with information. Any time we're able to talk specifically about where the food in our department is coming from, we're providing a higher level of service to our customers.”

Greater communication between suppliers and buyers on all developments is a plus. “Predictability is very important in maximizing the benefits of a relationship,” says Landi. “We're in constant communication with our wholesaler, Earls Organic Produce in San Francisco, about when our local vegetable deals are finishing up so we can secure an adequate imported supply for our stores. Since we're so far removed geographically from the product, it's important to be in constant communication about quality. Working with our suppliers to secure a consistent supply beforehand has provided real benefit.”

“It is always challenging to supply fresh produce during the winter due to the weather,” says Ciruli. “You worry about storms and subsequent traffic issues. For these reasons, pre-planning and constant communication between buyers and suppliers is essential if you want to have a successful winter program.” **pb**





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Mushrooms are a healthful and economical addition to a wide variety of dishes.

# Mushrooms Make The Cut In Winter Produce

The word is out that mushrooms are highly nutritious, and with the emergence of a new lineup of varieties, the category has enjoyed steady growth in recent years. **BY BOB JOHNSON**

**T**here is no better time to make a splash with an enticing display of mushroom varieties than the winter. During this time, consumers are open to ingredients that add interest to soups, stews and other dishes that offer comfort in the cold weather.

Bart Minor, president and CEO of the Mushroom Council, in San Jose, CA, notes, “Winter is a time when stews and soups and other items that include mushrooms are made quite often. There are many traditional American dishes that include mushrooms.”

## Many Mushrooms, Many Ways

The peak season for mushrooms is the months when consumers are looking to cook dishes that take the edge off the cold weather. “The Holidays are our busiest time,” reveals Fred Recchiuti, general manager at Basciani Foods, headquartered in Avondale, PA. “There’s an increase in button mushrooms for Thanksgiving and Christmas. During the Holiday season, there are more catered events, so there is added demand for the mushrooms



PHOTO COURTESY OF GOURMET MUSHROOMS

that are ready to stuff and use as appetizers.”

Cold weather puts consumers in a frame of mind to think about foods that are enhanced by mushrooms. “Mushrooms come to mind more during the winter because they are such a

good ingredient in soups and stews, and other warm hearty dishes,” points out Jane Rhyno, director of sales and marketing at Highline Mushrooms, in Leamington, Ontario, Canada.

Tough economic times may actually be



**“Mushrooms go with every kind of meal and with many different ethnic cuisines. At breakfast, mushrooms are traditionally used in omelets, but consumers should also consider that a mushroom hash is a lower calorie alternative to potatoes or toast and every bit as good a complement to eggs as sausage or bacon.”**

— Bob Engel, Gourmet Mushrooms

benefitting mushrooms, as consumers look for ways to enjoy high end meals at budget prices by cooking at home. What’s more, mushrooms provide an impressive bang for the buck, adding bulk and flavor to a wide variety of dishes. “Mushrooms are growing at a faster rate than produce overall, even during the recession because they are a great ingredient as people cook more at home, rather than dining out,” Rhyno explains.

The list of cold weather dishes that can be enhanced by mushrooms is virtually endless. Bob Engel, marketing director for Gourmet Mushrooms, located in Sebastopol, CA, details, “Mushrooms go with every kind of meal and with many different ethnic cuisines. At breakfast, mushrooms are traditionally used in omelets, but consumers should also consider that a mushroom hash is a lower calorie alternative to potatoes or toast and every bit as good a complement to eggs as sausage or bacon.” He continues, “Mushrooms are a natural component in hearty soups and stews, but are also an easy addition to pasta dishes, from spaghetti to ramen. They are also the perfect ingredient for Meatless Monday menus because they add both meaty texture and savory flavor.”

The Holiday season offers the best opportunities for providing recipes and demonstrations that include mushrooms as a key piece in cross-merchandising campaigns. Paul Frederic, senior vice president for sales and marketing at Avondale, PA-based To-Jo Mushrooms, Inc., suggests, “Provide recipes,

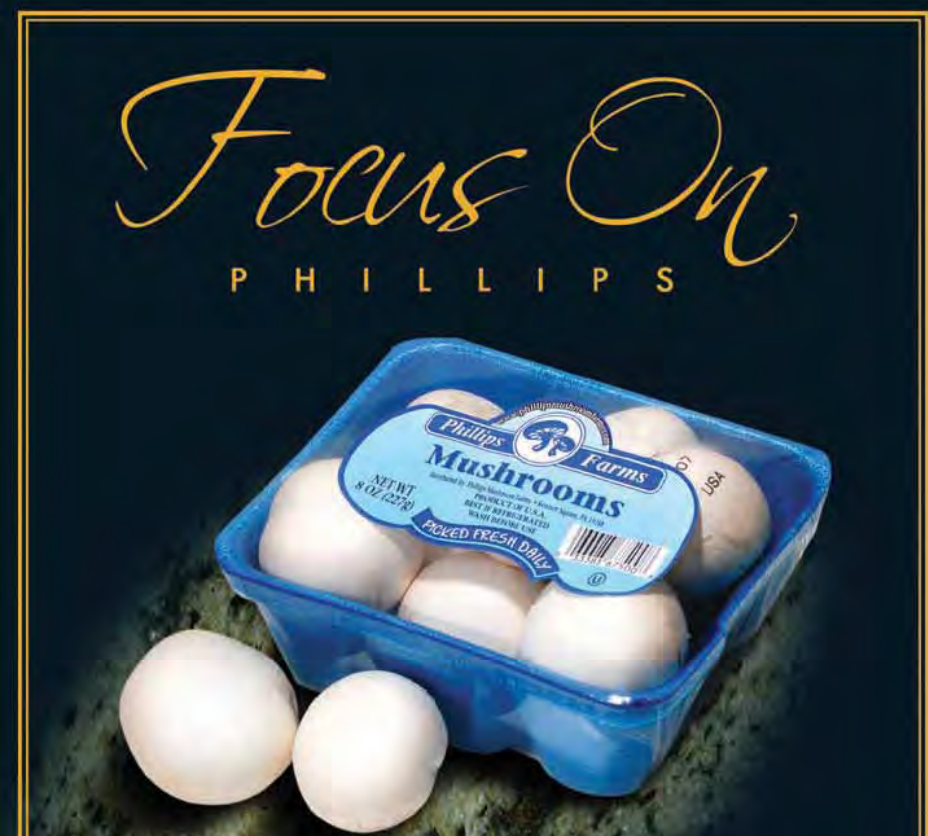
and show consumers how to use them. During the Holiday season, we offer larger packs for consumers who may be entertaining. We also offer club packs and beyond, which include 20-24- and 40-oz. packages.”

One major producer has created new labels that help consumers learn new ways to use mushrooms. “People need to be reminded how to use mushrooms,” says Gary Schroeder, director of Dole Mushrooms, in Kennett Square, PA. “Mushroom soup is a wonderful winter use — I think in-store demos of this are

excellent. Our new Dole mushroom labels include serving suggestions to help get consumers thinking about new usage ideas.”

While the mushroom season kicks off with Thanksgiving, it can be extended well beyond Christmas and even deep into the spring. “The peak season starts in November and continues on through May,” confirms Kevin Donovan, national sales manager at Phillips Mushroom Farms, located in Kennett Square, PA.


Mushrooms can be effectively merchandised as an ingredient in many dishes during



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this long season. “Retailers should realize that mushrooms go with almost everything,” Donovan reminds. “You can use them in gravy or sauces, or prepared with meat, chicken or fish.” He advises offering in-store recipes to give customers more ideas about using mushrooms.

The heart of the U.S. mushroom industry is in an area of Pennsylvania that got wet, if

not battered, during Hurricane Sandy. But thankfully, the major producers appear to have escaped without significant damage. “We weathered the storm extremely well,” Frederic says.

The industry weathered the storm, but mushrooms are nonetheless in a cycle that could leave them in short supply. “Supply is very tight, especially for the Holiday season,”

admits Basciani’s Recchiuti. “We’ve seen some consolidation, some companies going out of business. It’s the history of the mushroom business that every 10 years or so, some companies go out of business, supply gets tight and then we get a little bit of a price increase. We haven’t seen the price increase this cycle yet.”

