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JULY 2007 • VOL. 23 • NO. 7 • \$9.90

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PRODUCE QUIZ



THIS MONTH'S WINNER:

Kevin Weaver
Vice President, Produce Merchandising
Marsh Supermarkets
Indianapolis, IN

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

Kevin has had a steadily upward career with Marsh, where he has worked for 25 years. Having started with the company as a bagger, he became vice president, produce merchandising in 2001. Marsh was founded in 1931 and has 104 supermarkets in Indiana and western Ohio. It became a privately held company this past September.

Kevin is responsible for anything that has to do with produce — from merchandising to planning to promotion to marketing.

He has been reading PRODUCE BUSINESS for as long as he can remember. "I've been buying since the '90s, so I've been reading it since then," he explains.

"Any time I can get an up-to-date source on the trends of this business, that's a great help to me. PRODUCE BUSINESS is a great source of that kind of information," Kevin notes.

As the winner of the May quiz, he wins an iPod Nano.

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- 4) What is the fax number for Jerry Porricelli Produce? _____
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Reader Service #57





WASHINGTON GRAPEVINE

A report on the inside happenings of government.

SUBMITTED BY TOM STENZEL, PRESIDENT/CEO • UNITED FRESH PRODUCE ASSOCIATION



The Power of Coalition

You don't have to work in Washington, D.C., very long to realize even the most powerful lobbying group needs friends. Rarely does one organization stand alone and turn the tide on major issues — smart lobbyists forge coalitions. That's why immigration reform brings together such disparate interests as business and labor organizations, religious groups and agriculture, the construction trade and restaurants.

Sometimes, narrower coalitions are critical to success. For the produce industry, the Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance (SCFBA) is an example. If you didn't know our industry very well, you might think fruits and vegetables would be a pretty monolithic group, seeking the same sorts of things in agricultural policy. But the reality is just the opposite — finding consensus across different commodities, geographic regions and sectors of our industry is always a challenge.

At United Fresh Produce Association (UFPA), we try to do that through our volunteer councils, committees and Board of Directors, bringing together leaders from as many industry sectors as possible. When it comes to a major undertaking like the Farm Bill, it's also critical to forge alliances across different associations representing many different produce constituencies. Thus, the SCFBA was born.

In May 2005, a number of stakeholder specialty crop associations came together to begin scoping out a plan to influence the 2007 Farm Bill. We talked about shared goals and about conflicts. We debated strategy, looking at past successes and where we had fallen short. We hired the best outside consultants to help shape strategy, perform economic analyses and position us for the challenge ahead. And we pledged to stand together and fight as a coalition, rather than retreat to our own pet agendas and personal issues. Today, as you read this column, our efforts are front and center in the Congress.

The SCFBA has been led from the beginning by a steering committee of the 26 organizations that represent the diversity of our

industry. Early on, the steering committee elected the Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association, National Potato Council and Western Growers as co-chairs, with UFPA as secretary of the coalition. We now number over

If you didn't know our industry very well, you might think fruits and vegetables would be a pretty monolithic group, seeking the same sorts of things in agricultural policy.

100 specialty crop organizations as supporters of our Farm Bill initiatives.

Why is this coalition important? Today we stand together as an industry rather than a collection of disparate interests. When members of Congress offer a special deal to one commodity or one region to the detriment of others, we say, "No, thank you," and come back to the entire coalition's priorities. When we have different views on strategy, as smart people will, we don't go off on different tangents but debate a common strategy in meetings every Monday at our office. When the time comes for a strong voice for specialty crops, we share the stage together to minimize association competitiveness.

This will be one of the most important political seasons ever for our industry. The 2007 Farm Bill carries the opportunity to invest in the profitability of our industry for years to come. We can drive infrastructure investment for industry competitiveness, government research on produce safety, protection from plant pests and diseases, and consumption of healthful fresh fruits and

vegetables by the nation's children, investing in both the health of the next generation and the long-term health of our industry.

But even great coalitions need help. We need you — the most effective lobbyists are grassroots lobbyists — those of you who take the time to contact your member of Congress, speak about your business needs and show you care about the policies Congress implements. We hope political contact is part of your regular business and you routinely reach out to your elected leaders.

We also hope you'll come to Washington, D.C., Sept. 12-14, to add your voice to the largest gathering of fruit and vegetable leaders ever gathered in the nation's capital. The 2007 Washington Public Policy Conference will feature meetings with members of Congress, Administration officials and other national leaders to discuss critical issues facing your business. You'll take pride as our industry hosts the annual Fresh Festival on Capitol Hill, the most fun, tasty and healthful congressional reception of the year.

If this is your first time, there's an opening seminar about grassroots lobbying, so you'll feel comfortable meeting with members of Congress. Attendees visit congressional offices in teams, with veterans willing to lead the way. It's serious work, but you'll be amazed at the fun you'll have, too! Of course, conference organizers do the work in setting up personal meetings with your congressional delegations.

Back to the theme at hand — the power of coalition. The SCFBA is doing all we can to forge a Farm Bill good for all of agriculture and all of America. We don't want subsidies for our growers in just a few congressional districts; rather, we want investment that helps us bring an abundant supply of great-tasting, safe and affordable fresh fruits and vegetables to children and adults in every congressional district across the country.

That's where you come in. You can make a difference. Won't you sign up at <http://capwiz.com/unitedfresh/home/> and write a letter to your member of Congress? Even better, register to come to D.C. in September!

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Foodservice And Food Safety

As the produce industry gathers in Monterey for PMA's annual foodservice conference, there is much to celebrate. The great culinary trends — local, fresh, organic, seasonal — have led white tablecloth chefs to emphasize fresh produce. These trends will work their way through foodservice and lead to greater emphasis on fresh produce.

Yet these same trends must be channeled into safer directions, or the whole industry can find itself at risk.

The bulk of foodservice operates on one of two extremes of the supply chain. At one end of the business, most independents or small chains buy through either a distributor or a local purveyor. A restaurant operator generally has no real ability to assess the food-safety standards of its suppliers and thus no way to evaluate the safety of the food he is cooking with.

A local TV news exposé of the squalor of Los Angeles' 7th Street Market made it clear much of the produce in that filth was going to foodservice, including reasonably well-known chains. Very few operators buying from wholesalers and distributors off the 7th Street Market had any system designed to track anything.

It's not that they didn't want safe food; many were dealing with reputable broadliners who had their own procurement and auditing standards or individual distributors purchasing through food-service buying groups with rigorous standards. However, getting a good food-safety program was more luck than anything else.

On the other end of the industry are the massive chains with dedicated food-safety staffs and a highly aligned supply chain. Yet Taco Bell, part of the Yum Brands group, became the poster child for food-safety problems in fresh produce in restaurants.

The numbers are always unfair to large players. In the spinach crisis, the largest food-safety outbreak in produce history, about 300 people are known to have gotten sick or died. Even with so virulent a strain of *E. coli* O157:H7, if someone distributed only 5 percent of the volume Natural Selection Food packed under the Dole label on that fateful day in August 2006, only 15 people would be known to be sick — probably less, since some people didn't get tested until after the massive publicity. So, almost inevitably, known food-safety outbreaks will be tracked to products distributed en masse.

In addition, tying together an outbreak to a single source is much easier when all the product is used in the same way. Trace backs from consumer illnesses are based on the use of surveys — what did all these people eat or do in common? If the culprit is fresh-cut lettuce distributed only to Taco Bell, the survey should pick up a commonality. The same quantity of shredded lettuce, distributed to an equal number of independent restaurants, may never be traced back. Why? A Mexican restaurant had it on a taco, a sandwich shop

had it on a wrap, a diner had it in a salad. Making the connection to lettuce is far more difficult.

At the same time, the massively aligned supply chains of big foodservice operators don't guarantee food safety or even a major effort toward it. After all, what alignment does is give the operator power and the question is to what effect that power will be used.

Some operators have reputations for pushing food safety. But in many cases, the aligned supply chain is pushed to supply cheaper product so value prices can be offered and profit margins maintained.

General food-safety expertise is not sufficient. Urging food safety in general is like urging a strong national defense; it can't be effectuated in abstract. Food safety in produce depends on hundreds of small decisions. How deep must the fences go to stop burrowing animals? What kind of training and incentive systems are required for field workers? If food-safety experts at major chains don't know about these things, they will be ineffectual in making changes for the better.

Food-safety personnel must operate independently of other corporate considerations. An iron wall must fall across every company, and the food-safety people have to decide — without reference to anything else — what level of food-safety investment is sufficient to protect large operators against the larger reputational risk they run from an outbreak.

The FDA tells us the vast majority of foodborne illness is never identified or traced back to

a source. Unwittingly, the "foodie" culture encourages behavior that will increase unreported foodborne illnesses substantially — specifically those caused by fresh produce.

Pathogens are equal-opportunity devils — they do not exempt the virtuous yeoman farmer or the organic aficionado; they affect seasonal crops and the counter-seasonal crops equally.

We now have a situation in which reputable distributors spent millions on rigorous food-safety audits and the best chefs prefer their produce delivered in wood crates with the earth still upon them.

This is romanticism, but food safety requires HACCP plans, Good Agricultural Practices, expertise, water testing, soil samples and other tests. Our best chefs must insist the local growers they wish to buy from conform to good food-safety standards.

This means an independent third-party audit to an accepted standard. Suppliers will complain. It costs time and money. It might raise the costs of locally grown produce. But our white tablecloth chefs are in the power position here. If they refuse to buy from unaudited suppliers, these local growers will get their audits.

Chefs who don't insist on this are not just playing roulette with their businesses; they're playing Russian roulette with the lives of their customers.

**Our best chefs
must insist the
local growers
they wish to buy
from conform to
good food-safety
standards.**

History

where we come from matters.



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people, products and service.



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Reader Service # 1

Closing The Satisfaction Gap

The beauty of travel is how it opens one's senses to different cultures. Having recently vacationed in Tuscany, I can still recall the flavors of that region's cuisine. Yes, the great food was helped down with great Chianti. But it also stood on its own as a tribute to the role of food in doing far more than giving sustenance to life. The celebration of great flavors gave every meal a meaning and a memory.

This time isn't the first and won't be the last I write in this space about the critical role of better taste in driving more consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables. After all, the complex issue of improving the consistency of taste is simply too important — season after season, year after year.

So with Tuscany on my mind, I want to share a few new research insights while focusing attention on the satisfaction gap — the gap between how important taste is to our customers versus what they perceive they are receiving — between where our best customers would like us to be and where they say we are. This isn't just research theory: I'm sure my good friend Jim can readily add specific examples of great marketers who already embody these best practices.

Our industry is in the enviable position of growing and selling foods that consumers are actually being told to eat more of, not less. Fruits and vegetables pack more health-promoting, disease-fighting, waistline-narrowing nutrients per serving than any other food group. And unlike many so-called health foods whose taste profile and appearance is as insignificant as their nutrient density, fruits and veggies also offer eye-catching, lip-smacking appeal — the kind that can make tongues smile. If only that were always our No. 1 goal.

Produce Marketing Association's (PMA) latest consumer survey demonstrates how important taste and flavor are to produce consumers. Unfortunately, that research also indicates we are disappointing our customers — and missing an opportunity to grow our sales in the process. In late April, Opinion Dynamics Corporation surveyed 1,000 prima-

ry food shoppers by telephone for us. Their opinion is quite eye opening.

Of no surprise, the consumers we surveyed report they place a high degree of importance on the taste and flavor of their produce — this has been a consistent trend for years. Taste of fresh produce is "somewhat to extremely" important to 92+ percent of consumers. Taste and flavor also are critical drivers of where most consumers shop for produce, with 76 percent of shoppers surveyed reporting taste and flavor are "somewhat to very much" a factor in their choice of store.

When asked how important taste was compared to some other produce characteristics, our shoppers told us taste was more important than year-round availability. In other words, they don't mind waiting for foods with inconsistent taste to be at their in-season best. That's one reason why taste is clearly an important factor influencing purchases of locally grown produce. More than half (56 percent) of our survey participants report they buy locally grown because it is always fresher or better tasting. When pressed for their definition of locally grown, most define it as being from the local area or within their state.

When we asked which was the more important purchase factor, taste or health, we found a close race: 35 percent said health, 25 percent said taste, and 38 percent said the combination of taste and health influences their purchasing. This is the first time health has nudged out taste in our consumer surveys. In previous surveys, taste has been ranked a few percentage points ahead of health benefits.

It does seem we are largely disappointing our flavor-minded customers. The shoppers we surveyed report a low level of satisfaction with the taste and flavor of their produce, in marked contrast to how important they told us taste is to them. Only 25 percent report they are extremely satisfied with the taste and flavor of produce, while a larger 30 percent report only middle-of-the-road satisfaction. Lack of freshness and flavor are the reasons most often given by those respondents who

Our industry has an opportunity to both market and deliver high-quality, good-tasting produce, and to get paid a premium for it.

told us they aren't satisfied.

Why aren't our customers more satisfied with the taste of their produce? Each of us could suggest several reasons. Criteria such as yield, shipability, shelf life, appearance, color or being first-to-market are just some that spring immediately to mind.

As it turns out, our customers appear to be willing to pay more for the good taste they crave, based on our latest survey. The satisfaction gap suggests that our industry has an opportunity to both market and deliver high-quality, good-tasting produce, and to get paid a premium for it.

Nearly 70 percent of our shoppers told us they would pay at least a little extra for better-tasting produce, and 10 percent are willing to pay a lot more. This research indicates taste is important to our customers, they don't think their produce tastes as good as it should, and they are willing to pay more for fruits and vegetables that meet their taste expectations.

This is a clear road map to grow sales and increase margins, by delighting our customers. Doubters will say consumers always tell researchers they'll pay more for better taste and quality but don't behave that way. But look around the country and at market leaders worldwide and you'll see companies closing the satisfaction gap and making more money doing it. Starbucks coffee, anyone?



No Standards For Taste

About 15 years ago, PRODUCE BUSINESS did a major consumer focus group series that analyzed consumer attitudes toward taste. During a session in Los Angeles, one woman insisted she would shop only at Ralph's as she knew they had the best-tasting produce. As the moderator, I asked her how she knew which retailer had the better-tasting produce. After hemming and hawing, she 'fessed up. She had a pet rabbit that rejected, so she claimed, vegetables from anyplace but Ralph's!

Say what you will... at least this consumer had a way of ascertaining who sold better tasting produce — which is more than we can say about almost everyone else.

Although the issue of taste is often presented as a breeding problem, in which we have selected varieties for high yield and ease of transport — and there is truth in that — it is better thought of as a marketing problem.

We can accept that taste is “somewhat to extremely” important to 92+ percent of consumers and a factor in selecting a store — even that consumers would pay more for good taste. But then we realize this is an unactionable abstraction. How are consumers to ascertain which product tastes better? How are they to know which retailer sells better-tasting produce? On what basis could they decide to pay more for product A and not product B?

We have USDA grade standards for many items, but in not one is taste a criterion for earning a USDA grade; these standards can't really help consumers select product by taste.

We have well-known consumer brands, but the criteria for branding rarely relate to flavor. Even where producers have proprietary varieties, most market proprietary and non-proprietary varieties. The consumer, who can't rely on the brand or label for superior flavor, would have to be an expert on the individual variety of each produce item. Even with proprietary items, some marketers may imply better flavor or taste but few have done, and fewer still promote, any consumer research indicating their items do, in fact, taste better.

Most branded product operates under relative, not absolute, quality standards. After the

recent freeze, Sunkist was the exception that proves the rule. Withdrawing its branded oranges until the new crop, it announced no oranges met the criteria to be branded Sunkist.

Sunkist is virtually the only company to have done this — and it took a catastrophic freeze to do so. Normally branded marketers relax quality standards if necessary to have product to sell. A good brand may sell relatively top quality product but varying standards mean consumers can't rely on the brand.

Those brands that highlight flavor do so without making a clear commitment to the consumer. Some firms will mention that they offer “a more intense (fill in the produce item) flavor” — which sounds like puffery more than a commitment to the consumer.

Even when a specific measurement is used — such as a brix level — companies will promote that, on average, the brix level of their product is greater than standard industry product — a very bland warranty to consumers who don't care about averages, especially when an entire season's crop might be shipped below average if weather went wrong. Consumers want to know the item they are buying tastes good — a warranty shippers so far don't seem to want to make.

Retailers are also involved, but the way most handle product makes them not very useful to the consumer buying for taste. Few supermarkets make the commitment to handle one brand of an item. For example, there are loads of mini-melons out there, with dramatic variance in flavor and taste. Yet it is common for retailers to switch brands based on price.

These products look the same but are genetically distinct. Even if a particular brand of melons was better tasting and even if the consumer knew it, in most cases the consumer could not count on that brand being at any particular store. Even a willingness to switch stores wouldn't help, because the consumer wouldn't know what store to switch to.

When the retailer does make a commitment to handle a better-tasting item, it is usually classified as a secondary item and marked up to an extent that dissuades consumers from buying it. In other words, the

There are plenty of issues regarding taste. Notably, how do we define flavor?

mainstream item is not replaced with the better-tasting item. Instead, the new item is relegated to small displays at premium prices.

There are plenty of issues regarding taste. Notably, how do we define flavor? On many fruits, brix level seems a reasonable proxy but what criteria do we use for broccoli? Locally grown being better tasting is unsubstantiated. Riper peaches or melons are better tasting, and picking later can lead to riper fruit. But we just have no evidence iceberg lettuce picked locally tastes better than that picked far away.

There is much retailers can do without perfect knowledge or total reform of the system: Don't worry about being first to market; develop a reputation for selling only what meets a chain's flavor tests. Most consumers will appreciate not buying items not yet ready.

Retailers can also treat items with respect. Items, such as apples, that require refrigeration need to be refrigerated and not put on dry tables so consumers buy mealy apples.

Ironically, the trade's problems with food safety may yet contribute to a solution on the flavor front. Food safety and flavor depend on supply chain commitment to deliver that end result. As long as a retailer buys product from whomever is cheaper that day, the retailer can't know if it is getting flavor or food safety.

At the other extreme, if the retailer has a completely aligned supply chain, it can arrange for planting of only the most flavorful varieties to be grown in the safest way.

What is clear is this: If consumers can't identify what is the most flavorful produce by label or where it is sold, we will continue to disappoint our customers. That is discouraging, and unnecessary.