### The Latest New Thing

The Holidays may be the peak mushroom season, but this category is growing virtually year-round. “I think the Holidays — November and December — is probably the peak time for mushrooms,” remarks To-Jo’s Frederic. “But summer is pretty strong, too, because people want to cut back on calories and eat more salads.”

According to the Mushroom Council’s Minor, this year, mushroom sales actually increased during the summer, which could be a sign of brisk times to come. “This past summer we saw sales continue to increase,” he notes. “In the summer, they are used in salads, but usually not in the same volume as in the winter, except this year they have been. Any time is a good time to promote mushrooms.” Minor adds, mushroom sales in July 2012



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## THE BROWNING OF THE CATEGORY

The brown mushrooms in general, and the baby Bellas in particular, are leading the way in the growth of the category. “The brown mushrooms — the baby portabellas — are doing much better,” reports Jeff Cady, produce/floral category manager at Tops Friendly Market, in Buffalo, NY. “The whites are also doing better, but the browns are growing the fastest.”

Since they hit the mainstream market years ago, brown Portabella mushrooms have been growing in popularity. Paul Frederic, senior vice president for sales and marketing at Avondale, PA-based To-Jo Mushrooms, Inc., says, “One of the items that’s really driving the growth of the mushroom category is the brown mushroom — the baby Bellas or Criminis. Initially, we saw a lot of popularity of the Portabellas, the large 4- to 5-inch mushroom. That kicked off an interest among the consumers over the past six or seven years, and now it seems the baby Bellas — the immature version — have taken off,” Frederic says.

“The Portabella or brown mushroom is continuing to capture consumer attention,” confirms Bart Minor, president and CEO of the Mushroom Council, in San Jose, CA. “It’s not cannibalizing the sale of white mushrooms; it’s adding to the category. Portabellas have been coming on since the mid-1990s, but the past year or two it’s really opened people’s eyes. The King Oyster is also getting a lot of attention,” he adds.

“We’ve noticed increased demand for baby Portabellas,” reports Gary Schroeder, director of Dole Mushrooms, in Kennett Square, PA. “It’s a heartier mushroom than the white — it has great flavor and texture. Interest in the full-sized Portabella picked up in the early to mid 1990s, and about 10 years ago people started to realize the baby Portabella has the same great flavor and texture.”

Other producers agree that the shift toward the baby Bellas, or Criminis, has been the single most important recent change in mushroom varieties. Jane Rhyno, director of sales and marketing at Highline Mushrooms, in Leamington, Ontario, Canada, adds, “The biggest shift has been from the white to the Criminis. Asian varieties — the Shitake and the Oyster — are also seeing some growth as well, because people are

seeing them more often in restaurants.”

While the baby Bellas lead the way, the mushroom category has benefitted from an explosion in the number of interesting varieties. “Maitake Frondosa, also known as Hen-of-the-Woods, is a variety that is gaining in acceptance,” points out Bob Engel, marketing director for Gourmet Mushrooms, located in Sebastopol, CA. “It is a very flavorful mushroom, with a rich aroma, and an intriguing coral-like appearance. It is also one of the mushrooms that are being studied for its beneficial effect on the immune system. Our Nebrodini Bianco mushroom is the most recent one to be introduced to the U.S. market. It is a relative of the King Oyster, with a mild flavor and a firm, meaty texture. Consumers are demonstrating a preference for variety packs like our Chef’s Sampler and Specialty Trio. Chefs have long known that mushroom flavors are synergistic with one another,” he adds.

It may be difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile the demand for local produce with the interest in specialty mushrooms. “Many shoppers like to buy local, but specialty items are not widely farmed,” remarks Engel. “Gourmet Mushrooms grows seven different varieties of specialty mushrooms. There is national demand for our unique varieties. Sometimes quality and variety trump local.”

At the retail level, there is a tremendous advantage to offering variety within the mushroom section. “Consumers are looking for a nice assortment or variety,” confirms Frederic. “They are looking for good quality, and they are looking for bright and fresh looking mushrooms. Mushrooms are usually an impulse item, and a nice large display with a variety of beautiful mushrooms will catch their attention.”

Medley mixes can be a way to satisfy consumer interest in the wide variety of mushrooms. “Maximum variety is a key, and quality, of course,” says Cady. “There is more of a peak on the large Portabellas in the summer, when people are grilling. The white mushrooms are more popular in the winter. We’re also doing more Shitakes and Oyster mushrooms. We also have some medley mixes. We carry 4-oz. white to 20-oz. packages, and everything in between.” **pb**

were up more than 7.5 percent over the previous July, as mushrooms continue to enjoy steady growth. A major independent Northeast retailer reports steady increase in

demand for mushrooms.

According to Jeff Cady, produce/floral category manager at Tops Friendly Market, in Buffalo, NY, “Mushrooms are on a steady

increase with us. It started two or three years ago,” he says. Tops Friendly Markets has around 130 stores in New York and Pennsylvania.

One reason for mushroom growth is that consumers have seen new and interesting varieties within the category. “We’ve seen significant increases in retail sales of mushrooms for the past three years, at least,” reveals Phillips’ Donovan. “Consumers are looking for new products, and mushrooms fit in with that.”

Quality and appearance, above all, are the basis for an effective mushroom merchandising program. Bill Litvin, senior vice president for sales and national account manager at Giorgio Fresh Co., in Temple, PA, remarks, “The entire produce category has seen the growth in specific consumer-driven trends, such as the locally grown movement. Consumers see a benefit in eating locally grown produce — mushrooms included — so it is important to market those products to consumers. We believe locally grown is not as significant a concern as organic, and that quality, great shelf appearance, and flavor trump all other factors.”

Giorgio Fresh Company and Modern Mushroom Farms of Avondale, PA., reached an agreement in late October to transition the Modern Mushroom fresh mushroom business to the Giorgio family of brands.

### Vitamin-Enhanced Super Food

Mushrooms are benefiting from their newfound status as a super food. “We continue to appear on more super food lists,” says the Mushroom Council’s Minor. “People are coming to understand the unique nutritional value of mushrooms. We’ve come up with the new concept of swapability. Grind up mushrooms and mix them with meat; it extends the meat, and it makes it healthier.”

There is some new interest, in particular, in mushrooms exposed to light in order to increase their Vitamin D content. “Vitamin D-enhanced mushrooms are growing in acceptance, but Gourmet Mushrooms does not currently offer such a product,” says the company’s Engel. “Even without Vitamin D enhancement, mushrooms are healthful additions to the diet.”

The demand for Vitamin D-enhanced mushrooms, however, has not yet taken off. “We offer vitamin-enriched mushrooms, but we’re not seeing a lot of demand,” To-Jo’s Frederic shares.

Other producers have also found that the day of the enriched mushrooms has not quite arrived. “The vitamin-enriched mushrooms really haven’t caught on yet. They will, but

**“Consumers are looking for a nice assortment or variety. They are looking for good quality, and they are looking for bright and fresh looking mushrooms. Mushrooms are usually an impulse item, and a nice large display with a variety of beautiful mushrooms will catch their attention.”**

— Paul Frederic, To-Jo Mushrooms

there needs to be more consumer education,” says Phillips’ Donovan.

One producer is taking the lead in offering education about these healthiest of mushrooms. We have new mushroom labels with the first nutrition and health claim on a mushroom label,” shares Dole’s Schroeder. “Most people are deficient in vitamin D, especially in the winter, so it’s a natural fit. We offer two Portabella products that have 100 percent of your vitamin D requirement.”

The enhanced mushrooms have been exposed to light, and the mushrooms then make vitamin D. “This is a natural process — it is not artificial — which is why I don’t like to use the term ‘vitamin-enriched,’” Schroeder adds.

Mushrooms rich in vitamins seem poised

to enter the mainstream. “Based on data from The Mushroom Council, vitamin-enhanced mushrooms are a significant development,” says Giorgio’s Litvin. “Mushroom growers/companies are now able to enhance the Vitamin D content in mushrooms by exposing them to ultraviolet (UV) light without having adverse effects on the other nutrients. Consumers can get their daily intake of Vitamin D from mushrooms, which helps promote bone growth and maintenance, as well as helping the body absorb calcium.”