**NATIONAL WATERMELON BOARD,
ORLANDO, FL**

Kenton Kidd has joined the merchandising representative team and will handle the West Coast region. He has spent more than 30 years in the grocery retail business working with large wholesale operations, including Nash Finch, Associated Grocers of Colorado and A&P. He is also past president of the California Apple Association and California Apple Commission.



**DIAMOND FRUIT GROWERS,
HOOD RIVER, OR**

Stephen Ball has recently joined the sales staff. He will be working on the sales desk where he will be replacing Brian Lay, who will be retiring after nearly 40 years with Diamond. Ball has both retail and shipper experience, which gives him a broad perspective and helps him understand the needs of a wide-ranging base of customers.



**JOSEPH MERCURIO PRODUCE CORP.,
COLUMBUS, OH**

Frank Balassone is the new general manager. He was with IBM as business operations manager for 21 years and with Showa Aluminum Corp. of America as general manager for 11 years. Most recently he worked with Sequent. He will focus on reorganizing operations and developing the sales department with an emphasis on niche businesses and chains.



**EUROPEAN VEGETABLE SPECIALTY FARMS,
INC., SALINAS, CA**

Tim Hayes has joined EVS as marketing manager. The fourth generation of an agricultural family, he has experience in farming, brokerage and sales. He has worked for P.O.V.E., Santa Maria Produce Marketing, Freitas Brothers Farms and his own marketing operation. His responsibilities will include expanding the marketing capability and product line.



A.M.S. EXOTIC, LLC, LOS ANGELES, CA

Vanessa Smith is a new sales associate. She has 16 years of experience in the food industry, primarily in the foodservice sector. Her experience includes customer service, purchasing, sales, logistics, accounting and shipping and receiving. She will work from the Los Angeles facility and focus on the expansion of the retail and foodservice business.



BOSKOVICH FARMS, OXNARD, CA

Mike O'Leary has been named vice president of sales & marketing, Fresh Cut Division. He joined the company in 1996 and was most recently director of sales and marketing for the Fresh Cut Division. He will oversee sales and marketing of all fresh-cut product and will head a strategic team of departments to help facilitate customer satisfaction and compliance.

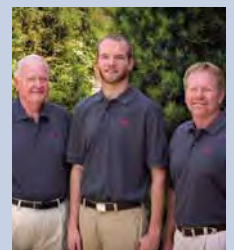


Armando Bermudez is a new sales associate. He has more than 14 years experience in the grocery/produce industry. He began his career in the grocery business with Albertson's and later joined Ready Pac. He will be responsible for the Los Angeles facility and focusing on the expansion of the retail and foodservice business.



WESPAK SALES, DINUBA, CA

Sam Stewart (center) has joined the company and will be working with his grandfather Bill Stewart (left), a Wespak founding partner with over 50 years of experience, and his father Jim Stewart (right), who has over 30 years in the industry. Sam recently graduated from California Polytechnic State University and began his produce career on the central coast of California.



Donna Hazelton is a new sales associate. She has 25 years of produce industry, most recently with Advantage Sales & Marketing as business development manager for the produce business. She will be operating out of a satellite office in Livermore, CA, and will be responsible for the expansion and introduction of the Earth Exotic's retail products.



ALBERT'S ORGANICS, BRIDGEPORT, NJ

Lucinda Moeller has been appointed promotions manager. Her primary role will be to design and create marketing materials that will be used to support Albert's retailer sales and promotions efforts and will work in Albert's Asheville, NC, studio. She has a B.S. in engineering technology with an emphasis on design graphics, illustration and video and multimedia presentations.



SYSCO CORP., HOUSTON, TX

Richard J. Dachman has been named vice president produce. He most recently served as senior vice president for FreshPoint, Inc., a Sysco subsidiary. He began his produce career at his family-owned business, Perry's Produce Co. After its sale, he and his father opened a produce operation for Kraft Foods, whose corporate staff he joined in 1987.



RJO PRODUCE MARKETING, FRESNO, CA

Rob O'Rourke is returning to the company he founded in 1993 with his brother John and will assume the position of senior vice president of business development. He has spent the last 2½ years as vice president of produce for Topco Associates. His mission will be to enhance existing relationships with growers and retailers and to develop new business concepts.



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



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FOOD SAFETY TECHNOLOGY

KES Science and Technology, Kennesaw, GA, has introduced a new model for the NASA-developed AiroCide PPT technology. The new wall-mounted unit features the standard 306-type stainless cover designed to withstand water and cleaning compound exposure during sanitation procedures. The technology emits only clean air.



Reader Service No. 300

EXPANDED SPECIALTY GREENS LINE

Earthbound Farm, San Juan Bautista, CA, is now offering Baby Spinach Blend, Baby Arugula Blend and Mâche Blend packaged in 5-ounce clear clamshells to complement its existing Baby Spinach, Baby Arugula and Mâche. Also available in Quebec-compliant packaging, they will be packed eight to a case with a suggested retail of \$3.99.



Reader Service No. 301

NEW ORGANIC JUICES

Uncle Matt's Organic, Clermont, FL, is introducing organic fruit juice blends — orange-pineapple-banana and orange-peach-mango. Both are 100 percent juice and USDA certified organic. The company is also introducing Homestyle Lemonade made from organic lemons. All are available in 32-ounce bottles made from clear PET plastic #1 for easy recycling.



Reader Service No. 302

BIODEGRADABLE PEELABLE LIDDING FILM

Rockwell Solutions, Dundee, Scotland, presents BioPeel Lidding for PLA, a clear, peelable PLA lidding or flow wrap for biodegradable applications, e.g., PLA trays. Suitable for use in chilled and frozen conditions, it is ideally suited for fruits, vegetables and salads. It also peel seals to other substrates including APET, PVC and HIPS.



Reader Service No. 303

PERSONAL AND PARTY SIZE FRESH-CUT COMBOS

Ready Pac, Irwindale, CA, introduces new premium fresh-cut fruit combinations in personal and party sizes. The blends include grape, blueberry, cantaloupe; strawberry, kiwi, mango; super fruit medley; berry blend; super summer splash; tropical fruit with lemon dip; apples and cinnamon crème; and a fruit, cheese, vegetables combination tray.



Reader Service No. 304

FRUIT-INSPIRED SALAD DRESSINGS

Naturally Fresh, Atlanta, GA, has launched a line of fruit-inspired dressing in four flavors — Pomango; Mandarin ginger; apple, cranberry, walnut; and mixed berry — made without any artificial preservatives. Called Naturally Fresh, Naturally Healthy, the line is low in calories and contains no fat, cholesterol or sodium. Suggested retail is \$3.99.

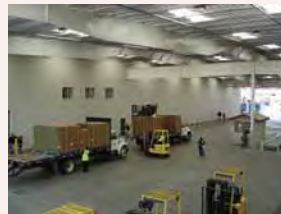


Reader Service No. 305

ANNOUNCEMENTS

STATE-OF-THE-ART BERRY COOLER

Driscoll's, Watsonville, CA, has opened one of California's largest cooling facilities in Santa Maria. The new 100,000-plus square foot facility will cool and house Driscoll's organic and conventionally grown berries. It will handle up to 125,000 boxes per day and is run by state-of-the-art, energy-efficient cooling, tracking and monitoring systems.



Reader Service No. 306

NEW CONSUMER HELP PROGRAM

Shop 'n Save, St. Louis, MO, a division of Supervalu, Eden Prairie, MN, has instituted an in-store campaign called Take a Peak that brings the government's MyPyramid to store shelves. Signs, window clings and other POS elements will communicate food group definitions, descriptions of serving sizes, recommended daily amounts and smart-shopping tips.



Reader Service No. 307

MUSHROOM EXPANSION

Highline Mushrooms, Leamington, ON, Canada, has announced it will significantly increase its growing capacity. The expansion includes additional growing rooms and a new state-of-the-art packaging facility. Highline specializes in white, mini bella and portabella mushrooms without pesticides or chemical treatments. It also supplies shiitake, oyster enoki and dried mushrooms.



Reader Service No. 308

MÂCHE AND STONE FRUIT PROMOTION

Epic Roots, Salinas, CA, and the California Tree Fruit Agreement, Reedley, CA, will promote California-grown Mâche and peaches, plums and nectarines during the month of July. A recipe for Mâche Salad with Shrimp and Summer Fruit Kabob is featured in an on-pack 8-page booklet being applied by Epic Roots to each U.S. retail pack of Mâche. A 50¢-off coupon is also included.



Reader Service No. 309

NAME OUR GUAC CONTEST

Fresherized Foods, Ft. Worth, TX, is running a consumer contest to rename its ready-to-eat guacamole, formerly known as Avoclassic Guacamole. The contest runs through Aug. 19. Weekly prizes include iPod Nanos and JBL speaker systems. The grand prize is a trip for four to Cabo San Lucas (airfare and accommodations) plus \$4,000 spending money. Entries can be made on-line.



Reader Service No. 310

EASY SUMMER RECIPES

The Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association, Antigo, WI, is offering Signature Dishes from Wisconsin Chefs, a colorful brochure that promotes Wisconsin produce. Included is Chef Jimmy Wade's (Heaven City Restaurant, Mukwonago, WI) recipe for Wisconsin Potato Louie Salad, which is perfect for summertime meals and picnics.



Reader Service No. 311

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Reader Service # 23

Whole Foods' London Store Gets Consumer Analysis



From Jim Prevor's *Perishable Pundit*, June 12, 2007

Whole Foods has opened its new store in London. The 80,000-square-foot store is like nothing in the United Kingdom in the way it combines an upscale gastronomical approach with a "save the world and my personal body" ethos, all wrapped in a trendy, social, foodservice-heavy atmosphere.

The *Daily Mail* ran a great piece on how British consumers react when they encounter Whole Foods. The piece is entitled "406 Cheeses? They must be off their trolley."

A trolley is a shopping cart in the United Kingdom, and what the *Daily Mail* did was ask both its own food writer, Tom Parker Bowles, a true "foodie," and Julie Critchlow, a housewife and mother who became a minor celebrity in the United Kingdom when she rebelled against a "healthy food" movement in the schools in the United Kingdom by slipping her kids foods they were willing to eat through the school fence, to visit the new Whole Foods and report their impressions.

In addition to being a well-known food columnist, Tom Parker Bowles has quite a pedigree.

He is the son of Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall (formerly Camilla Parker Bowles). HRH Prince Charles, Prince of Wales, was always his godfather and is now his stepfather. Tom's stepbrothers are Prince William and Prince Harry of Wales.

Julie Critchlow seemed overwhelmed by both the large selection and the high prices (please note that the photo below is not of Ms. Critchlow — this photo was supplied by Whole Foods):

As a mum with two kids, I work out my weekly food budget very carefully. I go to my local Morrisons in Rotherham every Thursday and spend £80 to £100. If I was to come here, I reckon my bill would go up to about £400.

It's all very expensive, the choice is ridiculous and so overwhelming I don't know where to start. Why do people need 20 different types of tomatoes?

My husband Christopher, who is a lorry driver, said he thought there were only two types — tinned and fresh. And I think a grape is a grape. You don't need so many different sorts.

Don't get me wrong. In principle, I am a great believer in choice.

For a start, the layout of Whole Foods Market is all biggledy-piggledy. In Morrisons I know exactly where I am, but here they don't, for example, take you from the bread to the cakes, which would make sense. Everything is all mixed up and all over the place.

It's also full of organic and healthy things and I don't believe in organic.

To me it's the same vegetable or fruit whether it has or hasn't had stuff sprayed on it.

At the end of the day you still have to peel and cook it to make it tasty.

The price of organic carrots here is ridiculous — £1.59 for a bag that would cost me 65p in Morrisons. I know all the prices because I buy the same things every week. And as for £1.79 for a Savoy cabbage? You must be kidding!

But I do like the way the fruit and veg have been displayed. The asparagus, which we love, looks great as do the mushrooms, but I've never seen 12 varieties before. I usually buy mine in a plastic container with clingfilm on top for 99p.

My husband loves jalapeño peppers and pod peas, but as for the rest of the vegetables, to be honest I don't know what more than half of them are.

We get through about two dozen eggs a week — I regularly make Steven fried-egg sandwiches for breakfast. I buy free range for £1.19 a dozen, whereas here they are £1.99.

But crikey! The loose eggs are 25p each, which is crazy, and as for the rhea eggs, at £25.99 each — rhea are like small ostriches — it would cost me £100 to feed us four.

I cannot look at the fresh fish stall. I prefer to buy my fish done and dusted and preferably frozen. We will eat salmon but only if it's tinned.

But one of the things I really love are individual meat pies. Here they cost £3.99 each, which is plain ridiculous.

The worst things are the cheese counters. They smell so much it completely puts me off. We just have Cheddar at home, but there must be hundreds of types here. Why do people need so many? And as for that Emmental, it smells like my husband's sweaty socks. I'm interested in seeing it though.

I never believed cheese with holes really existed. I thought you only saw it in Tom and Jerry films. As for all those goat's cheeses, you must be kidding. Who would want to eat something that smelt like a goat?



Photo courtesy of Whole Foods

The selection of wine doesn't interest me either. I am a lager lass.

I only use herbs when they are dried and in packets and I wouldn't buy fancy bread with fruit or vegetables in it — I can't imagine who would — but I do like French sticks, which in Morrisons cost 40p but here are 99p.

Overall, this place is probably OK if you are a professional chef, but I don't think it's any good for working-class mums with kids who make family meals.

I think people will come for a nosey and, if money is no object, they might come back.

But I admit I wouldn't mind having one of those strawberries they hand-dip in chocolate. They look fantastic, but God Almighty, at £1.80 for one, forget it!

Tom Parker Bowles was a little skeptical because his ethos is focused on locally grown and small scale, but he wound up being bowled over by Whole Foods' focus on local product and the interaction it encourages between food, staff and consumer:

I arrived at Whole Foods Market feeling very cynical. I have a problem with the ethos of a company that started off as a hippy store — hey everyone! We care — but is now a huge public company with little to do with small farmers.

Plus there is a lot of nonsense talked about organic food as if merely calling it organic makes it OK, and if you eat it you will look like Kate Moss or be cured of cancer.

Nowadays supermarkets use it as a marketing tool, to enable them to charge huge prices. I also prefer to support small shops and farmers and prefer markets over supermarkets.

I am a simple soul at heart. I like to buy British and seasonal foods.

But as soon as I walked in the door I was very impressed. It was a great joy to see so many British producers given space and although some items are very expensive, there were some great bargains, such as the organic milk at 79p a litre.

It is clever to put fresh bread near the entrance because it gives off a nice smell. The cynic in me realized it was no accident. There were all sorts of bread, such as sour dough bread and pain au levain, at £3.99.

But I couldn't see a plain brown or white loaf. Remarkably, within two minutes, I had caught the New Age hippy ethos and was ready to hug a dolphin and adopt a mung bean.

It is a Disneyland of food where everything is perfect. There are even tendrils that appear every seven minutes to give the vegetables a quick shower.

I wanted to find ingredients for a delicious dinner, and went straight for the Scottish beef at £15.99 per kilo. The only way to get flavour out of beef is to hang it for 14 to 40 days. Here they hang it in-house for 21 days, which is short by my standards, but it looked good and black. The assistant behind the counter was very knowledgeable, which you wouldn't find in most supermarkets.

I was also impressed that all the meat was rated. A five means the animals were kept in five-star accommodation, while one means intensive rearing and was therefore cheaper.

I also wanted a selection of English cheeses and found the very best

you could get. There was Colston Bassett Stilton and Montgomery Cheddar, Lanark Blue, Cornish Yarg and Appleby's Cheshire.

I also spotted a display of Gruyere that had aged 18 months and is about as different from the Gruyere you buy in a supermarket as a Ferrari is to a Mini.

I don't like goat's cheese but I was approached by a man who offered me a hard goat's cheese, which to my amazement I enjoyed.

You are constantly being offered food to taste by the very people who make it, so you can ask them lots of questions. It's a brilliant idea.

Close by was an enormous spread of antipastos. It would make my wife very excited, and no doubt please any mother with a hedge-fund husband who didn't want to cook.

I then passed the fresh-fish counter. It didn't smell at all, which is a sign that the fish is really fresh. I prodded every variety I could reach. Had I done that in Tesco, I would have been escorted out.

Sure enough the flesh bounced straight back every time. It all looked so good I decided against the beef and plumped for John Dory at £20.99 a kilo with some langoustines at a decent £14.99 a kilo.

I was pleased to see that most of the labels said MSC, which means the fish comes from sustainable sources.

I also bought some samphire, which is like skinny asparagus and has just come into season, for £8.99.

There was a whole area for Thai food, including fresh ginger, fresh horseradish and five types of grape-sized aubergine. Do we need

that? Probably not, but it looked delicious.

I spotted some wonderful fresh beetroot at the vegetable section so thought I'd make a beetroot salad. The asparagus was really good quality, too.

I also chose the fresh broad beans and peas. I was cross the peas weren't British as they are just coming into season, but that is really nit picking.

I am also a tomato freak and was delighted to spot Tigerella tomatoes, so called because the markings make them look like a tiger. Most supermarkets turn tomatoes into bland billiard balls, but not here.

For dessert I'd have tiny wild strawberries and British September elderflower ice cream, £4.29 for a punnet of 500ml.

Whole Foods Market is the opposite of the usual supermarket experience mainly because you are encouraged to touch, taste and smell. It might not be for everyone, but it is certainly a place where you can find the very best of British.

Whole Foods is not so much a supermarket as an experience. This is both its strength — it allows it to compete against everyone — and its weakness. Although Whole Foods has helped to change the way America retails and the way Americans think about food, those of its innovations that are scalable are quickly adopted by larger players that price more moderately.

So this one London store will probably be a big success. It may even lead to changes toward more variety, more foodservice and more interaction in other British stores - but it is hard to see it as a rollout across the United Kingdom, much less the continent.

Overall, this place is probably OK if you are a professional chef, but I don't think it's any good for working-class mums with kids who make family meals.

10 TOP Taste Trends

The role of produce on America's menus is growing exponentially.

By

CAROL
M. BAREUTHER, RD

Regional ethnic cuisines. Mind-boggling flavor pairings. A passion for freshness. These are among the trends driving taste innovation on today's restaurant menus.

Dining out is no longer a big deal, says Hudson Riehle, senior vice president of research and information services for the National Restaurant Association (NRA), Washington, D.C. "Americans now spend 47.9 percent of their food budget in restaurants, up from 25 percent a half-century ago."