A next step will be the development of more sustainable packaging for this nutritious food. “Giorgio is working with packaging suppliers to come up with more sustainable tills for use with our product,” reports Litvin.



“While the foam tills that we use work very well in protecting our product and enhancing shelf-life, we are also working with corrugated tills and RPET tills to address environmental concerns,” Litvin says.

Mushrooms will continue to grow in popularity because the word is out that this interesting food is good for you. “The popularity of mushrooms has increased for many reasons; there’s been a lot of positive press about the health benefits,” says Basciani’s Recchiuti.

Cady from Tops Markets agrees, adding, “There is a positive buzz about mushrooms.” **pb**

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# Five Ways To Sunny-Up Sales Of Tropicals

Consumers' never-ending quest for 'something new' combined with better availability, price and quality is moving tropical produce up to a more prominent place at the table. **BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD**



Tropicals are continuing to increase in popularity, thanks to a growing number of foodies, celebrity chefs, and influx new ethnic groups.

**A**ccording to Paul Kneeland, director of produce and floral for Kings Food Markets, a 25-store chain based in Parsippany, NJ, “Specialties as a whole are up in sales for us, and tropicals are a part of that. Shoppers today don’t just want the same apple, orange and banana. They want something new, something funky to try with different tastes and textures.”

Specialty fruit or tropicals represented 1.1 percent of produce dollar sales during the 52 weeks ending September 29, 2012, according to the Nielsen Perishables Group, a West Dundee, IL-based fresh food consulting firm. Sales are relatively steady with dollar contribution by quarter ranging from a low of 0.9 percent in Q1, 2012 to 1.2 percent in Q2, 2012.

What defines the tropicals category? Marion Tabard, marketing director for the Turbana Corp., in Coral Gables, FL, explains, “Tropicals can be any produce item grown in tropical climates. It encompasses many items and grouping them under one umbrella for merchandising purposes has become more complicated as they become more popular.”

The Top 10 best-selling tropicals in terms

of dollar sales are: mangos, kiwis, papayas, pomegranates, dates, tomatillos, coconuts, figs, persimmons and star fruit, according to the Nielsen Perishables Group.

Consumers' growing familiarity with these fruits and vegetables is driving their popularity, as they are the ones making up the bread-and-butter sales. New shoppers to the category can help boost these items to a more mainstream status. All it takes is savvy merchandising.

## 1. Stock Best-Sellers

Bananas and pineapples are technically tropical, yet at B&R Stores, a 17-unit chain headquartered in Lincoln, NE, operating under the Super Saver and Russ's Market banners, these fruits get mainstream billing and are among core contributors to produce department sales, reports produce director, Randy Bohaty. “Instead, when it comes to tropicals, we offer the more popular tropical fruits such as mangos and papayas, but feature more varieties,” he explains. “For example, we’ve introduced Keitt mangos to our customers as well as the Tommy Atkins. Similarly with papaya, we used to only carry the Hawaiian, but now the larger Maradol are more popular.

It takes education, plus encouraging customers to taste and sample.”

Mangos are imported year-round from Brazil, Ecuador, Peru, Guatemala and Mexico, says Homero Levy de Barros, president and CEO of Pompano Beach, FL-based HLB Specialties, LLC, a joint venture of HLB Tropical and Southern Specialties, which has expanded beyond papaya to now offer mangos, rambutan, limes and Hass avocados. “Tommy Atkins is the most popular,” reveals de Barros. “We also bring in Kent and Ataulfo and are working to bring in Keitt and Palmer.”

In addition to the most popular, M&M Tropicals, Inc., in Miami, FL, also imports lesser-known varieties of mangos. Sales associate Richard Perez notes, “In addition to our main program of mangos out of Ecuador and Peru from November to January, we’ve had a second program out of Haiti for the past four years for the Francine. It’s available from March to April and again for a short window in the summer. This is a variety that caters to a certain demographic who grew up with it and offers a taste of home.”

Four years ago, Melissa's/World Variety Produce Inc., in Los Angeles, CA, introduced





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**“One of the benefits of displaying tropicals by category rather than all together is that someone not specifically looking for *boniato* may see it and decide to buy if merchandised next to the potatoes. Preparation methods are the same.”**

— Doria Potts-Blonder, New Limeco



the Alphonso mango from India. While this is considered one of the best tasting mango varieties in the world, Robert Schueller, director of public relations, acknowledges, “At up to \$3 a piece, the price is a stumbling block, especially during the April to July season when mangos from Mexico often sell for 2-for-\$1. This has made marketing the Indian mango tough, but there are niche markets.”

In addition to mangos, Kings Super Markets’ Kneeland says, “Papayas are another tropical staple.”

Doria Potts-Blonder, sales and marketing director for Princeton, FL-headquartered New Limeco, says, “Papayas are gaining in popularity because of the recognized health benefits to digestion and diabetes. We primarily import the large Maradol variety year-round from Belize and Guatemala.”

“However,” adds de Barros, “Only 12 percent of U.S. customers buy papayas. I think part of the reason is that consumers haven’t tried a good papaya. That’s why we bring in tree-ripe Golden papayas by air from Brazil and a smaller quantity from Jamaica. That way, we get them from tree to customer in four days.” HLB also imports the larger or ‘family-size’ Formosa papaya year-round from Guatemala by vessel and Mexico by truck.

Personal-sized papayas are catching consumer’s interest, according to Mary Ostlund, director of marketing for Brooks Tropicals Inc., in Homestead, FL. “Sure, chopped Caribbean Red papaya in a bowl is great, but sometimes the occasion calls for papaya that’s its own bowl. It’s papaya that is perfect for a quick breakfast.”

In addition to mangos, Raul Millan, executive vice president of River Edge, NJ-based Vision Import Group LLC, reports, “Our lime business has grown 15 to 20 percent a year in the past five years, due to the growth of the Latin community throughout the United States,” he reports. “As a result, we have been doing a lot of work to brand our limes. My goal is that when you mention Mojito Limes, consumers and retailers think ‘limes,’ the same way they think Sunkist oranges or Chiquita bananas.” Vision sources a 52-week supply of limes from Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador and Colombia.

Hass avocados are mainstream. However, smooth green-skinned varieties that Brooks Tropicals collectively markets as SlimCados are picking up sales steam, says Ostlund. “SlimCado avocados continue to gain name recognition and popularity,” she remarks. “It’s an alternative to Hass avocados. Many health-

conscious consumers and Latinos appreciate having a choice.” Brooks’ Florida-grown SlimCados are available from July through January.

## 2. Expand Your Horizons

There’s a resurgence of interest by retailers in the tropicals category, observes Karen Caplan, president and CEO of Los Alamitos, CA-headquartered Frieda’s Inc. “Rather than see it as a token category, retailers have become more interested and are taking the initiative to develop this category beyond just bananas, pineapples, mangos and papayas.”

One retailer that has done a good job of this is Kings Food Markets. “One tropical fruit customers are really catching on to is dragon fruit,” says Kneeland. “In our new store in Connecticut, we can’t keep up with the demand. Having trained associates who know what it is and can educate customers is huge.” Dragon fruit is native to Central America. It’s now domestically grown in Florida from June to December and Southern California from August to early December.

Demand for dragon fruit currently exceeds supply, reveals M&M Tropicals’ Perez. “I see it becoming as popular as kiwi in the next one to two years,” he predicts.

Mangosteen is another increasing popular tropical, says Kings’ Kneeland. “We get them from Thailand. They are a good holiday item and work well as a garnish dropped into a glass of champagne.”

Passion fruit and cherimoya are now grown on the California coast. Guavas are harvested in Florida from June to August and again from November to March, while star fruit, or carambola, are cultivated year-round in Florida. This makes these tropical fruits much more accessible to U.S. consumers. Brooks’ Tropicals’ Ostlund says, “Star fruit wins customers over as soon as they are cut. This fruit partners well as topping many in-store cooking demonstrations. In addition, once customers sample fresh coconut, they don’t want to buy the bagged.”

“Tropical roots such as malanga move well in our stores that have a strong Hispanic demographic,” says B&R Store’s Bohaty.

Turbana’s Tabard points out, “Roots and tubers such as *malanga*, *yucca/cassava*, *chayote*, and yams are increasing in volume dramatically as immigration from Asia and Latin America continues to rise. This will lead to some products blending into mainstream culture primarily via foodservice. For example, it is no longer unforeseeable to imagine a burger restaurant chain appealing to Asian, Hispanic and African consumers by offering fried yucca as an additional side, thus opening



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doors to mainstream consumers to try an alternative for French fries.”

In October, Turbana launched its new tropicals line for North American. The line offers 11 products including yucca, chayote, yellow yams, malanga, cacao and aloe vera.

### 3. Build Destination And Demographically Correct Displays

Bananas and other tropicals are grouped in a destination display at B&R Stores. “They all don’t require refrigeration, so it makes sense,” Bohaty explains.

“A banana display on the end cap leading into the tropical aisle is like putting out the welcome mat, while giving the rushed shopper quick access to the fruit for tomorrow’s lunchboxes,” Brooks Tropicals’ Ostlund.

Papayas, mangos, pineapples, coconuts and other tropicals get their own section at Kings,” says Kneeland. “However, we will also, for example, put the dragon fruit in the middle of a display of navel oranges to catch consumer’s eye and expose them to something different.”

“One of the benefits of displaying tropicals by category rather than all together is that someone not specifically looking for *boniato* may see it and decide to buy if merchandised next to the potatoes,” points out Potts-Blonder of New Limeco. “Preparation methods are the same.”

Vision Import’s Millan agrees. “I personally feel that root items should be displayed with root items, citrus with citrus and so on,” he says. “Sooner or later, Anglos and other demographics will begin to consume tropicals as well, as long as they are readily available.”

On the other hand, Turbana’s Tabard recommends that tropicals be categorized according to their corresponding demographic target audience. For example, tropical roots and vegetables, which are aimed at Caribbean Hispanics and Southeast Asians, should be merchandised together. “This can lure customers who prefer to shop in specialized ethnic stores and *bodegas* by grouping tropicals together, labeling them in their native language (as well as in English), and by including ethnic recipes in their displays,” she explains.

However, as Brooks Tropicals’ Ostlund says, “All together or dispersed? If you’re smart, you’ll do both.”

### 4. Educate Category Newcomers

Ethnic consumers know the nutritional values of tropicals, how to select them and above all how to incorporate them into their recipes, acknowledges Tabard. “However,



education is essential for mainstream consumers,” she says. “To reach them, demos, recipes and POS materials showing how to select a product are a must.”

According to B&R Store’s Bohaty, “The most efficient way to educate category newcomers, is sampling followed by suggesting ways they can enjoy the product as well as showing them how to select a good one. That way, when they come back and choose something on their own, they will get a ripe one and keep coming back to buy.”

“At Kings,” Kneeland says, “we make use of information from our suppliers such as educational sign cards. One supplier offers an educational kit that I’ll print or forward to the stores as well as put the information in our weekly bulletin.”

Suppliers such as M&M Tropicals educate

customers via packaging. Perez details, “We pack mesh bags of 3-, 4- and 8-lb. bags of mangos that have information and recipes.”

Educating mainstream consumers is an area with great opportunities that very few marketers and retailers have been able to fully take advantage of, says Turbana’s Tabard. “New technologies such as Smartphones and video sharing websites can be a tool to facilitate this education,” she adds.

### 5. Promote By More Than Just Price

Everyone loves their Smartphones, but the latest Nielsen consumer reports show that Hispanic and Asians are more adept at using them than mainstream Americans, reports Tabard. “The same report indicates that they respond very well to price breaks,” she adds. “Ads distributed through electronic media should be an effective way to reach them to generate sales lifts.”

“While many retailers believe a cheap price is needed to sell tropicals, research shows that simply putting an item in the ad and not necessarily lowering the price can be just as effective,” says Frieda’s Caplan.

Rather than price, HLB Specialties’ de Barros advocates, “Promote by taste. We have seen a shift in the purchase requirements of European retailers over the past two years. Instead of trying to get the price down to the lowest, which means sending mangos by boat, they want them air-shipped and signed as ‘ready-to-eat’ mangos. There is a tremendous opportunity to sell more tropicals by focusing on taste rather than price.”

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# On the Future of Trade Shows

BY JOHN PANDOL

"Trade show attendance is 70 percent of what it was 10 years ago," I read in the *Wall Street Journal* a while back. We've all seen it... the downsizing and elimination of industry events. The FMI changed from a huge annual expo to a much smaller biannual trade show. Two of my favorite produce events, the defunct IFPA Fresh-Cut Expo and the PMA Retail Solutions Conference, disappeared from the calendar altogether. One of the principal touted benefits of the United Fresh/PMA merger was the elimination of a national trade show. Bah. Humbug. The trade viewed two national trade shows as a redundant expense and not an additional opportunity.

PMA's Fresh Summit sets record attendance, despite being shortened from four days to three. The New York Produce Show and Conference is now the second largest produce event, despite taking place in very expensive New York City. Companies are on a waitlist to be exhibitors at the Southeast Produce Council's Conference and Expo. America Trades Produce, a fabulous newer event, co-hosted by the Fresh Produce Association of the Americas and the Texas International Produce Association, will add a trade expo to its conference. It seems that trade show participation, both in attendance and in the number of events, is robust and growing.

So which is it? With respect to trade shows, is the produce industry different? Are we going against the trend, or are we clinging to the past, simply doing what we did last year, and remaining behind the curve in adopting the current marketing mix? One of the maxims we hear in marketing is that half of all marketing expenditures are wasted. The problem is that one can't know which half. Into which half do trade shows and conferences fall?

In 2012, I attended 12 events and could have done 20 or more. As I make a 2013 budget for my time (and it IS about the time, not the money), I ponder the value of attending versus not attending all kinds of things. I further ponder why are some events doing so well and others struggle?

Take The New York Produce Show and Conference, a one-day trade show overlaid on a three-day produce think tank summit, modestly called a conference. Zero to 5,000 attendance in three years. Why? How? What drives this kind of growth in an activity that many in the industry consider a waste of time?

The classic marketing thought on trade shows

is if one can see more targets more economically than through individual visits, and if one can reach an audience more effectively than through other means, the event is worthwhile. The more focused and target-rich the environment, the better. When all these conditions are met, the trade show is successful.

I think FOCUS is what's driving The New York Produce Show and Conference. For all the talk of supply consolidation, national category captains, vertical integration, lean supply chains and the like, there is still much production agriculture that is small-scale and ships to nearby wholesalers and retailers. The Eastern Produce Council is full of members from New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania, very important farm states for produce. Many of these growers don't ship more than a day's truck ride.

It is they and their regional customers who are the backbone of The New York Produce Show and Conference. Sure, there were the national players and attendees from six continents, but 80 percent of the participants live within driving distance of the Big Apple. Comparing the region's attendance at Fresh Summit, the registrants from the 14 states and five provinces within a roughly 400-mile radius of New York City numbered only about 2,000 in Anaheim.

Our trade shows are not going away, but realigning to meet the needs of the business. But what about conferences? Convention surveys all identify networking and education as key reasons to attend an event, in that order. After the show floor, my unscientific survey says that opening receptions are the next favorite activity.

Call me a dinosaur for remembering the days when conventioners purchased the recordings of the educational seminars, but very few attendees even go to an education event of any type these days. Education-only events like United Fresh's Washington Public Policy Conference, America Trades Produce, or PMA Fresh Connections, where important and useful ideas are discussed, draw only a few hundred people.

We're always being told we need to connect with the consumer. In December in New York, a unique collection of people shared ideas and learnings about what the consumer is thinking about food... and what he might be thinking about food in the future. You should be thinking about the future, too. Block out December 10-12, 2013, now...and take some time to think about the future.

*John Pandol is the director of Pandol Bros., in Delano, CA.*





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## DAY 1: GLOBAL TRADE SYMPOSIUM



On December 4, international traders, retailers, government officials, distinguished professors and guests from around the world gathered at the Second Annual Global Trade Symposium — *Produce Import & Export: A View From America's Gateway To The World*. The day focused on the importance of worldwide trade with presentations from such various businesses as Marks & Spencer, Sun World, Tali Grapes, C.H. Robinson, Veg Pro International and more.