As a result, consumers are looking for more from their dining experience, says former NRA president and CEO Steven Anderson. "Chefs are keeping a close eye on emerging trends and getting creative with ethnic influences and exotic ingredients."

The trend portends well for the produce industry. In fact, two of the top three items on NRA's December 2006-released *What's Hot and What's Not* list were locally grown produce and organics. The list, compiled from a survey of 1,146 chef-members of the American Culinary Federation, based in St. Augustine, FL, ranked 230 items as 'hot' or 'cool/passé'.

Mark Erickson, director of continuing education for the Culinary Institute of America (CIA), Hyde Park, NY, adds, "There's never been a time more ripe for produce on the menu. This is due to consumers' interest in health and, at the same time, their willingness to discover new foods and new flavors."

Here, then, are 10 top taste trends for food-service operators to consider.

1. WOW — WITHOUT OVERWHELMING

One of the challenges facing chefs today, says Sharon Olson, president of Olson Communications, Inc., the Chicago, IL-based marketing and research company that produces the *Culinary Visions Panel Report*, "is creating menu items that balance customers' desire for the adventurous, while also being familiar enough to be accessible and, of course, full of flavor and something unique."

Photo courtesy of the Idaho Potato Commission: Idaho Potato and Chicken Gumbo

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Photo courtesy of Food Marketing Resources: Pear Quesadilla With Pear Salsa

New taste twists on traditional dishes are the goal of many talented chefs.

According to Joe Wilson, executive chef at Narcoossee's, the regional American seafood restaurant located at Walt Disney World's Grand Floridian Resort & Spa in Lake Buena Vista, FL, "The idea is to use ingredients to punch up flavors, not overwhelm a dish. For example, we make a carrot salad using Nantes carrots, the ones with a small core and sweet flavor. To these we add cumin, ginger and golden raisins. Cumin is the 'something different' ingredient, a taste borrowed from the Middle East, but it's added with a light touch, very subtle. We don't want it to overwhelm the natural sweetness and flavor of the carrots.

"We're doing the same thing with an heirloom tomato salad. Instead of balsamic vinegar, we use port wine and mix it with extra virgin olive oil and fresh herbs such as tarragon and basil — whatever might be available and in season," he continues.

Yet another example, says Wilson, "is when kumquats are in season. We substitute them for oranges to make a marmalade chutney that we serve with a cheese plate. Guests love it, but like the other examples, it's not something way out, not something that the guests have no familiarity with whatsoever."

2. REGIONAL CUISINES

Everyone is always looking for the next great big trend, says CIA's Erickson. "There isn't a single cuisine. Consumers today recognize that there are many interesting flavors found all over the globe, not just in Europe as

it's traditionally been. Regions such as Asia, the Mediterranean and Latin America all have cuisines that are hot today. I think we're seeing a greater drill-down to the authentic cuisines in these regions. For example, instead of Mediterranean in general, we'll see interesting flavors and dishes coming out of Istanbul, Turkey, for example, or Greece."

Indeed, the top five cuisines according to NRA's *What's Hot and What's Not* list, are Pan Asian, Thai, Latin American, Brazilian/Argentinean and Mediterranean.

Susan Boyer, owner of Food Marketing Resources, San Ramon, CA, and foodservice menu development consultant for the Pear Bureau Northwest (PBN), Milwaukie, OR, agrees. "I think global flavors will become more specialized and go deeper. For example, we'll see different regions of Mexico featured, Vietnamese cuisine and Cuban cuisine, for example, instead of just Asian and Latin."

3. AUTHENTIC ASIAN

Interest in Asian-inspired flavors is turning both more unique and more quotidian.

For example, Asian citrus fruits, including Japanese yuzu, Philippine calamansi and Thai Kaffir limes, are lending an exotic taste to sweet and savory dishes on restaurant menus, according to the October 2006 issue of *Menu Watch* from Food Beat, Inc., Wheaton, IL. The December 2006 issue reveals that spicy Korean stews — made with fresh tofu, bits of meat and seafood or vegetables with a raw egg on top — are a growing trend in eateries across Los Angeles.

Asian hot pots and soups are also hitting it big, notes Barbra Colucci, a Newport Beach, CA-based consulting chef who has worked for chains such as Marie Callender's Restaurant and Bakery, Aliso Viejo, CA, and Shakey's USA Inc., Alhambra, CA, and is foodservice menu development chef for PBN. "Lots of different vegetables are being used in these dishes, along with rice noodles and a small amount of meat. They're dishes that are interesting but keep food costs low."

According to Christine Bruhn, PhD, director of the Center for Consumer Research at the University of California (UC), Davis, CA, and a member of the Institute of Food Technologists, Chicago, IL, Thai cuisine "is becoming popular because fewer items are fried. There's less fat, great taste from exotic spices and more healthful fruits and vegetables incorporated into dishes than the customary Chinese cuisine. I recently had lunch at a Thai restaurant and ordered prawns with a sweet red curry sauce and mango. It was delicious."

Asian flavors are also going mainstream. For example, TGI Friday's, based in Carrollton, TX, introduced a new menu item last fall — Crispy Green Bean Fries With Cucumber Wasabi Ranch Dip.

4. LATIN FLAVORS

Nuevo Latino Cuisine, which features flavors inherent in citrus juices, tropical fruits, garlic-ginger marinades and chimichurri sauce, are among menu items popping up more and more on restaurant menus, according to the November 2006 issue of *Food Beat's Menu Watch*.

Liz Mintz, Latino nutrition coalition program manager at Oldways Preservation Trust, Boston, MA, explains, "Chimichurri is the up-and-coming sauce, the new salsa. In place of the traditional basil, some chefs are using parsley or cilantro." Chimichurri is Argentinean in origin and is customarily used as a sauce for grilled meats. Its ingredients includes green herbs, garlic, salt, pepper, onion, paprika, olive oil and sometimes vinegar.

Other Latin flavors gaining in popularity include basil, cilantro, lime zest and jalapeño, says Robert Schueller, director of public relations for Melissa's/World Variety Produce, Los Angeles, CA. Avocados and limes are used both as condiments and in salads, he adds.

Chiles will continue to be big and used in a variety of ways, says consulting chef Colucci. "Rick Bayless, the king of Mexican cuisine, conducted a demonstration recently and did just what a chef should be doing. That is, he used one item in a variety of ways. In this case, he used serrano chiles, which he said he



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Reader Service # 27



loves, and first cut a few in half and sautéed them with garlic, lime juice and olive oil to make a marinade. Then he added some of this mixture to mashed avocados to make guacamole and then he added the rest to vinegar and chopped cilantro to make a salad dressing. One ingredient, three recipes that each taste entirely different.”

Expect to see even more innovation in Latin cuisine.

This spring, the CIA and San Antonio entrepreneur and philanthropist, Kit Goldsbury, announced a \$25 million donation and partnership that will result in the creation of a

new education and research center — the CIA’s Center for Foods of the Americas (CFA). CFA’s goal is to promote Latino diversity in the U.S. foodservice industry. Goldsbury was CEO and chairman of Pace Foods, San Antonio, TX, before selling the company to Campbell Soup Company, Camden, NJ, in 1995.

Of this gift and its potential, CIA president Dr. Tim Ryan, says, “With the Center for Foods of the Americas, the CIA will both increase its impact on the diversity of culinary leaders and further shape the direction of the cuisines enjoyed at the American restaurant table. Latin American cuisines are a rich

source of new food experiences and innovations for our industry.”

5. MEDITERRANEAN

The Mediterranean Diet is making a comeback due to a slew of new health studies, says K. Dunn Gifford, Oldways founder and president. “As a result, we’re seeing more greens, such as kale, watercress and Swiss chard, being used, especially in soups. Roasted asparagus, made with just a little olive oil and lemon juice, is showing up more often on

“Rick Bayless, the king of Mexican cuisine, conducted a demonstration recently and did just what a chef should be doing. That is, he used one item in a variety of ways.”

— **Barbra Colucci**
Consulting chef

menus. Pears and apples are being used in Greek-inspired desserts as well as lemons from the Amalfi Coast due to their intense flavor.”

There is more of a tendency now for authentic ingredients, says Stephen Kalil, president of the Research Chef’s Association, based in Atlanta, GA, and director of culinary innovations for Chili’s Grill & Bar, based in Dallas, TX. “In Italian cuisine, for example, we’re seeing more radicchio and endive, especially as endive now is grown in the United States. Purple asparagus is a more adventurous ingredient. Fennel is making its way into dishes shaved in salads, caramelized and braised. Slow-braised dishes are coming back, especially braised short ribs or lamb shanks in red wine with root vegetables such as carrots, beets, celery root, parsnips and sunchokes. We’re also seeing risotto built around vegetables such as endive, mushrooms or asparagus appearing as a center-of-the-plate item.”

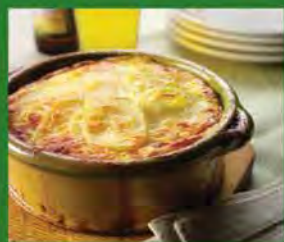
6. PRODUCE WITH A TWIST

The buzz today “is full-flavored produce,” says Gena Berry, owner and founder of Culinary Works, Atlanta, GA.

The CIA’s Erickson agrees. “The produce industry has developed growing, processing and transporting systems to make a variety of produce available to us at a level never known



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Photos courtesy of McCormick: Pictured from left to right Clove and Green Apples, Cumin and Apricot, Thyme and Tangerine

before in the history of mankind — but flavor has been lost in the process. There's room — and a need — to go back to the drawing board and develop systems to insure good-tasting fruits and vegetables, especially items like stone fruit, tomatoes and melons."

Beyond this, says Olson Communication's Olson, "Even when it comes to fresh produce, restaurant patrons are still looking for a bit of a splurge. So you will see luxurious cheese sauces, flavored butters, infused oils, fresh herbs, specialty salts and cracked pepper applied to add flavor. Leading operators grind their own unique spice blends."

Russet potatoes have trended beyond the classic baked with butter and sour cream, says Don Odiorne, vice president of foodser-

vice, Idaho Potato Commission (IPC), Eagle, ID. "One trend I find chefs now embracing with russet potatoes is a more upscale hash, where ingredients such as lobster or crab are combined with fresh herbs, diced or sliced potatoes with the skin on and a variety of mushrooms for a terrific brunch dish. Latkes and potato pancakes are becoming common side dishes for protein items replacing rice, beans or pasta as the preferred starch. Baked potato entrées, such as baked Idaho potatoes with toppings such as shredded BBQ pork or all veggies, are catching on — especially in the winter months — as a lunch item."

Outside-the-box combinations are also trending up, according to UC Davis' Bruhn. "We're seeing novel uses for herbs. Just the

other day I was served a peach pie with fresh basil garnish."

Food Marketing's Boyer adds, "Some of the uncommon ways chefs are incorporating fresh pears into their menus include the California Pizza Kitchen's [based in Los Angeles, CA] pear and gorgonzola pizza. Other restaurants have offered pear quesadillas and a FezBurger — hamburger with fresh pear and feta cheese topping.

"One R&D chef for a national chain told me he viewed pears as the new apple," she claims.

7. HOT FLAVOR PAIRINGS

Research and development (R&D) chefs at McCormick & Company, Inc., Hunt Valley,

WHAT CHEFS WANT

The pressure is on for wider variety, claims Sharon Olson, president of Olson Communications, Inc., Chicago, IL. "Specialty distributors are working the market to provide unique, high-quality ingredients without excessive drop charges. Leading-edge operators in the fine-dining segment are dedicated to local and organic. For high-volume operations, consistency of supply is going to be critical to long-term menu change."

On the other hand, there is little produce that is unavailable in some form, quantity or time slot to chefs today, says Mark Erickson, director of continuing education, Culinary Institute of America, Hyde Park, NY. However, good communication between chefs and suppliers is essential. "This helps make newer items and seasonally available items known so chefs can experiment with them, prepare them and present them in new and novel ways."

Foodservice produce suppliers "need to understand the concept and potential volume needed between an item that will be served in a special, limited-time menu item versus one that is incorporated into a dish that's on a permanent menu of a 1000-plus-unit chain," adds Stephen Kalil, president, Research Chef's Association, Atlanta, GA. "If the volume's not there, the chain needs to know. The larger the chain, the farther the forward planning — sometimes menu changes are made months ahead of time."

To make specialty items more available, he notes, "It's important for suppliers to encourage growers to cultivate fruits and vegetables previously

only available by importation. For example, endive and Italian cauliflower are now being grown in the United States."

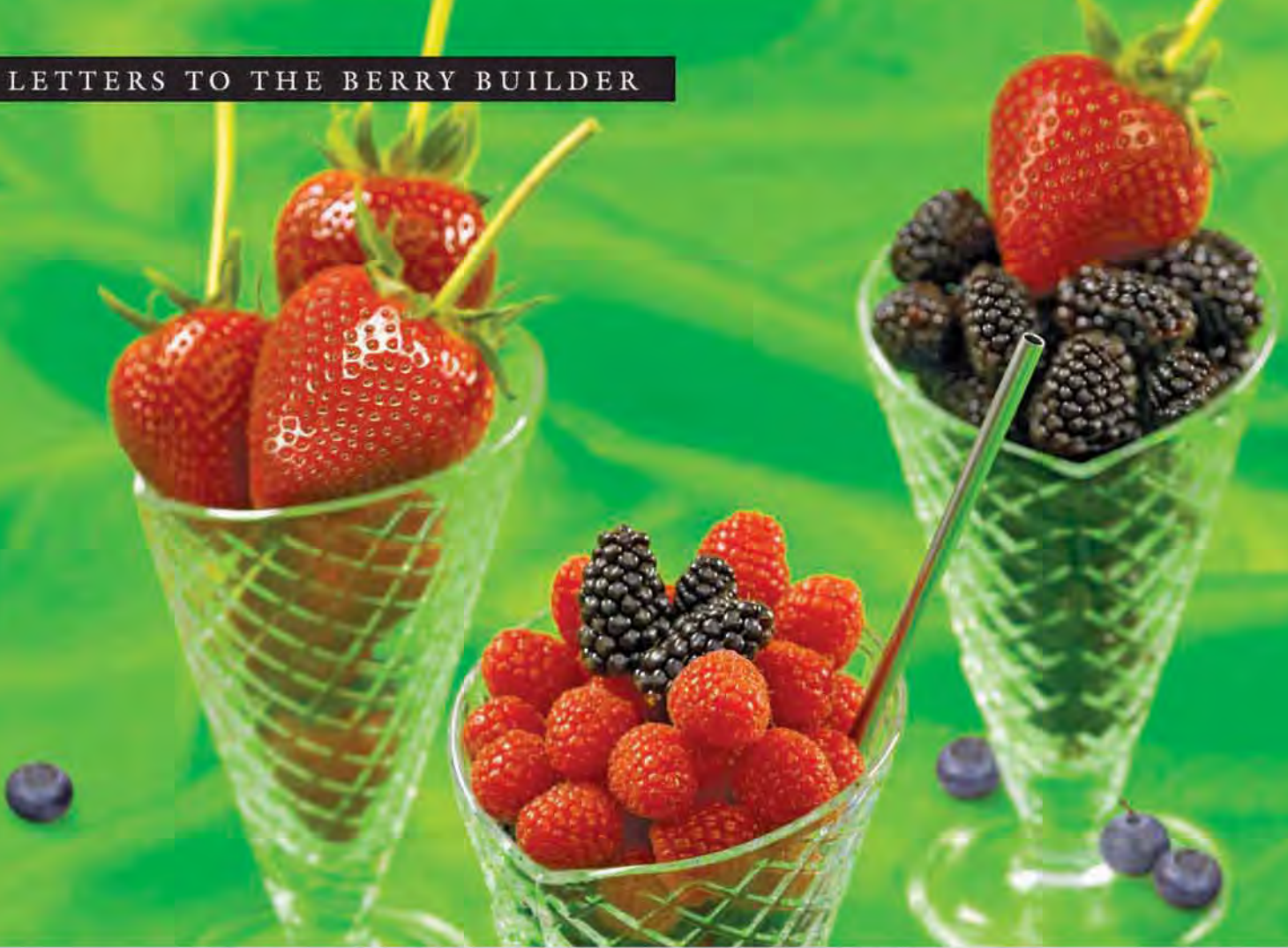
Chefs especially welcome low-labor, high-margin items, including "washed, peeled and diced vegetables. Also, micro greens are big now. They're trendy, add concentrated flavor in a small volume and, because they're micro, they don't have to be chopped," Kalil adds.

Among the services chefs find most helpful from suppliers are tastings or samples.

"Sure, I can look at a chart and see what's available when. But I want to see the product in advance — feel it, touch it, cook with it and see how it reacts," says Barbra Colucci, a Newport Beach, CA-based consulting chef. "All produce houses need to communicate what's coming, the farmers market report, and get out in the field and offer chefs sample boxes."

Sample boxes are integral to menu planning at Narcoossee's, Walt Disney World's Grand Floridian Resort & Spa in Lake Buena Vista, FL, says Joe Wilson, executive chef. "Every week or two, our supplier sends a box with samples of what's new or available — donut peaches, fresh apricots, Brentwood corn. Every week, they also fax or e-mail a list of 70 or 80 specialty produce items and a newsletter that tells us the latest harvest conditions and availability. I put a copy of this on a clipboard in the kitchen so we can all see it, study it and come up with menu ideas together. It's a great source of inspiration."

pb



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The desire for flavorful, healthful, cultural fare is putting more produce on restaurant menus, with organic fruits and vegetables a small but growing part of this trend.

According to the Greenfield, MA-based Organic Trade Association, organic fruits and vegetables represented \$5.3 billion in total sales in 2005, with \$252 million or 5 percent sold through foodservice channels.

Frank McCarthy, vice president of marketing for Albert's Organics, based in Bridgeport, NJ, says, "Our volume of organic produce into foodservice has more than doubled in the last 12 months. This is primarily to college and universities as well as to white tablecloth restaurants."

In the Southeast, says Mitch Blumenthal, president and owner of Global Organic Specialty Source, Inc., Sarasota, FL, "Organic produce is growing in use in certain segments of foodservice, such as high-end hotels, high-end restaurants and caterers. I believe restaurants that have higher budgets and can pass on the higher costs to their clientele are the ones able to incorporate organic items onto their restaurant menus."