The keynote presentation, *The Produce Market Transformed: How The Supermarket Revolution In Developing Countries Will Change The Business...And The World!*, was given by Professor Thomas Reardon, PhD, from Michigan State University.

Topics of discussion included the emerging powerhouse exporters of Guatemala and Peru, presented by representatives from the Guatemalan Trade Office and Peruvian Association of Agrarian Producer's Guild, retailing in the UK, global trends and logistics, marketing technology, dispute resolution, and direct retail importing.





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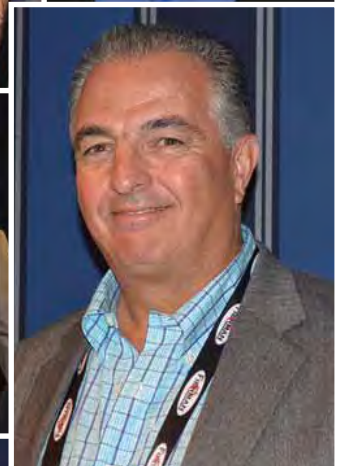
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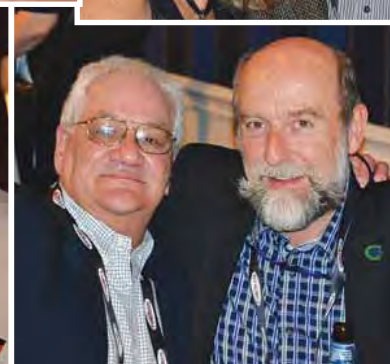


**DAY 1:  
OPENING  
COCKTAIL  
RECEPTION**



Exhibitors, attendees and guests of The New York Produce Show and Conference were treated to an excellent evening of light bites and cocktails to mark their first night in The Big Apple.

Following a night of networking and catching up with old friends, many guests hit the town for dinner reservations or a Broadway show.







**DAY 1:  
OPENING  
COCKTAIL  
RECEPTION**







## DAY 2: KEYNOTE BREAKFAST

The trade show morning began bright and early when industry members made their way to Pier 94 for a breakfast, hosted by Ken Whitacre, publisher of PRODUCE BUSINESS. Jim Allen, president of the New York Apple Association, delivered an elegant invocation.

Breakfast concluded with a presentation of the Joe Nucci Award for Product Innovation to Ocean Mist Farms for its "Season and Steam" microwavable Brussels sprouts. Paul Kneeland, vice president of produce and floral for Kings Food Markets, was also presented with The Chandler Copps Award in recognition of his extensive efforts to build connectivity in the trade.

Following the introduction of this year's Culinary Innovation Student Program, Jim Prevora's Perishable Pundit "Thought Leaders Panel" got underway.

Panel participants included: Eric Beelitz, A & P; Craig Carlson, U.S. Foods, Inc.; Rich Conger, King Kullen Supermarkets; Jim Corby, Delhaize America; Joel Fierman, Fierman Produce Exchange, Inc.; Marc Goldman, Morton Williams Supermarkets; Dean Holmquist, Allegiance Retail Services; Paul Kneeland, Kings Food Markets; Terry Murphy, Wakefern Food Corp.; Carmine Napolitano, Gristedes Supermarkets; Zeina Orfali, Marks & Spencer; Richard Stiles, Redners Markets, Inc.; and John Vasapoli, D'Agostino Supermarkets.







**DAY 2:  
TRADE SHOW,  
EDUCATIONAL  
MICRO-SESSIONS  
AND SPOUSE PROGRAM**



The third annual trade show kicked off at 10am with more than 350 exhibitors eagerly awaiting the ribbon cutting ceremony, which was presided over by Jim Prevor, Editor-in-Chief of PRODUCE BUSINESS magazine and John McAleavey of the Eastern Produce Council. Also in attendance were retailers from the area, New Jersey's Secretary of Agriculture, Douglas Fisher, and television personality/Hunts Points Market spokesperson, Tony Tantillo.

Pier 94 saw non-stop action, including an appearance by legendary New York Yankee Bucky Dent, who signed autographs and posed for pictures with excited fans at the Apio booth.

Concurrent to the trade show, and also at Pier 94, were educational micro-sessions. A total of seven sessions occurred throughout the day, each one lasting 45 minutes. Some of the topics covered included labor policy, ethnic produce marketing, vitamin D mushrooms, local and organic, and retailing in the United Kingdom.

While attendees delighted in walking the show floor pursuing new business and meeting with old friends, the spouse program commenced in the penthouse of the Sheraton New York. Debbie Prevor hosted a group of spouses and significant others to a day of shopping and sightseeing in the City.



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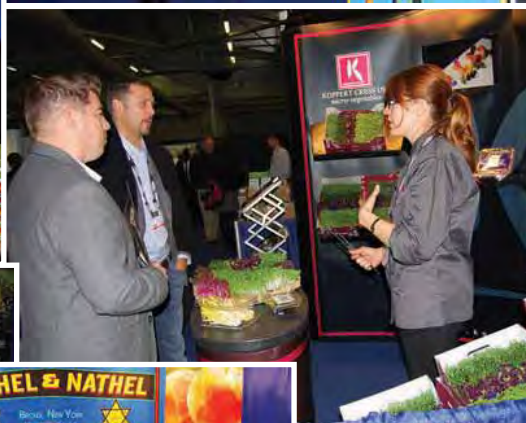
## BRONZE LEVEL







**DAY 2:  
TRADE SHOW,  
EDUCATIONAL  
MICRO-SESSIONS  
AND SPOUSE PROGRAM**







**DAY 2:  
CENTRAL PARK AND  
UNIVERSITY  
EDUCATIONAL  
OUTREACH  
PROGRAM**



Exhibitors and attendees of The New York Produce Show and Conference were greeted with a re-creation of Central Park upon entering the pier. There, they could grab an iconic New York-themed bite from one of the rotating meals and snacks served and dine at tables while observing the multiple celebrity chef demos happening in the area throughout the day.

Students mentored by industry leaders, such as Bruce Peterson, Reggie Griffin and Dick Spezzano — from Cornell, Delaware University, Rutgers, St. Joseph's, and the University of Connecticut — were also treated to an educational experience by attending the conference and sitting in on micro-sessions. In addition to the U.S. schools represented, a group from the *Università degli Studi di Scienze Gastronomiche* in Bra, Italy, enjoyed exploring the show floor and marveled at the size and scope of the U.S. produce industry.





**DAY 2:  
CULINARY  
INNOVATION  
STATION  
AND CELEBRITY  
CHEF DEMOS**



The Culinary Innovation Station was home to students-chefs from Johnson & Wales University and Le Cordon Bleu. Throughout the day, they foraged from exhibitor booths for fresh produce to create a variety of dishes on the spot. Exhibitors and attendees enjoyed observing the station with the students-chefs in action, and most of all, tasting the delicious dishes they made.

Back in "Central Park," guests were treated to live chef demos from super chefs, including Ritz Carlton New York's executive chef Mark Arnao, Top Chef Master Kerry Heffernan, executive chef Ben Pollinger of Oceana and Michael Giletto, executive chef at the Bayonne Golf Club, in Bayonne, NJ. The chefs made unique, produce-heavy dishes with student assistants from the Institute of Culinary Education, Johnson & Wales and Le Cordon Bleu.



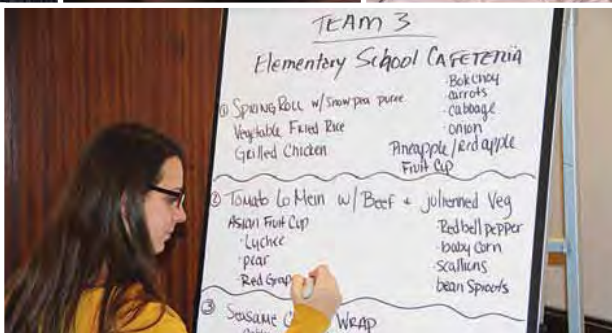




# DAY 3: IDEATION FRESH FOODSERVICE FORUM



The third day of The New York Produce Show and Conference presented attendees with two options: the IDEATION FRESH Foodservice Forum, or a variety of bus tours in and around New York City and its neighboring states. Those who attended IDEATION FRESH, which took place at the Sheraton New York, were treated to a day of brainstorming and conversation about how to bring more fresh produce into the foodservice arena.