Supply increases and more competitive pricing will open up additional foodservice opportunities, says Barbra Colucci, a consulting chef for the Pear Bureau Northwest, Milwaukie, OR. "We'll start to see some of the chains move more in this direction."

Rob Jacobs, owner of Jacobs Farm/Del Cabo,

MD, teamed with some of the nation's hottest chefs, television cooking personalities and cookbook authors to come up with the *McCormick Flavor Forecast 2007*.

Laurie Harrsen, McCormick director of consumer communications, says, "In creating this report, we examined two overarching trends influencing flavor. The first is the ever-expanding breadth of choices, specifically within individual ingredients. Even staples like salt are now available in a diverse palette of flavor, color and texture. Also, global cuisines, particularly those of North Africa, Asia and the Middle East, continue to drive our exploration of new foods and flavors."

In this year's report, McCormick's experts took the forecast in a new direction by forecasting 10 flavor pairings. Spanning sweet, hot, tangy, bitter, sour and everything in between, says Harrsen, "These partners take taste to a whole new dimension. Think of it as yin and yang for the table."

• **Clove and green apple:** fennel slaw, pan-

PRODUCE BLOOMS ON THE MENU

Pescadero, CA, agrees. "Chain restaurants are following the trends in consumer demand, and what they see the white tablecloth chefs doing. They also see Wal-Mart and Costco going organic, so they want to increase their organic offerings."

Organics are already incorporated into a variety of foodservice formats. According to the December 2006 *What's Hot and What's Not* list of the National Restaurant Association, Washington, D.C., from among the fine-dining restaurants that currently serve organic items (more than six out of 10), 52 percent expect higher sales in 2007; 42 percent of casual dining restaurants that serve organic menu items (four out of 10) expect them to grow; and 27 percent of family dining restaurants (three out of 10) report similarly.

Sourcing organic produce has become a lot easier in the past few years.

According to Maureen Royal, director of sales for CF Fresh, Sedro-Woolley, WA, "Whether it's purchasing from local organic farmers, farmers markets or small-, mid- or large-size distributors, the options have become greatly increased."

Bonnie Campbell Poux, owner of Access Organics, Kalispell, MT, agrees. "In order to compete with larger corporate farms, many smaller, regional growers are finding that marketing more directly to restaurants and through farmers markets and CSAs [community supported agriculture] helps them stay in business. Also, this conversation with the chef gives the farmer valuable and positive feedback about what to grow in the future."

Looking to the future, 67 percent of a group of cutting-edge, research and development and instructor chefs surveyed for the 2006 *Culinary Visions Panel Report*, produced by Olson Communications, Inc., Chicago, IL, said the use of organic foods was an 'important' or 'very important' consideration for them in developing menu items or product formulations.

Chefs like organic, says Albert's McCarthy, "because it adds value and a point of difference to their menus."

Flavor is another big attraction, adds Blumenthal. "Organic foods are considered gourmet due to their superior quality and taste. People are willing to pay a little more for more healthful and better tasting foods. Creative chefs can easily play around with the exotic flavors and textures that organic produce offers."

Poux follows up on this flavor theme. "A lot of organic farmers like to experiment with different, non-typical varieties of produce and therefore tend to offer unusual, colorful and extraordinarily flavorful varieties not normally found on an everyday produce list. Also, many organic growers work with heirloom varieties and that excites the chef world."

Currently, says Royal, "Mixed greens have to be the most widely used organic produce item in foodservice."

Tonya Antle, vice president of organic sales, Earthbound Farm, San Juan Bautista, CA, agrees. "Salads are an obvious choice and, I think, a really

easy way to start for operators just getting in to organics. They can feature a salad with organic spring mix on a permanent menu and be assured they can have a steady, year-round supply of a quality product."

This is also important from the labor issue, adds McCarthy. "Operators can buy pre-washed salad greens and have an organic salad on their menu with no added effort."

Beyond salads and salad fixings, "Anything seasonal is the request when chefs order organics," notes Blumenthal. "Talented chefs will work specials into the menus, revolving around the items that are available and affordable. We noticed certain specialty potatoes and unique vegetables such as baby corn, bull's blood beets, specialty beans and, of course, various fresh herbs, are the main requests."

"Smoothies made from organic fruits are also more common on restaurant menus nowadays," he adds.

For year-round use in permanent menu offerings, says Poux, "Organic produce in best supply would be onions, tomatoes, squash, carrots, lettuce, broccoli and cauliflower."

Looking ahead, Antle predicts, "I think chefs want to offer customers what they'd like to eat, and clearly interest in organic food continues to grow. In retail, organics just hit three percent of all retail food sales, a great accomplishment. We're not there in foodservice, though, so there's a lot of opportunity for expansion." **pb**

zabella, salsas, and chutneys; teamed with cooling vegetables, such as jicama and cucumber; a complement to main dishes, like fish, pork, and poultry.

- **Thyme and tangerine:** sauce or glaze for grilled chicken, salmon or shrimp; in vinaigrettes, marinades and desserts, such as sorbets, tiramisu and tarts.

- **Tellicherry black pepper and berry:** berry preserve and pepper-infused reduction as a glaze for lamb, beef or pork; in cream-based dishes and cheeses; or as a dessert sauce — black pepper, mixed berries, red wine, and sugar over ice cream.

- **Sea salt and smoked tea:** a rub for grilled meats, especially ribs, steaks and burgers; as a base for broths and sauces.

- **Lavender and honey:** added to port or Zinfandel as a marinade for lamb or game; an accent to fruits and sauces; in cheesecakes, sorbets, and shortbread.

- **Crystallized ginger and salted pistachio:** in cakes, tarts and cookies as is or

teamed with chocolate; sprinkled on mixed greens; added to stir-fries and rice dishes; blended in a food processor and used as a crust for salmon, halibut, shrimp, chicken or pork, or a topping for yogurt, ice cream or fresh fruit.

- **Cumin and apricot:** stirred into tagine of lamb or chicken; in braised meat dishes, couscous and rice; as a glaze for pork or poultry.

- **Toasted mustard and fennel seeds:** toasted and crushed as crust for pork, shrimp, chicken and lamb; in frittatas, potatoes, meat loaf and casseroles; simmered with chicken, onion and tomatoes.

- **Wasabi and maple:** blended with soy sauce and garlic for new teriyaki sauce; with pork tenderloin or stir-fries; as a glaze for shrimp, ribs, chicken or salmon; as a dipping sauce for plantains, pineapple, melon and other fruits.

- **Caramelized garlic and Riesling vinegar:** in brines and glazes for seafood, meats, fresh slaws and vegetables, including roasted

bell peppers and green beans; in fresh tomato and mozzarella salad.

8. THE FLAVOR OF FRUITS

The trilogy of super fruits — pomegranate, blueberry and açai — is what we see on the horizon in foodservice, says Olson Communication's Olson. "Today, pomegranate is the hot ingredient in everything from elegant sauces to martinis. Even if it seems a bit absurd, as in the martini, consumers just love that halo of health. Açai is the newest to emerge and is probably going to have its biggest impact in specialty beverages. Blueberries are easy to add to almost any menu items because operators are familiar with the fruit and understand its versatility on the menu."

Oldways' Gifford agrees on the berry front. "Berries are a big trend now. Whether blueberries, strawberries, raspberries or blackberries, they appear to be taking a starring role in desserts. No longer are we seeing the fat-, calorie-laden pies with thick crusts. Now,



Photo courtesy of National Strawberry Commission: Strawberry Shrimp Sевичe

berries are being incorporated into a thin crust, no crust or paired with a light sorbet.”

Fruit, specifically 18 varieties of quick-frozen fruits, were the focus of a recipe contest for foodservice operators held last year by the Dole Food Company, Westlake Village, CA. “Chefs could enter recipes in beverage, salsa, entrée or dessert categories,” says Donna Skidmore, director of consumer services. “The winning recipe was a chilled mango soup with caramelized pineapple served with a miniature almond macaroon.

“Other interesting entries were a filet mignon topped with blue cheese and two berries — blueberries and blackberries, and a roasted tomatillo and chile salsa made with cilantro, mango and papaya,” she adds,

Fruit sauces and purées give hearty protein entrées a sweet/savory appeal, explains Olson. “Breakfast is an undeveloped day-part and many of these items are perfect for smoothies and grab-and-go whole-meal beverages.”

9. FRESHNESS

Chefs increasingly are cooking with locally grown produce, fresh herbs, whole grains and grass-fed, free-range poultry and meat, as highlighted by NRA’s *What’s Hot and What’s Not* list.

“Consumers today are much more aware of the carbon footprint issue,” notes CIA’s Erickson. “The produce industry should pay attention to this and develop more seasonal and local sourcing opportunities.”

At Disney World’s Narcoossee’s restaurant, “Seasonal produce plays a big part of our menu specials,” relates Wilson. “There’s green garlic in the spring incorporated into risotto with Parmesan butter. English peas, ramps, wild leeks and rhubarb also in the spring. Heirloom tomatoes are best in July and

August. Florida’s winter citrus season offers so many opportunities — and they’re all locally sourced right in our backyard.”

10. HEALTH

Americans, especially aging boomers who have more disposable income to meet their food needs and often greater health concern, are looking for more flavor and less fat. Ninety-eight percent of restaurant and R&D chefs surveyed by Olson Communications for its 2006 *Culinary Visions Panel Report* agreed consumer desire for healthful foods was ‘very important.’ Eighty-one percent ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ they need to take responsibility for providing customers with healthful menu options. Still, 86 percent ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ customers want to indulge when dining out.

“A lot of authentic cuisines are inherently healthful, but most consumers equate healthful with a lack of flavor. It’s important to promote these cuisines for their exciting flavors, not on their healthfulness,” says CIA’s Erickson

Jonnie Chen, of Doku 15, Toronto, Canada, one of the chefs surveyed for the 2006 *Culinary Visions* report, believes, “Healthful foods will continue to be important and customers will be looking for high-quality produce and lean meats. Also, ethnic cuisine will incorporate more into the health trend.” **pb**



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WAL-MART PRICING STUDY ROUND XIV

Wal-Mart Takes On Canadian Retailers



Our Toronto results show a similar pattern of disengagement from the problem.

BY JIM PREVOR


There is a good chance Wal-Mart will be very successful in Canada.

The results of the 14th iteration of the *PRODUCE BUSINESS Wal-Mart Pricing Report* are in, and we leave the United States for the first time to visit a Wal-Mart Supercenter and its competitors in Toronto, ON, Canada.

Our findings: Despite generous warnings given by Wal-Mart's roll-out across the United States, Canadian supermarkets are, mostly, making the same mistake their U.S. counterparts did.

They are allowing Wal-Mart to establish a reputation as the low-price leader on fresh produce.

There are exceptions, of course, but in general, the



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practice in the United States when Wal-Mart came to town could best be described as “Do nothing until forced to” — certainly on price.

Consumers would visit the Wal-Mart Supercenter and note significantly lower prices. Perhaps the consumers wouldn't shop there regularly — Wal-Mart might have been too far from their home or inconvenient to their office. But with each visit, consumers would notice value.



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Clamshells per tray	6	4
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Tiers per pallet	19	16
Trays per pallet	95	80
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The dynamic was well established. Wal-Mart would open one or two Supercenters in a town. With only a few stores, Wal-Mart was not yet a major competitive threat.

This is similar to the situation in Canada where, after all, Wal-Mart only has seven Supercenters.

If a chain lowered its price points in all its stores to be within shooting distance of Wal-Mart, it would cost the chain a fortune. So in market after market, local retailers did not go after Wal-Mart in pricing and went for the short-term money by continuing to offer their customary line of higher-priced produce.

In the meantime, consumers would visit the Wal-Mart Supercenter and note significantly lower prices. Perhaps the consumers wouldn't shop there regularly — Wal-Mart might have been too far from their home or inconvenient to their office. But with each visit, consumers would notice value.

In time, Wal-Mart built more Supercenters. And by that time, the

Continued on page 36

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Reader Service # 60

Wal-Mart Supercenter vs 4 Chains
Price Comparison – Toronto, Canada
Prices Available To The General Public

Produce Item	How Sold	Wal-Mart Supercenter	A & P	% Over Wal-Mart	Bruno's	% Over Wal-Mart	Loblaws	% Over Wal-Mart	Sobeys	% Over Wal-Mart
Apples — Granny Smith	Lb	\$0.97	\$1.69	74.23%	\$1.69	74.23%	\$1.29	32.99%	\$1.99	105.15%
Apples — Red Delicious	Lb	\$0.97	\$1.69	74.23%	\$1.69	74.23%	\$1.29	32.99%	\$1.69	74.23%
Asparagus	Each	\$2.97	\$3.99	34.34%	\$3.99	34.34%	\$2.99	0.67%	\$3.99	34.34%
Bananas — Yellow	Lb	\$0.47	\$0.69	46.81%	\$0.69	46.81%	\$0.59	25.53%	\$0.59	25.53%
Beans, Green	Lb	\$1.47	\$2.49	69.39%	\$2.99	103.40%	\$1.99	35.37%	\$1.49	1.36%
Blackberries — 5.6 oz Clam	Each	\$2.97	\$4.99	68.01%	\$3.99	34.34%	\$2.99	0.67%	\$3.99	34.34%
Bok Choy	Lb	\$2.16	\$1.99	-7.87%	\$1.99	-7.87%	\$0.79	-63.43%	\$1.29	-40.28%
Broccoli	Lb	\$1.17	\$1.99	70.09%	\$1.49	27.35%	\$1.69	44.44%	\$1.29	10.26%
Cabbage — Green	Each	\$1.27	\$1.99	56.69%	\$1.49	17.32%	\$1.99	56.69%	\$1.79	40.94%
Cantaloupe — Whole	Each	\$2.47	\$2.99	21.05%	\$2.67	8.10%	\$2.99	21.05%	\$2.69	8.91%
Carrots - Whole	Lb	\$0.58	\$0.89	53.45%	\$1.29	122.41%	\$0.69	18.97%	\$0.99	70.69%
Celery	Bunch	\$1.47	\$1.99	35.37%	\$1.99	35.37%	\$1.99	35.37%	\$1.79	21.77%
Cucumbers — English	Each	\$1.07	\$1.49	39.25%	\$1.99	85.98%	\$1.49	39.25%	\$1.29	20.56%
Cucumbers — Regular	Each	\$0.57	\$0.99	73.68%	\$0.99	73.68%	\$0.79	38.60%	\$0.99	73.68%
Dips (296-350 ml)	Each	\$2.47	\$3.49	41.30%	\$3.49	41.30%	\$3.49	41.30%	\$2.99	21.05%
Dressings (350-385 ml)	Each	\$3.77	\$3.99	5.84%	\$3.99	5.84%	\$3.99	5.84%	\$3.49	-7.43%
Eggplant	Lb	\$1.97	\$1.99	1.02%	\$1.88	-4.57%	\$1.89	-4.06%	\$2.99	51.78%
Garlic	Each	\$0.97	\$1.25	28.35%	\$0.89	-8.25%	\$0.99	2.06%	\$1.49	53.61%
Grapefruit — Red	Each	\$0.44	\$1.39	215.91%	\$0.75	69.32%	\$0.99	125.00%	\$1.29	193.18%
Grapes — Green Seedless	Lb	\$2.97	\$3.99	34.34%	\$2.99	0.67%	\$2.99	0.67%	\$3.99	34.34%
Grapes — Red Seedless	Lb	\$1.47	\$2.99	103.40%	\$1.99	35.37%	\$1.99	35.37%	\$2.99	103.40%
Green Onions	Bunch	\$0.47	\$0.89	89.36%	\$0.69	46.81%	\$0.59	25.53%	\$0.99	110.64%
Honeydew — Whole	Each	\$2.97	\$3.99	34.34%	\$3.99	34.34%	\$2.99	0.67%	\$5.99	101.68%
Kiwi	Each	\$0.33	\$0.50	50.76%	\$0.69	109.09%	\$0.33	0.00%	\$0.39	18.18%
Lettuce — Green Leaf	Each	\$0.97	\$1.99	105.15%	\$1.49	53.61%	\$1.29	32.99%	\$1.29	32.99%
Lettuce — Iceberg	Each	\$0.97	\$1.69	74.23%	\$1.49	53.61%	\$2.49	156.70%	\$1.69	74.23%
Lettuce — Romaine	Each	\$0.97	\$1.69	74.23%	\$1.69	74.23%	\$1.29	32.99%	\$1.49	53.61%
Mangos — Red Large	Each	\$0.97	\$1.97	103.09%	\$1.29	32.99%	\$1.29	32.99%	\$0.99	2.06%
Mushrooms — White Packaged	8 oz	\$1.47	\$2.49	69.39%	\$2.29	55.78%	\$2.29	55.78%	\$1.49	1.36%
Onions — Red Bulk	Lb	\$1.97	\$2.49	26.40%	\$2.59	31.47%	\$2.49	26.40%	\$2.49	26.40%
Onions — Sweet Bulk	Lb	\$1.97	\$1.99	1.02%	\$1.89	-4.06%	\$1.99	1.02%	\$1.49	-24.37%
Pears — Bosc	Lb	\$0.97	\$1.69	74.23%	\$1.79	84.54%	\$1.29	32.99%	\$1.79	84.54%
Peppers — Bell Green	Lb	\$1.77	\$2.49	40.68%	\$2.99	68.93%	\$2.49	40.68%	\$2.99	68.93%
Pineapple	Each	\$3.97	\$4.99	25.69%	\$4.99	25.69%	\$4.99	25.69%	\$4.99	25.69%
Potatoes — Red Bulk	Lb	\$1.27	\$1.29	1.57%	\$1.49	17.32%	\$1.49	17.32%	\$1.29	1.57%
Potatoes — White Bulk	Lb	\$1.27	\$1.49	17.32%	\$1.59	25.20%	\$1.49	17.32%	\$1.79	40.94%
Salad — Caesar 10 oz Bag	10 oz	\$3.97	\$3.99	0.50%	\$3.99	0.50%	\$2.99	-24.69%	\$3.79	-4.53%
Salad — Garden 1# Bag	Each	\$2.97	\$2.99	0.67%	\$1.99	-33.00%	\$1.99	-33.00%	\$1.99	-33.00%
Squash — Zucchini	Lb	\$2.97	\$1.99	-33.00%	\$1.59	-46.46%	\$1.49	-49.83%	\$1.49	-49.83%
Tomatoes — Grape Pint	Each	\$2.97	\$3.99	34.34%	\$3.99	34.34%	\$2.99	0.67%	\$3.99	34.34%
Tomatoes — Hothouse	Lb	\$1.47	\$2.49	69.39%	\$2.99	103.40%	\$1.99	35.37%	\$1.49	1.36%
Tomatoes — Roma/Plum	Lb	\$1.27	\$1.99	56.69%	\$2.99	135.43%	\$1.69	33.07%	\$1.79	40.94%
Turnips	Lb	\$0.79	\$0.99	25.32%	\$0.97	22.78%	\$0.69	-12.66%	\$0.79	0.00%
Yams	Lb	\$0.99	\$1.29	30.30%	\$0.98	-1.01%	\$1.29	30.30%	\$0.99	0.00%
Market Basket Total		\$74.35	\$100.30	34.91%	\$95.36	28.25%	\$83.80	12.71%	\$92.56	24.49%

Source: U.S. Marketing Services

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How They Stack Up Against Wal-Mart Supercenter

Region	Store	% over Wal-Mart	Store	% over Wal-Mart	Store	% over Wal-Mart
Connecticut	Super Stop & Shop	.23%	Shaws	.34%	Big Y	.36%
	Harmon's	.2%	Smith's	.6%	Albertson's	.12%
South Florida	Super Target	.22%	Publix	.31%	Winn-Dixie	.52%
Dallas, TX	Albertson's	.23%	Brookshires	.7%	Kroger	.19%
	Neighborhood Market	—1.2%	Tom Thumb	.27%		
Portland, OR	Albertson's	.30%	Fred Meyer	.22%	Haggen	.27%
	Safeway	.37%				
Phoenix, AZ	Albertson's	.22%	Bashas'	.25%	Fry's	.15%
	Safeway	.17%				
Palm Springs, CA	Albertson's	.19%	Jensen's	.60%	Ralphs	.16%
	Vons	.20%				
Detroit, MI	A&P Food Basic	—17%	Farmer Jack	.24%	Kroger	.28%
	Meijer	.3%				
St. Louis, MO	Dierbergs	.22%	Schnucks	.14%		
Houston, TX	HEB	.15%	Kroger	.30%	Fiesta Mart	—0.3%
Atlanta, GA	Harry's	.18%	Ingles	.16%	Kroger	.25%
	Publix	.13%	Target	.3%		
Denver, CO	Albertsons	.16%	King Sooper	.21%	Safeway	.25%
Portland, OR	Albertsons	.32%	Fred Meyer	.21%	QFC	.54%
	Safeway	.30%				
Toronto, Canada	A&P	.35%	Bruno's	.28%	Loblaws	.13%
	Sobeys	.45%				



Continued from page 32

consumers had become predisposed to the notion that Wal-Mart offered good value on fresh produce.

At that point there was always a mad dash to get competitive — but it was usually too late. Only the biggest, strongest chains with the capital to



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reorganize and reformat generally survived.

LOBLAWS COMES CLOSEST TO WAL-MART PRICING

Our Toronto results show a similar pattern of disengagement from the

Our experience has been that in many cases it is not necessary to beat Wal-Mart on pricing. Obviously, many other things matter, but 5 percent is one thing, 10 percent might be possible, but at 34.9 percent, A&P will not be competitive for the great middle class.

problem: All the dollar figures, of course, are in Canadian dollars. (See *Wal-Mart Supercenter vs 4 Chains* on page 34.)

But it is the percentages that are striking. Metro bought A&P's Canadian division and seems to feel no compunction to be competitive.

With a price level almost 35 percent higher than the Wal-Mart Supercenter, it is simply not in the ballpark. In fact, A&P was the second most expensive supermarket we have ever studied compared to Wal-Mart. Only a Winn-Dixie beat it out — and that chain promptly filed for Chapter 11 protection. (See *How They Stack Up Against Wal-Mart Supercenter* on page 36 for previous markets studied.)

Our experience has been that in many cases it is not necessary to beat Wal-Mart on pricing. Obviously, many other things matter, but 5 percent is one thing, 10 percent might be possible, but at 34.9 percent, A&P will not be competitive for the great middle class.



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Neither will Bruno's nor Sobeys, coming in at 28.25 percent and 24.49 percent over Wal-Mart, respectively.

It is hard to understand how these chains can just be indifferent to their consumers, who must start to perceive these chains as high priced.

Only Loblaws has a shot — coming in at 12.71 percent over Wal-Mart's prices, Loblaws is at least approaching a range where superiority in service, convenience, assortment and other factors can compensate for higher prices — although Loblaws should aim to get the differential below 10 percent.

Of course, many retailers successfully co-exist with Wal-Mart. Like Whole Foods, they don't so much compete with Wal-Mart as get out of its way.

But the numbers don't lie. If Canadian supermarkets don't respond more aggressively to remain competitive with Wal-Mart, there will soon be not seven Supercenters but 300.

Forewarned is forearmed. **pb**

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Asian Consumer Market Remains Largely Untapped

Savvy retailers are looking for ways to enter this billion-dollar market.

BY MAURCIA DELEAN HOUCK

The produce industry is growing, thanks in large part to a virtually untapped market — the Asian consumer.

Relying on a diet rich in fresh fruits and vegetables, the Asian consumer has staggering buying power. In Texas alone, Asians contribute nearly \$23 billion a year to the state economy. "Buying power like that can't be ignored," says Charlie Eagle, vice president of business development for Southern Specialties, Pompano Beach, FL.

The average Asian consumer, who outspends most Caucasian Americans by nearly 96 percent on produce alone, spends nearly \$900 a year on fresh fruit and vegetables, he explains. Coupled with a national population growth of nearly 49 percent since 1990, the Asian-American community offers retailers an opportunity to expand produce profits considerably — if they learn how to best serve this growing consumer base.

Tapping into this often overlooked market requires more than just setting up a few Asian-style displays and expanding the fresh produce section of the supermarket, warns Kate Reeb, vice president of marketing for Coast Produce Company in Los Angeles, CA. "You need to really get to know this unique consumer," she stresses. "Look at your customer base, get to know them — their eating patterns, traditions and culture. Reach out to the Asian customer by building a relationship with them and becoming part of their community."

Information from all the interviewees indicates the main produce customer in an Asian-American household is older (often a grandparent), a daily shopper, educated and higher-income — the average annual Asian household

income exceeds \$75,000. This shopper prefers fresh produce and wants to choose individual produce items by hand, rarely purchasing prepackaged food.

Retailers must keep in mind, according to industry leaders, that shopping for produce is a highly personal experience for Asians. It is not about running to the store to pick up a few things for dinner. It is about feeling comfortable, meeting with friends and going on an outing. "Shopping is a social event for the Asian community," says Reeb. "They don't want to feel as if they've been an afterthought in your marketing practices." They are extremely loyal customers and as such, expect the respect and interest from the retailer.

Traditional older Asian shoppers are not just looking for food; they are seeking an experience. They go to the supermarket to meet with friends, socialize and keep up to date on community events and world news. It is not uncommon to see a group of older men talking outside while the women take their time inside the store shopping and talking.

According to Randy Akahoshi, produce specialist for MCL Distributing, Los Angeles, CA, most Asian consumers prefer to frequent a small, local specialty shop run by members of their own community. "These shop owners know the community. They know the traditions, the culture and the eating habits of their customers, and they understand the Asian consumers' need to feel at home within the store environment and the processes they use to choose the fresh fruits and vegetables that they will feed their family," he explains.

It does not matter if the ethnic-owned shop costs more, he adds. These consumers are willing to pay more for the environment and selection they crave. "There is a purpose to everything they purchase," he explains. "It needs to look a certain way, feel a certain way, smell and taste a certain way."

Asians choose their fruits and vegetables on a daily basis. Fresh is not just key — it is essential. "They want large displays that showcase big beautiful produce," he says.

Even the way produce is presented and handled



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Increased Interest In Indian Cuisine Gives Produce Sales A Surge

Although the Asian-Indian market is the fastest-growing niche in the Asian marketplace, it is often overlooked. Yet with 2.2 million Asian-Indian consumers seeking retailers who will tailor produce lines to their diet needs and tastes, the opportunity for increased retail sales is tremendous.

In addition, the increased popularity of Indian cuisine — both within the Asian-Indian community and the general populace — is giving produce retailers a reason to add Indian menu ingredients to store shelves. Fresh produce sales are on the rise in areas with high Asian-Indian populations, due largely to the Indian diet, which relies heavily on fresh vegetables for its main dishes.

The key to maintaining these higher sales, according to industry analysts, is the retailer's ability to carry a full line of standard Indian products and ingredients, a strong focus on offering more variety in the four or five mainstay produce items needed for most Indian recipes, and learning the crossover opportunities of Indian cuisine can have with other Asian produce staples.

"I would highly suggest that retailers consider hiring a produce associate from within this ethnic community," advises Randy Akahoshi, produce specialist, MCL Distributing, Los Angeles, CA. "Unless you know the culture and the produce ingredients first-hand, you don't really know what crossover prod-

ucts you can suggest as substitutions. In addition, an ethnic produce associate can better guide the American consumer through the produce choices of Indian cuisine."

Charlie Eagle, vice president of business development, Southern Specialties, Pompano Beach, FL, agrees targeting marketing efforts to reach a specific audience can better help a retailer enter this new market. "The Indian diet can be considerably different than, say, a Japanese or Chinese diet. Retailers can enjoy a lift in sales if they take the time to find out the subcultures of each Asian marketing group, such as Asian-Indians, and target their produce offerings and marketing strategies more toward them."

When it comes to selling more fresh fruit to the Asian-Indian consumer, Wendy McManus, director of marketing, National Mango Board (NMB), Orlando, FL, stresses the importance of understanding the differences between the Asian culture and the American one. "While Americans tend to prefer a very ripe, sweet piece of fruit, many Asian recipes use a greener, fleshier and tarter mango. This can be a very important nuance for retailers to understand when stocking fresh mangos in their produce section."

The key to tapping this relatively forgotten market, says Eagle, is a willingness to learn what the Asian Indian consumer wants — and giving it to them. **pb**

can make a difference. These consumers must feel they are not picking just a piece of produce but rather they are choosing the exact piece that was meant for them. "It's a very personalized and thought-out procedure," MCL's Akahoshi contends.

A retailer's failure to acknowledge ethnic variances and expectations can mean the difference between being embraced by Asian consumers and being left by the wayside, industry experts contend.

"The Asian customer is extremely loyal. They do not go from store to store in the same way as an average American customer would, looking for good produce in one, the best meats in another or a better sale in a third," says Akahoshi. "Once they find a store that offers them good variety, freshness and value, they will return again and again, even if it doesn't have exactly what they're looking for on one particular day."

It can be difficult for new retailers to gain acceptance among some Asian communities, but there is growth potential for those willing to be patient, especially in regions

without a wide variety of specialty stores, stresses Max Matsuura, export sales manager, Bonipak Produce Co., Santa Maria, CA. "Often in smaller market regions, specialty stores aren't available and the larger supermarkets don't carry the variety the Asian is looking for or the products aren't as fresh as they'd like. If a retailer in these areas can take the time to find out what the customer really wants, it has an opportunity to build a strong relationship with the entire Asian community in its area for years to come."

Third-generation Asian customers are more likely to shop at traditional supermarkets than their parents or grandparents, if the stores offer the products they have come to rely on from the specialty shops. Third-generation consumers will shop at major grocery outlets, but only if they offer the same ingredients, products and produce found at ethnic shops — good news for retailers hoping to break into this lucrative market, according to information Southern Specialties' Eagle gathered at the 2006 Produce Marketing Association (PMA), Newark, DE,

Retail Solutions Conference from Saul Gitlin, executive vice president of strategic marketing, Kang & Lee Advertising, New York, NY.

Retailers must take the time to understand their target audience. A typical failure of the produce industry, as well as many traditional retailers, says Eagle, is assuming all Asians eat and shop alike. "That is absolutely not the case at all," he stresses. "We are a marketing entity that has lost track of the fact that the Asian market is made up of a variety of groups: Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese. Of the 12 million Asians living in America today, only 2½ million are Chinese, yet most marketing campaigns target this group alone.

"We have to try to cater to all of these groups and their individual tastes, buying needs, culture and food preferences as an industry if we hope to reach the full profit potential this market offers," he continues.

WHAT ASIAN CONSUMERS WANT AND EXPECT

Once a retailer has figured out which Asian consumer base it wants to target, its next step is figuring out how to best meet that particular group's produce needs.

"On the whole, Asians want big, beautiful fruits and vegetable," stresses Coast's Reeb. "They want produce that looks impressive and tastes even better."

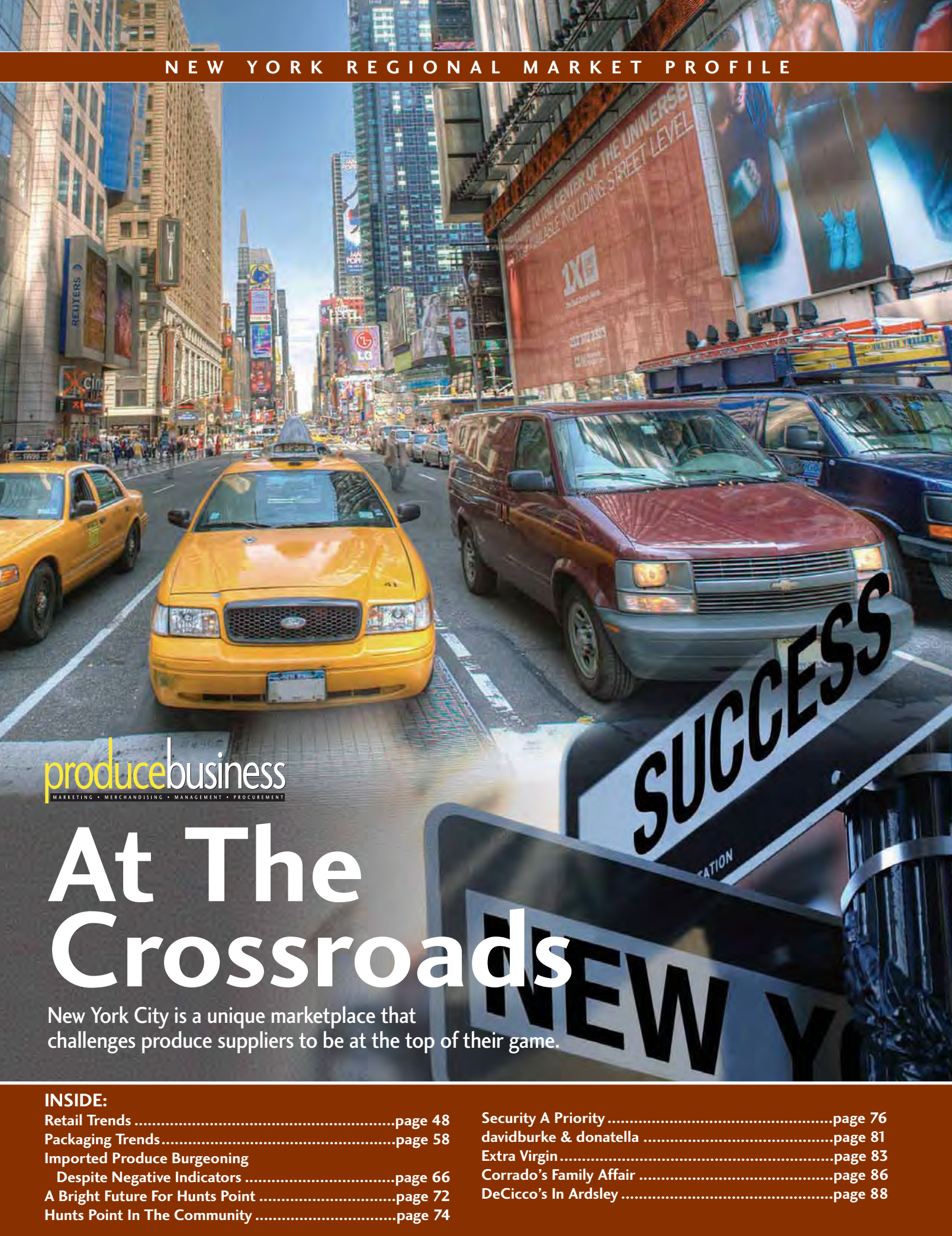
"Intensity, too, is very important," adds Akahoshi. "Asian consumers are looking for a lot of color, a lot of texture, and big sizes in their fruits and vegetables."

Asians give fruit as a gift, so it must be beautiful, explains Reeb. "Fruit is a huge gift market among the Asians. They love to give fruit for special occasions and holidays, making size and color even more important."

Variety and freshness are also key, says Akahoshi. "Bringing in a large selection of exotic fruits, in addition to more greens than a grocer would traditionally carry, is going to create a lot more excitement among the Asian community."

Reeb agrees. "Expand your offerings to include a large variety of apples, pears, mangos and greens — lots of greens. Asian consumers want to have a lot of fresh, beautiful produce to choose from. Give them large, diverse displays and they'll come back."