The forum, titled *Culinary Evolution And Revolution: Utilizing Produce Staples and Specialties In the Menu of Tomorrow*, hosted a number of world-renowned specialists in the field, including: Gillian Duffy, culinary editor of *New York* magazine; James Beard award-winning Chef Michael Foley, chief food innovator for Hyde Park Group; Gabrielle Morini, assistant professor at the University of Gastronomic Sciences, in Pollenza, Italy; and Chef Brad Barnes, CMC, from the Culinary Institute of America.

In addition, live chef demos were conducted by Chef Michael Giletto, executive chef at the Bayonne Golf Club, in Bayonne, NJ, and Chef Amanda Cohen, owner of Dirt Candy.





### DAY 3: INDUSTRY TOURS



Many attendees chose to stay in the New York area an extra day to experience one of the six bus tours that provided participants with a behind-the-scenes look at retailers and wholesalers across the tri-state area. The six trips went to the Hunts Point Produce Market; the new Philadelphia Produce Market and Wegmans in Cherry Hill, NJ.

Manhattan specialty food retailers included Balducci's Gourmet on the Go, Baldor Specialty Foods and Eataly; New York retailers including Whole Foods, Manhattan Fruit Exchange, Morton Williams, Fairway Broadway and Westside Market; New Jersey retailers included Whole Foods, St. Philip's Academy, Kings Bedminster, Wegmans, and Shoprite Somerville; and the Brooklyn retailers and urban agriculture tour included Pfizer Mushroom Facility, The Orchard, Roberta's Pizza with Rooftop Garden, and The Brooklyn Navy Yard - Farms, Beehives, Apiary & Kings County Distillery watering system.





# Pay Attention To Peanuts In Produce

A year-round roster of sports to pair with peanuts makes this healthful snack a boon for produce departments. **BY BOB JOHNSON**



Hampton Farms owns a licensing agreement with the MLB, allowing logos and graphics for all of the U.S.-based teams to be printed on 12-oz. packages of peanuts.

**A**lmonds, walnuts and pistachios have come to the forefront in a big way as scientific studies document their ability to help prevent major life-threatening diseases. But the buzz about these fabulous tree nuts has done nothing to reduce the demand for peanuts, and may actually be providing a coattail affect.

Bob Sutter, CEO of Nashville-based North Carolina Peanut Growers Association, says, "I don't think the publicity about the health benefits of almonds and walnuts has affected us in a negative way. In fact, it may have affected us in a positive way because we're talking about nuts. Although peanuts are really a legume, they have the same nutritional values as nuts. Sales of peanuts are increasing," he adds. The North Carolina Peanut Growers Association promotes the state's production, marketing, and consumption of peanuts through research, education, legislation and other means.

Peanuts are in demand because they are a healthy, fun and familiar snack. "Demand has been consistent over the past five to 10 years," reports Terry Williams, national sales manager for EJ Cox/Sachs Nut Co., headquartered in Clarkton, NC. "We have not seen almonds and walnuts cut into peanut sales at all — we have

not seen any downturn. As an industry, we have done a great job of maintaining high consumer confidence that peanuts are a healthy and fun snack. EJ Cox, a wholesaler of peanuts under the Sachs name, is a major supplier, processor and shipper of Virginia-style peanuts.

According to Marianne Copelan, executive director of Virginia-Carolina Peanuts Promotions, based in Nashville, NC, "A lot of consumers know some of the facts about peanuts, but they don't know all the health benefits. They are gluten- and cholesterol-free. They are high in protein and have the good kind of fat. They're good for your heart; they're good for you. These are locally grown products from the United States that are excellent in many ways," says.

The key to driving peanut sales is pretty simple — display them prominently in the right place at the right time.

## Location, Location, Location

Prominent displays in a visible location drives produce department peanut sales like nothing else. "Get the peanuts in front of the consumer," asserts Sutter. "Everybody likes peanuts, but they need to be reminded."

In-store promotions at the right time can catch the eye of the consumer, and drive peanut sales. "We do a lot of promotions at retailers including Publix, Piggly Wiggly, Food Lion and Whole Foods," reveals Copelan. "I would definitely say Wal-Mart does a good job; you always see peanuts at the front of the produce department."

Virginia-Carolina Peanuts Promotions has POP materials available to help retailers. "As the value leader in the nut category, in-shell peanuts should be afforded a significant allotment in the space dedicated to nuts in any produce department," says Pete Jessup, director of retail sales at Hampton Farms, headquartered in Raleigh, NC. "We also believe that supplemental displays tied into various themed (particularly sports-oriented) promotions will drive significant incremental sales." He adds, "A heavy percentage of in-shell sales are incremental in nature so visibility, particularly during promotional periods, is key." Hampton Farms is one of the leading roasters of in-shell peanuts in the country.

With peanuts, promotions that correspond to major sporting events are effective in increasing sales. "High visibility is important," adds Williams of EJ Cox. "Peanuts are



## “We have found great success with pistachio display shippers, which really draws the customers. But we don’t have anything like that for peanuts.”

*Mike Patterson, Magruder’s*

an impulse item. Pallet placement during the holidays and major sporting events are important. When inventory is high, the more we promote, the more product we move. Promotion is the key to success, with good placement and banners.”

One retailer reports, however, that no one in the peanut business is matching the leading pistachio producer when it comes to offering eye-catching displays. “With us, the pistachios have encroached on the peanuts,” admits Mike Patterson, director of produce operations at Magruder’s, a 5-unit independent Rockville, MD-based retailer. “We have found great success with pistachio display shippers, which really draws the customers. But we don’t have anything like that for peanuts.”

### The Sporting Nut

Peanuts are associated like hot dogs are with the arrival of baseball season. “In-shell

Peanuts have long enjoyed a steep tradition and natural tie-in with baseball, so Opening Day, the All-Star Game, and World Series are all events that warrant additional promotion,” Jessup says.

There are also promotional opportunities for peanuts in the fall and winter during football season.

“One of the best attributes of in-shell peanuts is that we’ve seen our business steady throughout the course of the year. We begin the calendar year with College Bowls and Super Bowl promotions in January and February; enter into March with March Madness; move into April through July tying into Major League Baseball; use August and September as kickoffs of both the NCAA and NFL football seasons; and wrap up the year October through December with the traditional fourth quarter holidays and promotions,” Jessup details. The seamless transition from one sports season to the next means there is always a reason and way to promote peanuts.

“At Magruder’s, peanut placement depends on the time of the year,” reveals Patterson. “At the beginning of baseball season in April, and the beginning of football season in September, we merchandise displays of pistachios and peanuts at the front of the produce department

and promote them.”

This sports connection drives promotions. “Sports lends itself to peanuts,” contends Sutter of the North Carolina Peanut Growers Association. “From fall right through Super Bowl is the best time to promote peanuts. The summer is a big time for us because of baseball. But luckily, there is a sport for every season, which smoothes out the year.”

The peak times of the major sports are the best times to take advantage of special promotional displays of peanuts. “Supplemental or secondary displays — particularly in the produce, chip/snack, or beverage aisles — during promotional periods have always proven to be exceptionally effective,” reveals Jessup of Hampton Farms. “For this year’s football playoffs, (both the college bowl season and Super Bowl) Hampton Farms will be offering a half-pallet display with football graphics that we are confident is going to drive significant incremental sales. For baseball season, the company owns a licensing agreement with Major League Baseball, and we pack 12-oz. in-shell peanut bags with the logos and graphics for all U.S.-based teams,” he details. “We also believe in continuing to offer consumers value-added items like our Cajun-flavored Hot Nuts and Hickory Smoked flavored in-shell Peanuts.”

### The Total Package

Peanuts are sold these days almost entirely packaged, rather than bulk. “It depends on the grocery store chain,” says Sutter, “but I think Kroger is more likely to have bulk, and everybody else is packaged.”