Many retailers overlook seasonal specialties. "Asians love hearty soups in winter with lots of okra and bitter melons, but in summer it's all about light and healthful eating with plenty of stir-fried and steamed vegetables," says Akahoshi. "They love all types of fresh fruit from all over the world — apples, pears, citrus, mangos, melons and a host of other exotics — and will buy anything with a lot of color and flavor." **pb**



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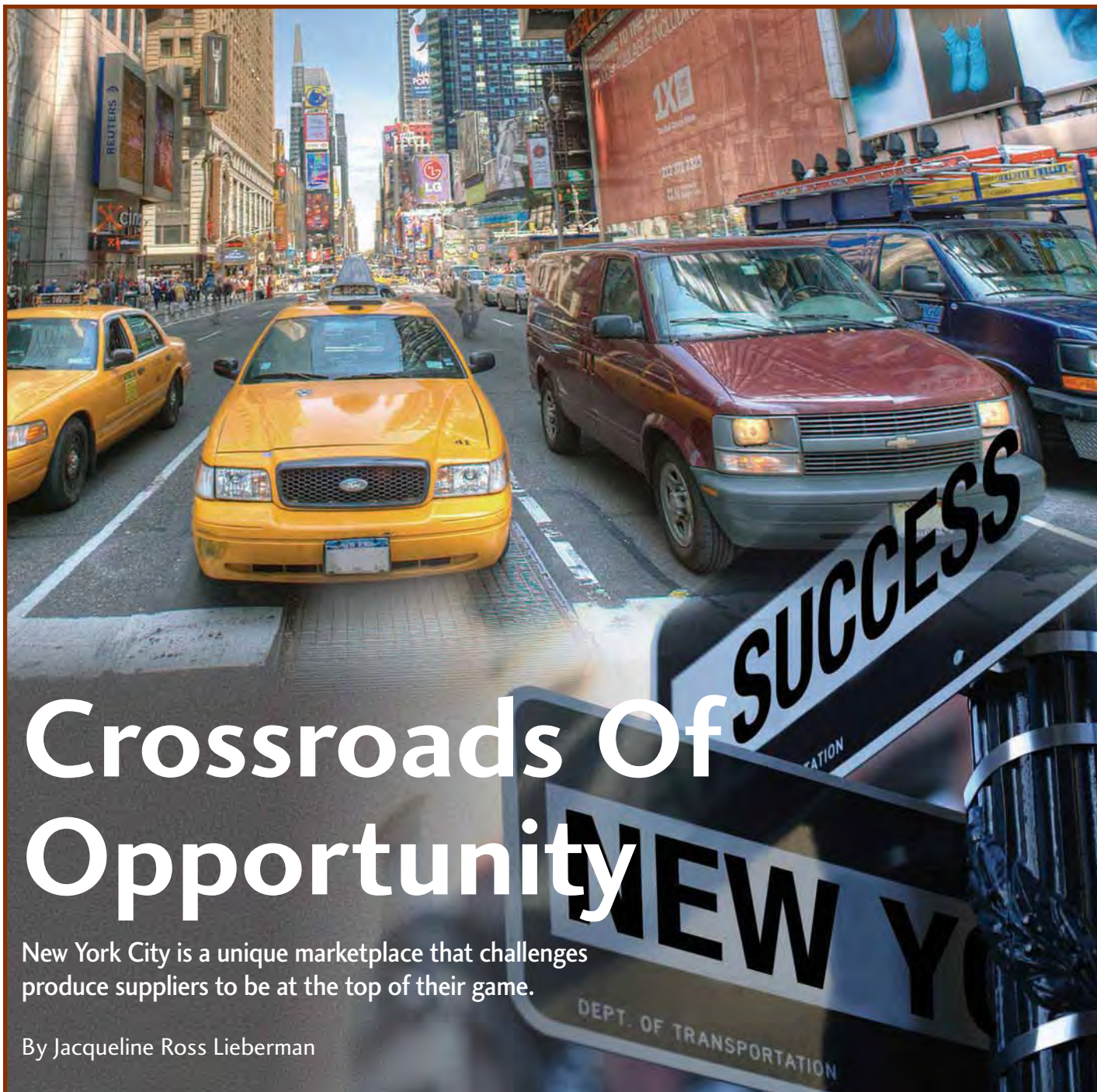
At The Crossroads

New York City is a unique marketplace that challenges produce suppliers to be at the top of their game.

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Crossroads Of Opportunity

New York City is a unique marketplace that challenges produce suppliers to be at the top of their game.

By Jacqueline Ross Lieberman

THE NEW YORK MARKETPLACE IS ONE OF THE LARGEST AND MOST DIVERSE IN THE WORLD. "IT IS ONE OF THE BIGGEST OUTLETS IN THE COUNTRY," SAYS ROBERT GOLDSTEIN, PRESIDENT AND OWNER, GENPRO INC., RUTHERFORD, NJ, TRANSPORTATION PROVIDERS SPECIALIZING IN PERISHABLE FREIGHT. "WE SERVICE IT DAY-IN AND DAY-OUT."

And if Times Square is often referred to as the crossroads of the world, then the Hunts Point Terminal Market in the Bronx, NY, is the crossroads of the produce business.

"It's the biggest wholesale market in the world for produce," says Noah Barnes, vice president, Capay Organic, Capay, CA, growers of organic produce. "For anyone in the produce industry, it's kind of like going to Mecca."

"Our markets affect FOBs everywhere," claims Matthew D'Arrigo, co-president of the Hunts Point Terminal Produce Cooperative Association and vice president of D'Arrigo Brothers Co. of New York, Inc., located at the Hunts Point Market. A bad day for New York means a bad day in other markets. "It's the major spot market for the country."

Although stores that buy from shippers make their deals long before shipments arrive, "There's an oversupply and an undersupply happening every day," says D'Arrigo. When the supply is high, wholesalers buy at a low price. When that happens, for example, "We will then be cheaper, and the single guy on 41st Street will get cheaper green peppers than Pathmark."

When the supply is low, large retailers often turn to Hunts Point to make up for what did not arrive from shippers. "It's very natural," he continues. "We're a pressure gauge — a release point."



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(Left to right) Donyella Todaro-Bierman, Gary Henkus, and Stephen Bukowski of Target Interstate Systems, Inc.



(Left to right) Steve Katzman and Mario Andreani of S. Katzman Produce



(Left to right) Matthew D'Arrigo of D'Arrigo Brothers Company of New York, Inc., Sal Vacca of A.J. Trucco, and Paul D'Arrigo of D'Arrigo Brothers Company of New York, Inc.

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Hunts Point is “a natural dumping ground” when the market is flooded with an item, according to Steve Katzman, president, S. Katzman Produce, Katzman Berry Corp. and S. Katzman Produce East, Inc., all located at the Hunts Point Market.

Smaller stores often find ways to compete with larger chains by getting... better prices at Hunts Point.

In some cases, merchants at Hunts Point buy produce that was rejected by a chain for one reason or another. “No matter what it is, you can usually find someone who wants it,” says Katzman. For example, if an item has only about a day’s shelf life, “You can sell something to be eaten right away.”

Katzman tells of a store that planned to do a big strawberry promotion. When it did not receive as many strawberries as expected, Katzman — who was able to procure a large shipment of blackberries — sold the store blackberries at a good price, which it

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RETAIL TRENDS

New Yorkers love produce, and retailers take that into account. “We like Stew Leonard’s,” says David Blumberg, president, Merex Food Corp. The Connecticut-based retailer has a store in Yonkers, NY, in addition to one in Danbury, CT, and one in Norwalk, Ct. “Their displays are so beautiful. They’re narrow and they’re deep. They move a lot of quantities.”

Stew Leonard’s also carries a large percentage of local produce when it is available. “It’s savvy to put on a sign that says ‘local’ to get people to buy their stuff, instead of going to a greenmarket,” according to Andrew Gurda, manager, A. Gurda Produce, Inc., Middletown, NY.

Smart retailers cater to consumer trends. “There seems to be a trend toward more natural products and conveniently packaged products,” according to Joseph Casa, president, Harbor View Foods, Inc., Mt. Sinai, NY, a broker of Long Island-grown produce to chain supermarkets. “Take basil – it used to be you bought a bunch of basil. Now you buy those clamshells. We’ve all gotten a little spoiled.”

“Retailers are carrying a more diverse array of items. And I see organic items continue to increase,” comments Paul Auerbach, president, Maurice A. Auerbach, Inc., South Hackensack, NJ. “I see in different supermarkets both a return to bulk and a return to packaging. A lot of the local specialty guys like a lot of bulk with big displays.”

Overall, produce departments are becoming more important in New York. “I think the produce departments have become larger and larger. The world has become aware of eating *5-A-Day* and being fit. People are more aware of going to the gym. Produce is part of the lifestyle of today,” observes Roni Okun, president, Morris Okun, Inc., at the Hunts Point Market. “I see produce departments getting physically larger, as well as the number of varieties they carry. Instead of one variety of tomatoes, they handle six varieties. Organics are getting larger. All sorts of lettuces – Bibb, red leaf, green leaf.”

Many retailers are working with suppliers to sell more produce with promotions and in-store demonstrations. “We do a lot of work with marketing. We do a lot of cooking demonstrations with our products,” says Auerbach.

Much of New York City is made up of small communities that have come to rely upon mom-and-pop stores and independent

restaurants. Because of this, “The Wal-Marts and big chain stores will always have difficulty here,” says Sam Zappala, co-owner, Empire Fresh-Cuts LLC, Oswego, NY. His recommendation to retailers is to make the store fit the community, not the other way around. “Don’t try to change what a community has created.”

Traditional retail stores are seeing more competition from farmers markets. “This year there will be 83 retail farmers markets in the city’s five boroughs,” reports Bob Lewis, Brooklyn, NY-based chief marketing representative, New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYS DAM), Albany, NY. “The first market was developed in 1976 and the number has doubled in the last 10 years. Approximately 200 small-scale farmers, the majority from New York state, participate. Most of the markets operate one day a week in open-air settings, such as parks and plazas, during the local harvest season of June through November. Some operate year-round as a result of farmers and producers with value-added dairy, meat, poultry, wine and horticulture products being available in addition to fruit and vegetables from storage.”

Lewis believes farmers markets present produce in a visually and socially appealing setting. “The busy, open marketplace attracts people as it offers high quality, taste and the opportunity to speak to the actual producer,” he explains. “The markets are also the venue for the operation of the WIC [Women, Infants and Children] and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP), which provides women, children and seniors with \$20 to \$24 in New York state Farmers Market Checks to spend at the markets. This program – now in its 20th year – is the largest in the United States and has generated new awareness of the benefits of fresh products by many low-income families. It includes on-site cooking demos that provide consumers with simple recipes as well as guidance in selection and preparation.”

Unlike at many markets around the country, the markets allow New Yorkers to use their electronic benefits transfer (used in place of food stamps) to buy produce at farmers markets. “The department pioneered the Farmers Market Wireless EBT [Electronic Benefits Transfer] Program, which provides farmers and markets with wireless terminals that can accept the Food Stamp/EBT Card,” says Lewis. “This project has received support from New York City to expand the number of terminals operating and also accept credit and debit cards for farmers market produce.”

pb

promoted instead. “They took an opportunity and they ran with it — and they were happy.”

Smaller stores often find ways to compete with larger chains by getting these better prices at Hunts Point.

Because it relies on supply and demand, “The market can be very much more expensive than us. And it can be much cheaper,” says David Blumberg, CEO, Merex Food Corp, Yonkers, NY, an importer and re-packer of specialty fruits and vegetables that

sells to A&J Produce at Hunts Point.

“I think the No. 1 reason we’re such a big market is the independent retailer in New York City,” according to D’Arrigo of D’Arrigo Bros. He sites independent greengrocers and independent restaurants as the two biggest customers of the market.

“Independents saved the market in the late ‘80s when the supermarkets almost all pulled out,” relates John Garcia, president, Krisp-Pak Sales Corp., Hunts Point Market. When Korean immigrants first began open-

ing independent produce shops in New York, not everyone realized how big an impact they would have on the market. Garcia remembers when Korean grocers first began buying at Hunts Point. “When they walked the platform, they weren’t greeted as the saviors of the market at the time. The traditional market man selling in the ‘70s had his trade established already. The Korean buyer was like a small, unimportant guy.”

Still, he was not about to let the opportunity slip by. “I didn’t have any customers,”

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Carlos Garcia of Krisp-Pak Sales Corp. (at right) and a buyer on the Market



John Garcia of Krisp-Pak Sales Corp.



Richard Cochran and Mike Cochran of Robert T. Cochran & Co., Inc.

Garcia recalls, so he began selling mushrooms to these independent buyers. "I worked on making the Koreans my customers. I was respectful to them. I went to picnics and parties they gave. I went to restaurants with them. I attended their meetings. By 1978, I was the king of the Korean mushroom sellers." Many of those same customers still buy their mushrooms, as well as other vegetables, from Krisp-Pak.

Times have changed since the '70s. In the past, Korean storeowners often came to the market to buy as individuals. These days,

says Garcia, between 15 and 20 delivery services with eight to 10 trucks each buy for these independent stores. "Very few Koreans come in for their own stores," he notes.

No Place Like New York

Many of the produce companies in New York have been family-owned for generations. "Our roots started in the early '20s with my grandfather as a pushcart peddler," explains Joel Fierman, president, Joseph Fierman & Son, Inc, a full-line distributor of fruits and vegetables.

"My grandparents on both sides of my family worked in the produce business," says Joey Russo, A Trading, importers, growers, shippers and distributors of fruit and vegetables in Blauvelt, NY.

Many in the business tell stories of having grown up around produce. Mario Andreani, general manager, S. Katzman Produce, was just seven years old when he began working at a retail produce store after school. "I would stand on a milk box to reach the register," he remembers.

Continued on page 54

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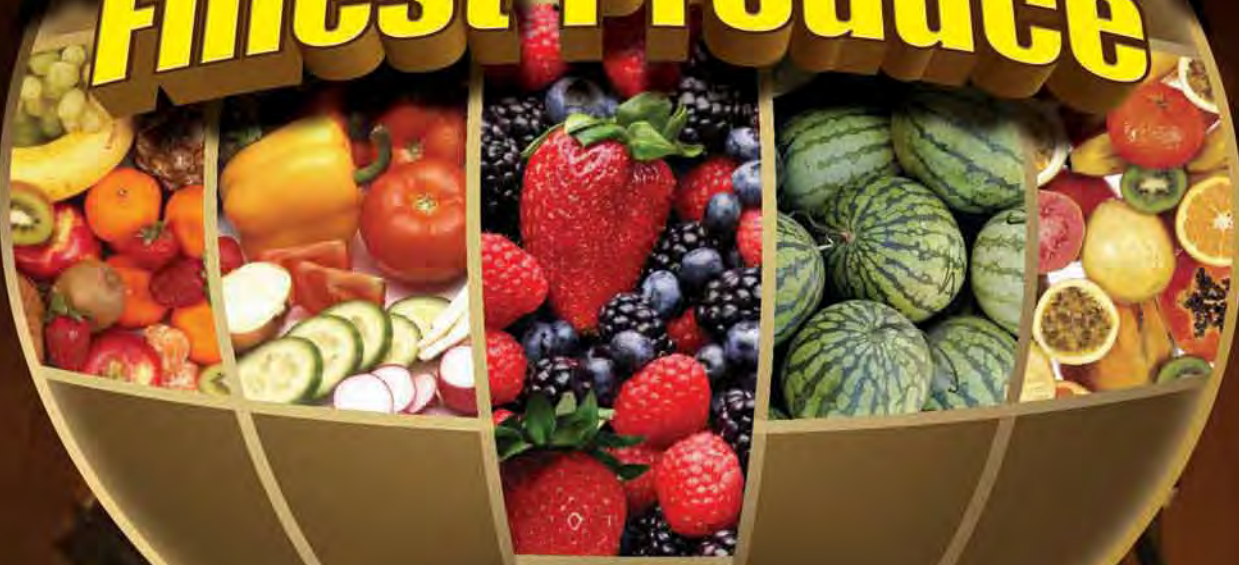
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Kristen Cerniglia of D'Arrigo Food Service, Inc.



(Left to right) Jimmy Granata of E. Armata Produce, Harris Mercier of Krisp-Pak, Dena Solis of Nathel & Nathel and Ralph Comunale of E. Armata

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"I have really very young memories of going with my father to his produce company in Atlanta. I loved the setting. I thought it was so cool," explains Kristen Cerniglia, who recently moved to New York and is now a sales representative for D'Arrigo Food Service, Inc. "It's in my blood, I guess."

Once people begin working in the produce industry and get involved in its fast pace, it is hard to quit. "New York is an exciting market to do business in," adds Russo.

New York's demographic makeup continues to evolve. "We have a real European and even Mediterranean, African and ex-Soviet Republic flavor going on here," says D'Arrigo Brothers' D'Arrigo.

In New York, "We have something for everyone," says Roni Okun, director, Morris Okun, Inc., a Hunts Point wholesaler.

"You have your Dominicans who do delivery for supermarkets for outlying Hispanic areas," notes Krisp-Pak's Garcia. "You have your Arabs — there's a core group of Jordanians and Lebanese. And there are Indians and Pakistanis."

In an area such as New York City, there are millions of people who are in and out of the city everyday and who count on fresh fruit and vegetables to be delivered daily, says Russo.

Sam Zappala, co-owner, Empire Fresh-Cuts LLC, Oswego, NY, which processes New York state onions, agrees. "They want to buy their food everyday. They don't want to buy a can that was made three months ago."

Because of the diverse population, specialty items are important to New Yorkers. "What's considered a specialty in Iowa is common in New York. We have such a tremendous mixture of ethnicity here," explains Merex's Blumberg.

Produce companies find it imperative to respond to the dynamic changes in culture

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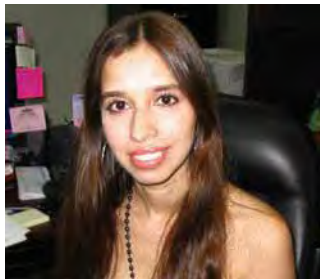


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as immigrants change the face of New York. In recent years, that has meant several companies have begun carrying more bok choy and less horseradish.

"New population groups include many Mexicans who are interested in certain items," reports Bob Lewis, chief marketing representative of the Brooklyn, NY-office of the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM), based in Albany, NY. "We have facilitated establishment of the New Farmer Development Project by the Council on the Environment of New York City and Cornell Cooperative Extension, which has helped around a

dozen former farmers from Mexico, Central America and South America, as well as come from Caribbean countries, become new farmers in the New York region. These farmers are producing new products like papalo, pipiche, alache, squash blossoms and calaloo that are in high demand in certain ethnic neighborhoods."

Some items simply become more or less popular over time. Looking back, D'Arrigo Brothers' D'Arrigo notes that celery is not the hot seller it once was. On the other hand, asparagus is much more popular. And, he says, "Certain lettuces are on their way out. It's really very, very subtle. You

don't notice it happening. There's a constant change from year to year in what we sell and how much we sell."

Upscale Niche

New York is home to many upscale restaurants and markets. "It's the only place in the world where you will find someone to pay the air freight to buy a high-quality item," notes Barnes of Capay Organic, which ships organic heirloom tomatoes overnight to Eli & Ali's Love Tomatoes, Brooklyn, NY. "New Yorkers know quality."

"It's one of the few markets where the prices don't matter," agrees Katzman of S.

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Katzman Produce. "The upscale clientele drives the prices for these items," such as stemmed strawberries that are sold to shops to be dipped in chocolate and sold for several dollars apiece.