Concern about the allergic reaction some people have to peanuts is a major reason they are largely sold in packages. “While there is still some bulk, it is trending toward the packaged,” EJ Cox’s Williams says. “It’s more convenient, and stores that used to carry bulk are transitioning to packaged in response to consumer concern about allergies.”

The packaged product also offers a degree of protection against some customers deciding that the bulk display is an invitation to sample the peanuts.

If possible, however, there may still be advantages in offering both bulk and packaged



peanuts. “Concerns over issues such as allergens, shrink, and freshness have resulted in many of our produce sales moving into a packaged UPC-driven environment,” admits Jessup. “However, our experience has been that the stores who sell the most in-shell peanuts have always offered them in both a bulk and packaged format.”

### What Type Nut?

Nearly all of the in-shell peanuts in the produce department are the Virginia-type peanut. “We try to promote North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia peanuts since each state grows a different type of peanut,” explains Copeland of Virginia-Carolina Peanuts Promotions. “Plus, we try to push the gourmet Virginia-type peanut.”

Other regions generally grow the peanuts made into peanut butter, or shelled and sold in jars.

Don Koehler, executive director of the Tifton-based Georgia Peanut Commission, shares, “All of our peanuts are processed. They are either made into peanut butter or shelled and then salted. North Carolina is the largest producer of Virginia type, or ballpark, peanuts. Our demand has continued to increase; the market has been growing since 2002. It’s very exciting to see growth in all segments of the peanut industry.”

Some produce departments find they can effectively merchandise modest displays of Spanish or Valencia peanuts, in addition to Virginia peanuts. “The Spanish type is smaller yet, and the Valencia out of New Mexico and Texas is a specialty peanut,” Koehler says.

The Virginia type, however, has a larger nut that makes it best suited for salting and roasting in shell. “The roasted or roasted and salted in-shell are the Virginia-type peanut,” says Sutter of the North Carolina Peanut Growers Association. Sometimes you’ll see Valencias, but 95 to 96 percent of the peanuts in the produce department are the Virginias.”

**pb**



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Established by public and private partnership at the University of California, Davis, initial funding for CPS was provided by the California Department of Food and Agriculture, the University of California, Produce Marketing Association and Taylor Farms. Ongoing administrative costs are covered by the Produce Marketing Association, enabling industry and public funds to go exclusively to research.

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**UCDAVIS**



# UNDER PROMISE, OVER DELIVER



I'm certain we have all heard the financial axiom, "Under Promise, Over Deliver." In its truest sense, in the financial world, it means don't promise any results you are not ready to deliver or exceed. In the produce world, in the past few years, the opposite seems to be occurring at retail. Many retailers have great slogans and "programs" that tout how great their produce is. In far too many cases, these promises fall far short

of expectation. In the many times I've faced the initiation of a new program to entice the customer to come to our store to buy the best produce, the hardest part was overcoming management's position on execution as, "They just don't get it!" Management is all for a powerful slogan or "program" that presents produce as a competitive advantage. However, their commitment to the resources needed for consistent execution of the expectations raised by such advertisement is lacking.

To overcome management's resistance to providing the resources needed, I have found it is necessary to convince them of the benefits of supporting the effort versus the catastrophic consequences of not fulfilling the customers' expectations. If the customer comes into the store with the expectation of finding the superior produce department that has been promoted, and the department does not live up to expectation, the customer will probably offer the benefit of the doubt and that the department had an off day. This is a one-time allowance, and if the customers continue to find that their expectation fed by the advertising is not met, then the worst-case scenario comes into play and you lose a customer. At best, in this situation, the consumers will form the opinion that the promotion and advertisement of the department is "just words" and their expectations will be lowered for the produce department as well the entire store.

The most successful retailers do not allow this to happen. They have adopted the position that whatever we say we will deliver at store level. I have been on both sides of this equation and have found that the way of the successful retailers is the best. By following up on your promise to the consumer and encouraging your produce personnel provide extra effort to make the department shine, you can attain the benefits of over delivering. It is not to say that you need to purposely "sandbag"

your promise to the consumer. It is to deliver to the consumer what you say you will and then exceed their expectations. This requires your persistence with management to get the resources needed to make your produce department truly superior. The proof of your argument is the success of those retailers that live by their word. Conversely, as a bad experience or loss of expectation results in negative perception, the ability to over deliver results in a positive perception of the produce operation that reflects well on the entire store and company.

Selling this proposition will be no small accomplishment given the present climate in many retailers of cost control, labor restrictions, and high profit expectations. The key will be to convince upper management and their financial advisors (they may be one in the same) that exceeding the consumers' expectations will drive top-line sales (the lifeblood of any retail organization) and ultimately reach the goals set for the department as well as helping to drive the results in the total store and company. Don't be discouraged if your first attempt is refused. I have found that persistence and a consistent message will eventually become successful.

**The key will be to convince upper management and their financial advisors (they may be one in the same) that exceeding the consumers' expectations will drive top-line sales (the lifeblood of any retail organization) and ultimately reach the goals set for the department as well as helping to drive the results in the total store and company.**

The toughest aspect of this proposition will be after you gain approval to move forward. Initial results may not meet expectations, and if that occurs, you will need to fight to maintain the support for more than just one or two four-week periods. Consumers are cautious and will need more than one or two trips to the department to begin to gain the confidence and raise their expectation. However, once this occurs, sales will begin to gain momentum and increase to new, higher levels.

You must always be wary of the tendency of upper management to start to cut back the resources on a successful program as it begins to show success. It is vital to maintain the effort as once the success is gained, word-of-mouth from the consumer will also add new customers coming to the store. It is important to reinvest some of the profits from the extra sales in continuing to support the program in order to keep exceeding customer expectations. Once you set upon this course, a retailer must continue in this direction or suffer the negative effects of over promising. In the end, this action will increase sales and profits, which will make upper management happy; increased sales will mean more orders and that will make suppliers happy; and the superior produce department by will make the customer happy. It is the ultimate win-win situation.

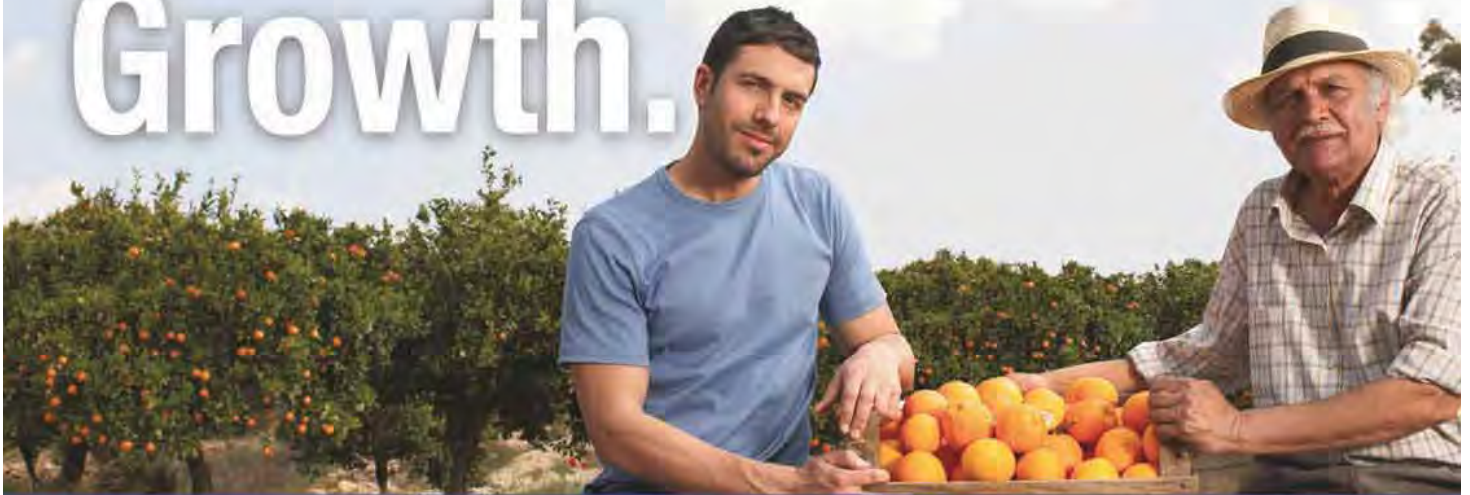
**pb**

**By Don Harris**

Don Harris is a 38-year veteran of the produce industry, with most of that time spent in retail. He has worked in every aspect of the industry, from "field-to-fork" in both the conventional and organic arenas. Harris is presently consulting on all subjects of retail, category development and sales strategies, among others. Comments can be directed to [editor@producebusiness.com](mailto:editor@producebusiness.com)



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# FRUIT LOGISTICA ANNOUNCES CANDIDATES FOR 2013 INNOVATION AWARD

The Fruit Logistica Innovation Award (FLIA) is presented annually to an outstanding innovation in the fresh produce sector and its service industries at Fruit Logistica in Berlin, which takes place February 6-8. The competition is organized by Messe Berlin and *Fruchthandel* Magazine and is open to all exhibitors and co-exhibitors of the 2013 Fruit Logistica conference. In recent years it has become one of the most important and sought-after awards of its kind in the international fresh produce industry and attracts worldwide interest from trade and consumer media alike.

The nominated innovations will be presented to more than 55,000 visitors from 130 countries in a special exhibition area. During the first two days of the exhibition, visitors will be able to vote for the best innovation of the year. The FLIA 2013 award will be presented on the final day of the exhibition in a special ceremony.

The FLIA jury, comprising experts from production, quality management, wholesale distribution and retail, as well as from the packaging and service sectors, has nominated the following candidates for the FLIA 2013:

**1) 5 AM TAG E.V. SERVICEBÜRO, Germany**  
“Frische ist Leben”

A three-year, internationally based campaign supported by the European Union for the generic promotion of the consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables in Germany under the headline “Fresh is Life.”

**2) ABRACAD TECHNOWORKS BV, Netherlands**  
“High speed counting and packing device”

A fast and flexible feeding system that packs small bags into cartons.

**3) BANKEN CHAMPIGNONS BV, Netherlands**  
“Mushrooms to combine”

Four different fresh mushroom mixes with recipes for consumers.

**4) BEHR AG, Germany**  
“Schwarzwurzeln/Steckrüben - küchenfertig geschält”

An attractive and convenient presentation of ready-to-cook black salsify and turnips.

**5) BEN-DOR FRUITS AND NURSERIES LTD., Israel**  
“Colored Apricots”

A colorful range of new, sweet and juicy apricots with different skin and flesh colorings.

**6) ELBE-OBST FRUCHTVERARBEITUNG MBH, Germany**



The 2012 FLIA award went to the sweet-tasting and seedless pepper, Angello, by Syngenta Seeds B.V. from the Netherlands. Pictured left to right are: Robert Broadfoot, CEO, *Fruchthandel* Magazine; Benny Nir, Syngenta Seeds B.V.; Luciano Fioramonti, Syngenta Seeds B.V.; and Gérald Lamusse, Global Brand Manager, Fruit Logistica.

**“Apfel-Schiffchen”**

Cut dried apple slices produced using a special new technique to maintain crispness and avoid browning.

**7) GREENWATT SA, Belgium**

“On-site bio-gas plant turning organic waste into energy”

Small-scale, cost-saving installations suitable for locations such as wholesale markets, pack-houses etc.

**8) SOFRUILEG, France**

“Nergi”

A sweet-tasting berry derived from the kiwi with green flesh and a smooth, thin edible skin.

**9) STAAY FOOD GROUP, Netherlands**

“City-Farming”

A production concept for urban locations using LED lighting to grow seedlings in 35 days under safe, controlled conditions.

**10) TOZER SEEDS LTD, UK:**

“Flower sprout”

A new, small vegetable with attractive, green and purple frilly leaves; a cross between Brussels sprouts and kale.



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# BEATING THE SAME DRUM

Whether it was the government urging the nation to eat “twice as much fruits and vegetables...for the well-balanced diet so necessary to health and vigor in winning [the] war” as illustrated in the ad to the right, First Lady Michelle Obama promoting her *Let’s Move* campaign, or the USDA touting its MyPlate initiative, it’s clear that as a nation, we have not been consuming enough fresh produce — now, or ever! This magazine ad, submitted by John Pandol, director of Delano, CA-based Pandol Bros., Inc., illustrates that while the industry has moved forward by leaps and bounds since the mid 20th Century, consumption remains a challenge.

Pandol recollects, “The day the Los Angeles city council adopted a Meatless Monday resolution I saw this on Ebay. I cannot find anything as to why the Department of War specifically promoted produce consumption. It was a policy to reduce the consumption of calorie-dense foods like meat, wheat, fats and sugar to make them available for the military and allied populations — the starving children in Europe.”

Long before it was considered trendy or sustainable, Pandol points out that “substituting foods was considered patriotic. Meatless Mondays, Wheatless Wednesdays and Sugarless Sundays existed as voluntary initiatives in WWI, and meat and other products were rationed during WWII. Interestingly, 40 percent of U.S. vegetables were grown in home ‘Victory Gardens’ in 1945.”

Pandol continues, “The modern activists who commandeered Meatless Mondays in the 1990s had a goal of reducing meat consumption to increase public health. Additionally, those who believe that meat production is environmentally damaging have joined the one-day-a-week vegetarianism campaign. Do I benefit my health and that of the planet by substituting a ham sandwich for peanut butter and jelly once-a-week or substituting spaghetti and meatballs for macaroni and cheese? Probably not. After 15 years, for all the talk about flexitarianism, the modern Meatless Monday campaign has less than 10 percent adoption.”



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

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Top Story: Natural Delights Introduces Country's First Pitted Medjool Dates

by Bard Valley Natural Delights™ Medjool Dates  
Posted: Friday, July 27, 2012 at 8:58AM EDT

BAIRD VALLEY, CA-- Bard Valley Natural Delights, the nation's top Medjool date brand, offers consumers a convenient new way to enjoy the lusciousness and all-around snackability of Medjools with the introduction of Natural Delights Pitted Medjool Dates, the country's first pitted Medjool date product. Launching this fall, the 12-ounce package will sell for the Suggested Retail Price (SRP) of \$6.99.

"The introduction of Natural Delights Pitted Medjool Dates makes it easier than ever for Americans to indulge in the sweetness of one of the world's most mysterious fruits," said Priscilla Anderson, head of marketing for the Medjool Date Growers Association (BVMGGA).

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Stories "Just In": The Time is Ripe For Fresh BC Blueberries This Season

by British Columbia Blueberry Council  
Posted: Friday, July 27, 2012 at 8:58AM EDT

Beginning with a trickle and turning into a torrent, consumers can now find the first of the 2012 season's fresh BC blueberries at their local supermarket's produce department. Farmers' markets and farm stands. More than 800 British Columbian blueberry farmers are now out in the fields picking what looks like a very strong crop of the antioxidant-rich, sweet

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Plus we cover top-level happenings in Retail and Foodservice that are of special interest to a perishable food executive at a supermarket or other retail chain and at a foodservice chain operation or foodservice distributor.





PRODUCE BUSINESS is accepting nominations for its Ninth Annual 40-Under-Forty Project, which recognizes the produce industry's top young leaders.

Honorees will be selected based on their professional accomplishments, demonstrated leadership and industry/community contributions. To be eligible, nominees must be under the age of 40 as of January 1 (People born after January 1, 1973).

To nominate someone, please fill out this form by March 1, 2013, and fax back to 561-994-1610.

Once nominated, the candidate will receive forms from us to fill out asking for detailed information. A candidate only needs to be nominated one time. Multiple nominations will have no bearing on selection.

**ABOUT THE NOMINEE:**

First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Approximate Age \_\_\_\_\_  
 Company \_\_\_\_\_  
 Position \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_  
 Country \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

In 100 words or less, describe why this person should be nominated:  
 (You can use a separate sheet for this)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Nominee's Professional Achievements:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Nominee's Industry/Community/Charitable Activities:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**ABOUT THE NOMINATOR:**

First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Company \_\_\_\_\_  
 Position \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_  
 Country \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Nominator information is for internal use only and will not be shared with candidate or have a bearing on selection.

For more information email: [info@producebusiness.com](mailto:info@producebusiness.com)