Jeffrey Schwartz, vice president, Maurice A. Auerbach, Inc., South Hackensack, NJ, purveyors of bulk and packaged produce, including garlic, asparagus, horseradish, pearl onions, frisée, radicchio, rhubarb and baby potatoes, agrees upscale restaurants

and supermarkets are often willing to ignore prices. "They're always looking for new and exciting things, and cost is often no object. They want their salads and prepared dishes to be sexy."

"I definitely see an eye toward quality in New York," says Paul Auerbach, president, Maurice A. Auerbach, Inc. "Even the more budget retailers want more quality produce. I see an increase in the quality of all things in this market in general."

"It's challenging and exciting. You always have to be a step ahead," says Jeffrey Ornstein, owner, Eli & Ali's.

"Items have to be new," says Peter Kroner, Ornstein's partner. "They have to be interesting."

Many items that were hot just a few years ago have all but disappeared from New York's marketplace. "There are things that are down-trending," says Merex's Blumberg, such as decorative items — "things that look

PACKAGING TRENDS

"I believe in added-value retail packaging," says Nick Pacia, vice president of A.J. Trucco, Hunts Point, which re-packs items such as kiwi and chestnuts. "This year is the first time we're doing organic in a package. We're offering added-value products, new items, high-color packaging with recipes on them." Well-known chef Tony Merola is developing recipes, such as chestnut pudding and chestnut hummus, to place on packages of the company's chestnuts.

Because of the packaging, Trucco's brands — including KiwiStar and GrapeStar — are gaining a strong retail position, according to Pacia. "Twenty percent of the FOB sales are value-added packaging. It's less labor intensive for the retailers. It's easy for scanning packages. It's easier for the consumer to pick up and go home. There's less shrink."

Packaging produce is nothing new, of course. John Garcia, president, Krisp-Pak Sales Corp., Hunts Point, says his mother Millie was one of the first to offer a value-added produce item — bagged spinach — in 1946. (Editor's note: Please see *Blast From The Past* on page 142.) "It had a very good reception in the New York area. We delivered to all the chain stores on a daily basis.

"All that technology wasn't available until the '50s, '60s and '70s. Nevertheless, there was a continuing demand for it. Everyone loved the convenience of it. It was much easier to use our cello-packed spinach than to buy the raw product," according to Garcia. Later, Millie would come up with bagged parsnips and other staple items. "We stayed regional, of course. Most regional packers stayed regional. It didn't go national until the late '90s when the California packers started packing in cello. With them came the diversity of packing that it's evolved into, with the Caesar salad in the pack and everything else. Now they're cut-

ting up cantaloupe, slices of apples, slices of onions and things like that." Krisp-Pak still sells packaged produce, although the packaging is done off-site.

Busy New Yorkers love the convenience of washed, cut produce. Packaging also cuts back on safety concerns. "You can trace the bag back if there's any type of problem," Pacia notes.

Packages of Trucco's GrapeStar muscato grapes include information about the variety. "That's very important to get the consumer to buy the grape," explains Pacia. "The more information you have for the consumer, the better."

While Merex Food Corp., Yonkers, NY, is now using modified atmosphere bags to give produce longer shelf life, CEO David Blumberg believes, "It's not so much a matter of technology as practices." For example, he adds, "We're trying to give the customer the amount they desire." For most New Yorkers, that means a smaller package than was previously sold. Merex also provides two recipes on each of its Bon Campo packages — one to serve hot and one to serve cold. "The line sells because people like the recipes."

Recipes can turn a packaged item into a value-added item, explains Peter Kroner, partner, Eli & Ali's Love Tomatoes. "Consumers like the ingredient lists. They love recipes. They like country of origin. They like dating. And that's all stuff that we're going to apply to our packaging."

Eli & Ali's is also looking to add value with biodegradable packaging. "It's a good selling point, and it's good for the environment," says Ornstein.

"People who are true to organics are going to look for that packaging," according to Kroner.

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(From left to right) Peter Kroner, Jeff Ornstein and Art Hernandez of Eli & Ali's Love Tomatoes; Noah Barnes of Capay Organic, San Francisco, CA

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kind of cool but don't really eat good."

Some New Yorkers are discovering produce that others have enjoyed for years. Sales of kiwi are up 40 percent from last year, reports Nick Pacia, vice president, A.J. Trucco, importers, distributors and wholesalers of dried fruit, nuts and fresh produce at Hunts Point.

"This industry is unique in that an item will be in vogue, then it will be out of style. Then it might come back again."

**— Peter Kroner
Eli & Ali's Love Tomatoes**

Cilantro, too, has become a big item. "Ten years ago, I probably wouldn't know what that was," notes Phillip Schmidt, president, Philip A. Schmidt & Son Farms, Inc., Riverhead, NY, growers of local produce, including cilantro.

"This industry is unique in that an item will be in vogue, then it will be out of style. Then it might come back again," notes Kroner of Eli & Ali's.

Overall, imported items are becoming more important. "We're going to start bring-

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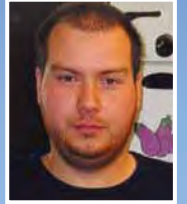
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ing garlic from Argentina and Chile," says Nir Dubnikov, sales, Top Katz LLC, fruit and vegetable brokers at Hunts Point. "Onions from Chile. Imports are the future for us."

According to Auerbach, imports are extremely important to Maurice A. Auerbach, especially garlic. "We're the largest importer of Argentinean garlic in the United States," he says. By importing from South America, he is able to supply fresh garlic when it is unavailable from the United States. "The harvest is in November, December, and the sales season is January through July. The American crop comes out of the ground in June, July. It's basically the opposite."

Imports are also hot for another reason. "New York has so many different cultures in one. It's so important to have their products imported here," adds Kroner.

"You have a large mix of ethnic holidays," notes Auerbach. "You get a lot of holiday business on specialty items — people going into restaurants as well as retail."

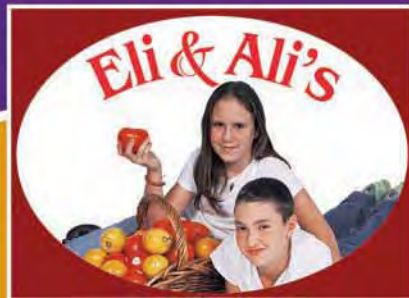
The trick is to sell what is needed — not to create a demand where there is none. "There needs to be a measurable demand for something," according to D'Arrigo of D'Arrigo Bros.

Evolving Companies

Changing demographics mean the faces and languages of storeowners, workers and produce wholesalers change with the times as well. Hunts Point Market "has become less Korean and more Hispanic in the last couple of years," D'Arrigo notes. Many of the newer workers are Latino. "The Korean customer is the biggest single factor here, but it's less of a factor than it used to be."

The companies themselves are also evolving. Although some single-person, single-truck companies still exist at Hunts Point, D'Arrigo believes they are becoming extinct as others consolidate. Although he admits the smallest companies might not

Continued on page 68



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IMPORTED PRODUCE BURGEONING DESPITE NEGATIVE INDICATORS

By Peter G. Lavery

International trade is more expensive than ever before, so why is New York importing more foreign produce than ever before? The unanimous answer from New York's importers and wholesale distributors is surprisingly simple: quality and price.

Ira Nathel, president, Nathel & Nathel, Bronx, NY, notes, "Growth is definitely happening." He explains the most basic economic decision: "Holland peppers are cheaper than Canadian peppers often. Also, melons now will come into Philadelphia – instead of Miami – from Guatemala or Chile." Simply put, cost drives the decision of whether to import.

Quality and price are drivers for the growth of imported produce, says Matthew D'Arrigo, president of the Hunts Point Cooperative Market and vice president of D'Arrigo Brothers Co. of New York, Inc., Bronx, NY. Importing produce in New York is still relatively new, "starting with Mexican and Cuban produce 40-plus years ago," he notes. "Then came South America – Chile started with onions, then table grapes and then boom! Growth has increased every year for over 40 years. But that's just our half of the world. From there, came Holland, Belgium and Spain.

"I always think of us as a microcosm of what's going on in the world of produce. New York reflects the various influences in the world. You don't see the change in produce year to year, but in 5-year windows, you start to see it," he adds.

William Greeley, an agricultural commodities specialist with a private fund in Connecticut, adds, "With fruit and vegetables, the cost of production abroad is a third of what it is in the United States. Plus, with the global economy still expanding, you ultimately have supply disruption," resulting in new markets and cheaper prices for those commodities.

"In the United States, the metropolitan diet has changed, moving from carbohydrate-loaded to protein-rich and filled with fruits and vegetables, largely because medical and even holistic nutritionists are pushing it," he adds.

Shaleen Heffernan, a "date specialist" at Agrexco USA, Ltd., Jamaica, NY, notes, "Dates are no longer a religious food or a holiday food. Our end user wants, needs and requests our product and quality. [Our imports are] the crème de la crème, so my dates will always cost more and our customers are willing to pay for them."

High quality is the key, she says, and the quality of imported dates derives from traditional farming methods employed abroad. "More care and attention is paid to soil overseas, whereas you see more and more effort to rush the process here in the United States."

According to David Blumberg, president of Merex Food Corp., Yonkers, NY, "We are still looking to overseas markets, but we are looking to markets that are closer, like the Dominican Republic, Guatemala and Mexico." He has seen a steady slowdown in European imports for the last five years, due to the price of the Euro and because Europeans have alternate markets to sell to, with some South American produce already going to Europe because of the stronger currency.

D'Arrigo points to new markets and cheaper commodities as factors

making imported produce cheaper. "China is the 2,000-pound gorilla now. They basically can grow anything for free – labor's essentially free in China and water is cheap," he notes. "Also, India has tremendous resources available."

Eddy Creces, general manager, Coosemans New York Inc, Bronx, NY, notes imports are primarily through South and Central America but now includes Africa as well. "There are more consistent growing seasons in other countries. And now there is heavy investment in facilities in foreign countries, too. They now have HACCP programs in facilities; they follow guidelines with pesticides, too," he continues.

Nick Pacia, vice president, A.J. Trucco, Bronx, NY, handles as much of Trucco's supply chain as possible – short of growing plants and capturing boats himself. Trucco has invested heavily in technology to accomplish its own brand of careful micromanagement.

Pacia offers a laundry list of countries and regions Trucco now deals with directly. "Italy for kiwi, but Chile, New Zealand and California for kiwi, too. Spain, Sicily and Italy for lemons, New Zealand for apples, and Italy again for Muscat grapes. And," he adds, "we do national branding on all these items." Handling the logistics in-house has certainly had benefits for Trucco that help contain the impact of changing dollar and logistics costs.

In addition to import and wholesale, Trucco imports for outside-the-market sales. "There's so much you can expand in the market, but [we do] major distribution and imports for retailers. The market wholesale is great, but little by little we have really grown."

Trucco now does some air shipping but most shipments are containerized, taking from 13 days (for Spain) to 24 days (for Turkey or Greece). "We are all over, and keep expanding all over. We are really unique, looking at [the wholesale business]."

As for additional reasons and benefits of using importers, D'Arrigo believes, "Specialty means small volume with potential. Lots of things start as specialty; lots die as specialty, too. Mango was a specialty item. It's the No. 1 item in the world. Look at kiwi or clementines, too. If there's a large educational process ahead, you've got to call these fruits specialty items.

"We are always being introduced to new items, but really you need an importer to go through that very painful process of developing new markets," he adds. "Clementines suffered for 10 or 15 years because nobody knew what to do with them before they took off. The grower loses money for the first five years – that's our marketing process. I went to Chile twice a year for years – growers were easy to find, but import is not a very easy business. It is a much tougher business than domestic deals, because sometimes the more you have, the more money you lose."

D'Arrigo believes the weakening dollar makes us a potential economic power in export, too. "If the dollar gets stronger, who are we going to run to? Or who is going to run to us? That's the question." **pb**



IN MEMORIAM

Barry Hirsch

April 28 1956 – April 10, 2007

Loving father of Daniel, Kathryn and Haley

Beloved brother of Lori and Michael

Beloved Uncle of Henry, Perry, Alexander, Craig and Jack

Life Partner of Karen

Words from loving friends:

"When I began in the produce business 22 years ago, my first week I began talking to Barry Hirsch. For the next 22 years I had a friend, confidant and partner.

Once in a lifetime do you have the good fortune to develop a relationship through business as close as I had with Barry. Somewhere along the line he coined the nickname "Chol," which we each adopted for each other. I have a hard time imagining not picking up the phone and hearing his voice... "Choly Boy, where are my limes?"

I will always treasure the too few times we had to spend time together. And I will always feel a hollow spot for the times I looked forward to spending with him. I know my feelings of loss pale in comparison to those of you who were close to him every day.

When I began in the produce business 22 years ago, I sat next to my father. Very few have the good fortune to have a working and personal relationship with their father as I did. When he died in December he was 78 years old but had the spirit of an 18-year-old. Barry came to help me say goodbye to him. I think Barry was like my dad, a 50-year-old with an 18-year-old spirit.

He was the closest I had to a brother. I dearly loved and will miss him.

Speaking of love, I believe that's how I can finish. Barry loved the produce business. Barry loved his family. Barry loved life. That's part of what made him so special. He loved us all. He even loved the one's he hated. You could hear it in his voice. You could see it in his face. And he got what he gave. We all loved him.

Although he has gone and left a void in all our hearts, we will always have the love he gave us it will never be lost."

Lawrence Kunik

"Barry was a very competitive golfer who did not like to give strokes when you deserved them, but even if he would end up losing money, he'd look to help you without causing embarrassment. He was a great guy to socialize with away from business."

Thomas Tramutola

"Barry Hirsch was a unique and wonderful individual. A man for all seasons, he was a rare example of someone able to derive great joy from both his personal and professional life.

He was one of, if not, the best buyer and seller of produce that I have known in all my years in the industry. Anyone fortunate enough to have experienced Barry is now left with a void that cannot be filled. To say he will be missed is truly an understatement."

Harold Chubinsky

"Barry's love of children was so obvious to me. In the years that Barry still worked selling on the platform, whenever a tour of children walked by, he would stop what he was doing, come to ask the name of each, the grade they were in, what they loved about school, and he personally handed each child an apple. No matter how busy he was, he took the time to speak with them."

Myra Gordon

"When I think of Barry Hirsch, I think YOUNG. He called me that as a nickname, it fits him better. Full of Life. A wise, sincere and 'real' person. 'Larger than life' is also a perfect description.

Barry was always singing and happy. He was down to earth and never with his nose in the air... always helping others. He brought life into the room and a smile to break the monotony, always breaking the silence with a humorous remark. He had style and loved to flaunt his good taste but he never seemed conceited.

I had the privilege of knowing him for four years and he treated me like family. He reminded me of a conversation we had when I first started working for Kleiman and Hochberg. He quoted me: 'Keep me on and you won't be disappointed.' He ended the conversation with 'You're alright.'

I love and miss you Barry Hirsch. Please give my mom a big hug and kiss her for me, and make her smile up there with that great charm of yours.

Lisette Zalle

Barry Hirsch – Lover of Life, Children, Golf, Travel, the Produce Business



Continued from page 64

disappear, he feels they are working under “a definite competitive disadvantage.”

For instance, D'Arrigo Brothers' D'Arrigo says, “We guarantee every one of our customers the right to a second delivery every day. None of these one-guy deals can do a second run every day.” And, he adds, “That kind of business doesn't get handed down to the next generation. That kind of operation, you can't sell.”

Still, the one-man operations do have a few advantages. They are able to keep costs down by running everything themselves, so their prices may be lower. And, explains D'Arrigo, “There are thousands of single, one-of-a-kind restaurants here in New York,” and they often match up well with a similar produce service.

Chain restaurants, on the other hand, require much larger purveyors. As more chain restaurants pop up in New York, one-man operations have fewer opportunities. “What's happening around the country is starting to happen here,” he says, referring to the growing number of chain restaurants. “Mostly in the touristy areas. I don't think the independent restaurants are going to disappear, because there's a very sophisticated restaurant-goer in New York City. I don't think restaurant owners are thinking they're going to be overrun by chains.”

“There's been a shrinking of businesses that operate here. When we came here in '67, there were 140 companies here. Now there are 40,” says Fierman of Joseph Fierman. “You had a lot of specialty houses. You had potatoes and onions. You had the melon people. It was a different day and age.”

“In this industry, if you don't grow, you're probably going to shrink,” agrees Sheldon Nathel, vice president, Nathel & Nathel, Inc., a wholesale produce company at the Hunts Point Market. “The specialization has gone by the wayside.”

“People just want to have one-stop shopping,” interjects Ira Nathel, the company's president.

“I'm third generation. Originally, we started as a western house,” says Okun of Morris Okun. Now, “We do everything. We handle a full line of produce from arugula to zucchini. And we're the only tomato processor on the Hunts Point Market.”

One man who disagrees with the notion that you must diversify or die is Jim Renella, owner, J. Renella Produce, Inc., wholesalers of watermelons — and only watermelons —

“Once you start with transportation, you lose flavor. With local, you could be picking corn in the morning and roasting it at 10:00 that night.”

— Mario Andreani
S. Katzman Produce

at Hunts Point. “Used to be one guy handled the mushrooms. There was an onion guy. There was a tomato guy. We do it the old-fashioned way, and it seems to work. We sell a lot of melons. I mean a lot. They feel they have to have more, but I don't see it.”

While Renella's business thrives, few others are willing to risk it all on one item. “People want to come to the market and minimize how many platforms they have to go to,” adds Sheldon Nathel. But that doesn't mean people have stopped haggling for the best prices. “In this market, you'll never stop the haggling. We haggle with everybody because everyone haggles with us.”

Because of that constant give-and-take,

some chains still do a majority of their shopping at Hunts Point. “They're able to search around and find bargains they can't get from California, and they can see what they're buying. There's a lot of advantages to buying on the market,” says Krisp-Pak's Garcia.

Smaller customers who shop at Hunts Point also enjoy the added benefit of one-stop-shopping made possible by The Food Barn, which opened in 2006. The store offers staple items such as dairy, frozen foods and olive oil in addition to produce. “The majority of my customers sell to restaurants. They're one-truck, small operations,” says Tim Motley, president.

Because Motley buys much of his fresh produce from Hunts Point merchants, “I'm not competing against anyone in the produce market. It keeps the customer base within the market. They'll spend the whole night shopping for produce, stop here in the morning, pick up their frozen, their dairy and any produce items they get from me.”

Service

Service has become the key to buying and selling produce in New York. “Customers look for quality, then service. The third item they look at is price,” according to Ciro Porricelli, vice president, Jerry Porricelli Produce, Hunts Point Market.

“For three generations, we've had to make sure our farmer stays happy and we have to make sure our customer stays happy,” says Katzman of S. Katzman.

Many Hunts Point businesses deliver to outside merchants that then deliver to small stores and restaurants. “The more delivery you have, the more your company can reach other companies who deliver,” explains Russo of A Trading.

In some cases, wholesalers are delivering straight to stores and restaurants. “Fifteen months ago, we established a new company called D'Arrigo Food Service, Inc.,” says D'Arrigo. The service sends out as many as 14 trucks some days that deliver to restaurants around the tri-state area.

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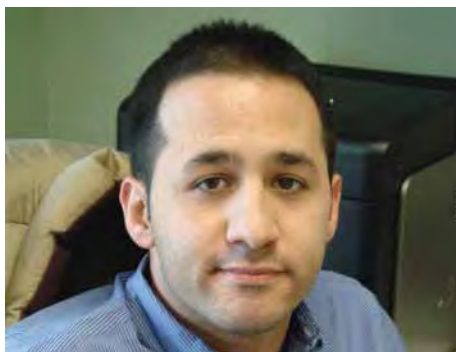


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Reader Service # 42



Vito Cangialo of A.J. Trucco



Myra Gordon of Hunts Point Market Co-op Association

D'Arrigo Food Service also delivers every day of the week, something no other food-service delivery company in New York offers, according to Cerniglia. "When I tell customers we deliver seven days a week, they get really excited," she notes. "If a customer calls at 10 in the morning saying, 'Oh, I forgot, I need this,' we send second runs all the time. And there's no minimum order. We try to do our best and be as accommodating as we can to our customers."

Always having specific items in stock, despite growing seasons, is important to customers, which means many merchants procure produce from around the world. "We have kiwi 365 days a year," says Salvatore Vacca, president, A.J. Trucco.

Wholesalers also provide their customers with knowledge. "It's important when you talk to the customers and when you talk to the shippers," notes Vacca. At Trucco, good relationships with customers and shippers are key to long-term success. "They don't ask prices," he says of his customers, "because they know we're going to take good care of them."

Because so much of business is done over the phone, "They're relying on us to be their eyes," explains Ira Nathel of Nathel & Nathel. "Shippers and customers trust us to give them the right price, and the competitive price."

"A lot of our business is done on the phone, even to the smaller independents, because they trust us," according to Katzman of S. Katzman.

"We maintain good relationships with shippers. You deal with these people over many, many years. If a guy feels he can trust you, it makes for a beautiful marriage," notes Sheldon Nathel of Nathel & Nathel. "If you make a bad sale, sometimes you've got to give the shipper the money so you don't hurt him. You'll make it back."

"I have terrific relationships with my

shippers," claims Fierman of Joseph Fierman. "Some of the shippers I can trace back to my grandfather when he used to travel the country to meet shippers. They supply me with product year-round and I try to get them the best price on a very competitive market."

Customer relations are just as important. "Your reputation speaks for itself. People come back to you because they know you'll take care of them," notes Porricelli. For example, "I know one customer will come in and say he needs 30 arugula tonight." Porricelli will go out of his way to make sure he has it. "When the market goes the other way and nobody wants it, I'll say here, take it, help me out. And he will."

"We have supermarket chains where we don't speak to the buyer for years — we do everything by e-mail," according to Merex's Blumberg.

Mike Doles, sales, Top Katz LLC, believes service is equally if not more important for brokers. "Our relationships with growers and shippers are very strong. They rely on us to move their products, and we do. They rely on us to get them the right price for them."

For the customer, says Dubnikov of Top Katz, "A broker's not just a middle man. A broker has the better deal on transportation and more than one supplier, so he can always give you a better option."

Trust is the most important part of any produce business relationship in New York. "It's all done on a handshake and your word. We're dealing with some of the most honorable people in the world," says Katzman of the growers he buys from. They know he will be just as honest with them.

"We have farmers in Jersey who ship us trailer loads a week. We mail them the checks. They just deposit the checks and go over the returns months later," says Katzman of S. Katzman. "The bigger firms have

Continued on page 74



Jerry Porricelli

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A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR HUNTS POINT

The end is near for the outdated Hunts Point Market. In its place, the Hunts Point Terminal Produce Cooperative Association hopes to see a newer, bigger and better market in a matter of years.

"We are a whole lot farther along than we were three, four years ago," says Steve Katzman, owner, S. Katzman Produce and co-president of the cooperative.

Several plans have been drawn up for a new market. "We've had two very positive meetings with the city," according to Matthew D'Arrigo, co-president of the association with Katzman and vice-president of D'Arrigo Brothers Company of New York, Inc. "Optimistically, we could have a new market here in four years," he says, although many argue the reality is closer to eight to 10 years.

Several merchants say the new market cannot be built too soon. "This place was obsolete when they built it," claims Joe Palumbo, managing member of Top Banana and president of the New York Produce Trade Association. "When it was built, tractors were 40 feet long. Now they're 52 feet long. And anything that's 40 years old and as used and abused as this market is needs to be replaced." If it isn't, he says, "People are going to leave. You can't work like this anymore."

"We're celebrating the 40th anniversary of the market," notes Richard Cochran, president, Robt. T. Cochran & Co. Inc., and a member of the Hunts Point Terminal Produce Cooperative Association's board. "This place is falling apart."

One reason the process might be slowed is the constant revolving door of government officials who need to be educated about the market and the importance of building a new facility. "It's frustrating," says Palumbo.

But Katzman believes city officials are beginning to see the importance of the market. "It's really the last big project that the city is missing. There's a lot of revenue driven out of here. It's not sexy like a new stadium, but it's definitely needed more than a new stadium. Getting a new market would be better for New York than having the Olympics here."

The project could be slowed for other reasons. Merchants at the Hunts Point Market have reasons to look out for their own best interests while deciding on the new plans. "Everybody in this market needs to be accommodated," says Joel Fierman, president, Joseph Fierman & Son, Inc.

"We're not going to agree on everything," says Palumbo. Some simply worry they will not be placed in the spaces that are best for them. Palumbo urges merchants, "Let's get the design, and then we'll get to where we're placing people."

Logistically, the transition should be simple: The current market would continue to run while the new market would be built on the acreage behind it. But money is an issue. While New York City would pay for the new market, merchants will have to spend a great deal of money both to draw up plans and to lobby a myriad of officials.

The Association is now looking at two designs. Eventually, "The city's going to tell you which one they're going for. They get a general consensus from us," says Palumbo. "With our influence, with us educating them and them educating us, I think they'll make the right decision."

Bigger And Better

"I'm optimistic about this new market," says Mario Andreani, manager, S. Katzman. "We could put all of our operations under one roof, which would add efficiency."

"I can presume, with all the mistakes that were made, with the new market, things will be different," says Salvatore Vacca, a member of the Association's board and president of A.J. Trucco. For example, "It seems like four markets — people go to rows A and B and not C and D, or vice-versa. Sometimes, I don't see customers for a long time."

Customers do not have the time to go back and forth to haggle over price "because of the size," relates Vacca. "They may call you on the telephone."

Fierman believes the current market can be intimidating to smaller customers. "I'd like to see the market be a little more friendly to customers. The market used to be a hot spot for the stores, for the restaurateurs. There's no draw. If I'm putting it on a truck and doing it from a phone, what difference does it make?"

Warehouse space is another problem at Hunts Point. "Space is the most precious commodity to Hunts Point, not produce," says Palumbo. "We're always trying to out-work the work."

"They've always had a need for refrigerated storage space. That's what they need here," agrees Fierman.

"The amenities of the new market will be substantially better than we have here," D'Arrigo notes. "Maybe we'll even have a food court."

That should come as a relief to Paul Kazan, president, Target Interstate Systems, Hunts Point

Terminal Market, who says his biggest concern is for the well-being of the truck drivers. As it is now, the small amount of storage space at Hunts Point means many truckers wait for days to unload. With nowhere to go, many are forced to spend this time living out of their vehicles — after several days of straight driving. Often, the trucks must idle to keep refrigerated produce cold, which is bad for the air — and illegal; a driver can be fined up to \$300 for idling.

This could be prevented, says Kazan, with a little planning. He advocates putting in a drivers' lounge with showers and a place to rest. He envisions an area much like a truck stop, where drivers can get an oil change, check their e-mail and find a bite to eat. Special electronic hook-ups could let drivers plug in their trucks to keep food cold without wasting fuel and polluting the air around Hunts Point.

This would make Hunts Point more attractive, but truckers who

"It's really the last big project that the city is missing. There's a lot of revenue driven out of here. It's not sexy like a new stadium, but it's definitely needed more than a new stadium. Getting a new market would be better for New York than having the Olympics here."

— Steve Katzman
Katzman Produce

spend days at Hunts Point lose not only time but also money. "The driver makes his income on how many miles he can travel," notes Robert Goldstein, president and owner, Genpro Inc., Rutherford, NJ.

Rail service must be taken into consideration, as well. As fuel prices rise, Fierman believes more companies will turn to rail.

"Years ago, we used to bring everything by rail," says Cochran. Much more produce could be shipped that way again if rail service were to improve.

"We need to include the rail," agrees Katzman. "Even though there's not a high percentage of rail right now, we never know how the infrastructure in the United States will improve."

The new market might also include enclosed loading and unloading platforms. Because of the open-air platforms, when this market first opened, says Cochran, "Salesmen stood outside and just froze." Most companies have built sales booths to keep out the elements, but these are not enough to keep produce cold as it is unloaded during the hot summer months.

The new market may make better use of electricity and leave less of an impact on the environment. In addition to electric hookups for refrigerated trucks, says D'Arrigo, "Whatever we can do to keep this place green, we'll do, even if that means growing greens or herbs on the roof."

Farmers At Hunts Point?

A wholesale farmers market could be part of the plan. The New York State Department of Agriculture Markets (NYSDAM), Albany, NY, is well on its way to opening a large wholesale farmers market, and many believe that this should be part of the new Hunts Point produce market.

"Right now we're looking at where this would be," says Jessica Chitenden, NYSDAM director of communications. "There are several places that we're looking at. One is at Hunts Point itself. Others are near Hunts Point."

"The idea developed from the fact that farmers at the retail farmers markets have been increasingly supplying hundreds of restaurants and other buyers interested in 'buying locally' but that these markets are not suited to the needs of most wholesale buyers, as they operate only during the day and do not have the volume needed," explains Bob Lewis, NYSDAM's Brooklyn, NY-based chief marketing representative.

"We approached the USDA [U.S. Department of Agriculture] for funding of a New York City Wholesale Farmers Market Study in 2002 and the study was funded and began in 2003. The first phase, a 'needs assessment phase,' was concluded in 2005 and determined there was an annual demand of at least \$866 million for local produce that such a market could tap," he continues. "A second phase, which focuses on high-priority sites and economic feasibility, is expected to be concluded this summer. Models for such a facility include markets in Paris and Toronto."

Some worry the costs of a wholesale farmers market outweigh the benefits. "Why do farmers have to sell their own produce?" wonders Fierman. "I always thought the farmer brought his product to the market, not that he marketed the product himself."

"I don't have a full sales staff," points out Andrew Gurda, manager, A. Gurda Produce, Inc., Pine Island, NY, growers and shippers of local produce who sell to merchants at Hunts Point. "There's only one of me. If I

go to the greenmarket, that's all I'm going to do. I haven't got the personnel. They have a full sales staff and people coming to them." And, he adds, "They have a full line. Business attracts business. Maybe someone comes in for pineapple and maybe they need a bag of lettuce or some potatoes. One product will help the other."

"A large majority of farmers already have customers here," according to Myra Gordon, executive administrative director, Hunts Point Terminal Cooperative Association, Inc. "I believe because New York state produce has a short growing season, in order to support the market it would have to stay open. The only way to do that is to sell the same things Hunts Point Market sells. If that were to occur, it would split the customer base."

Gordon worries many farmers would bring in produce from farther away during the cooler months, if it were permitted. "It's going to depend upon their lease."

But D'Arrigo sees another option. Instead of renting space to farmers on a year-round basis, "Farmers would pay by the truck coming in." An open-air market – similar to the other farmers markets around the city – would allow them to set up the space as needed.

Fierman also worries about what a farmers market could mean for food safety. "We'd be bringing in an unlicensed, unregulated group of individuals to sell food you can't trace back. It's a flea market for farmers. How can you expect to control food safety? It will only hurt Hunts Point if somebody gets sick and the media says it came from Hunts Point."

Lewis answers, "Department inspectors visit all retail food establishments in New York City, as well as farmers markets, to ensure they are in compliance with food safety requirements."

"I'm going gung-ho on putting a farmers market in as part of the new market," says D'Arrigo. "The added layering of different kinds of wholesaling into a new market design will enhance the whole image of the market. We're a very rough-and-tumble, bare-bones kind of a market. If you could get a few other types of wholesaling in here, it would help bring more customers in here."

"I think we feel – and I think they feel – that combining the two would be beneficial," agrees Gordon.

The last possible sticking point, she believes, is that the city is looking to open the farmers market long before the new Hunts Point Market can be built. In fact, a small version of the envisioned wholesale farmers market, with 17 growers, already operates out of the New Fulton Fish Market at Hunts Point. Time will tell if this market will be incorporated into the new Hunts Point terminal market or if it will grow up someplace else.

Bringing Back The Trade Association

The New York Produce Trade Association is making a comeback, says Palumbo. Started as a credit association, it has been lagging for years, "We're going to revitalize it, rejuvenate it"

"We're trying to modernize the Association and bring it into the 21st century. It helps the entire marketplace to run in a more professional manner," says Angela L. Venuti, vice president of the Association and secretary and treasurer of Ven-Co Produce Inc. "It's been in existence since this market opened, but we're changing the format. We're sure it's going to enhance the way the market operates."

pb

Continued from page70

gotten bigger because they do things honorably. You sell for the right price. You return for the right price.”

Andreani of S. Katzman never forgets how important it is to look out for the people he does business with, no matter how big his company becomes. “When you break it down, we really are just peddlers,” he says. In addition to his customers, “Without farmers or truck drivers, we are nothing.”

For trucking companies, as well, a high level of service separates successful compa-

“Local farmers have been our mainstream for years. That’s where we started. I used to go with my grandfather to the farms.”

—Ciro Porricelli
Jerry Porricelli Produce

nies from the others. “We’ve found better ways of putting together shipments so they’re cost efficient,” says Genpro’s Goldstein.

“Fuel’s up by 25¢ a gallon, which adds another \$300 to the trip” to New York from California, says Paul Kazan of Target Interstate Systems, Bronx, NY. To save fuel, “We load the trucks both ways.” Kazan makes sure trucks that come in loaded with produce leave for the West Coast loaded with other freight. By helping them in this manner, “We get these trucks to be somewhat dedicated to Target.”

Local Produce: Good When You Can Get It

When it is available, locally grown produce is a staple for many in the New York area.

“New Jersey is known as the Garden State,” adds Sheldon Nathel of Nathel & Nathel. “They grow some of the most beautiful produce anywhere.”

“As soon as Jersey produce starts, we have a broker down there,” says Krisp-Pak’s

HUNTS POINT IN THE COMMUNITY

Each year, local causes rely on Hunts Point merchants to donate produce, filling food banks and making possible programs such as the recent party that kicked off New York’s annual Fleet Week.

“We were the donor of the year for the second year in a row to City Harvest,” says Myra Gordon, executive administrative director, Hunts Point Terminal Cooperative Association, Inc., Bronx, NY. “We also participate in Bronx week, which we’ve been doing for 20 years.” Sometimes she will call a merchant requesting watermelons for a city-hosted party or bananas to be handed out to the runners in a marathon.

Many merchants donate to schools as a way to educate children about the importance and great taste of produce. “We will support the poorest schools,” says Gordon. “They will come to us for fruit for the kids. Last year, S. Katzman Produce brought over a truck of raspberries, blueberries and strawberries to one of the schools. Some of these kids had never eaten these fruits before.”

Gordon, as a representative of Hunts Point, helps charities find other donors to round out programs after she has found merchants to donate produce. In one case, she helped an organization find turkeys to provide Thanksgiving dinners for the needy.

She praises the generosity of these companies and individuals who often take money from their own pockets to help those around them. “It isn’t just the cost of the box they donate. They lose the profit and they still have to pay the shipper and the handling price.” **pb**

Garcia. “Arugula, cilantro, bunch radish, wild dandelion. As the season goes on, we use 20, 30 items from down there. And we use a few items from New York state.”

“In the summer, that’s all there really is. Nobody’s bringing eggplant from anyplace other than New Jersey in the summer,” says Richard Cochran, president, Robt. T. Cochran

& Co. Inc., produce commission merchants at the Hunts Point Market.

“We’ve had many great relationships with growers in Long Island and upstate New York going back since my grandfather [developed them],” says Cary Rubin of Rubin Bros., a wholesaler on the Hunts Point Market. (For more on New York produce, please see *New York State Vegetable Report* on page 96.)

NYSDAM’s Lewis cites many reasons local produce has an advantage in New York. “Superior freshness, taste and specialty seasonal produce availability for consumers, retailers and institutions; food security through the support of regional agriculture’s capacity to supply the city; economic security through the support of the New York state farm and food economy; open space and environmental benefits (including water quality) of working farm land; biodiversity through the preservation of local varieties; long-term food cost containment though savings in transportation costs (hundreds versus thousands of miles); and nutrition education and community development opportunities available through retail farmers markets.”

He also mentions programs such as the New York City Healthy Bodega Project, Food Bank Procurement and *Pride of New York* Produce Promotions in Central Park as well as the New York City SchoolFood Local Procurement Project. “We have successfully helped New York City Department of Education SchoolFood source sliced apples and baby peeled carrots — Grab Apples and Carrot Crunchers from a small New York state processor who supplies these items to meet SchoolFood’s needs for supplying over 860,000 school lunches per day,” says Lewis. “We also worked to assist SchoolFood and its distributors to source salad greens and other fresh and frozen vegetables from New York state, as well as dairy and other products.”

These promotions have all added to the already existing demand for local produce. “Local is very hot right now. There’s a definite interest in local,” says D’Arrigo of D’Arrigo Brothers.

“A lot of our customers like the local products,” according to Doles of Top Katz. “It’s just cost-effective, because of the transportation rates.”

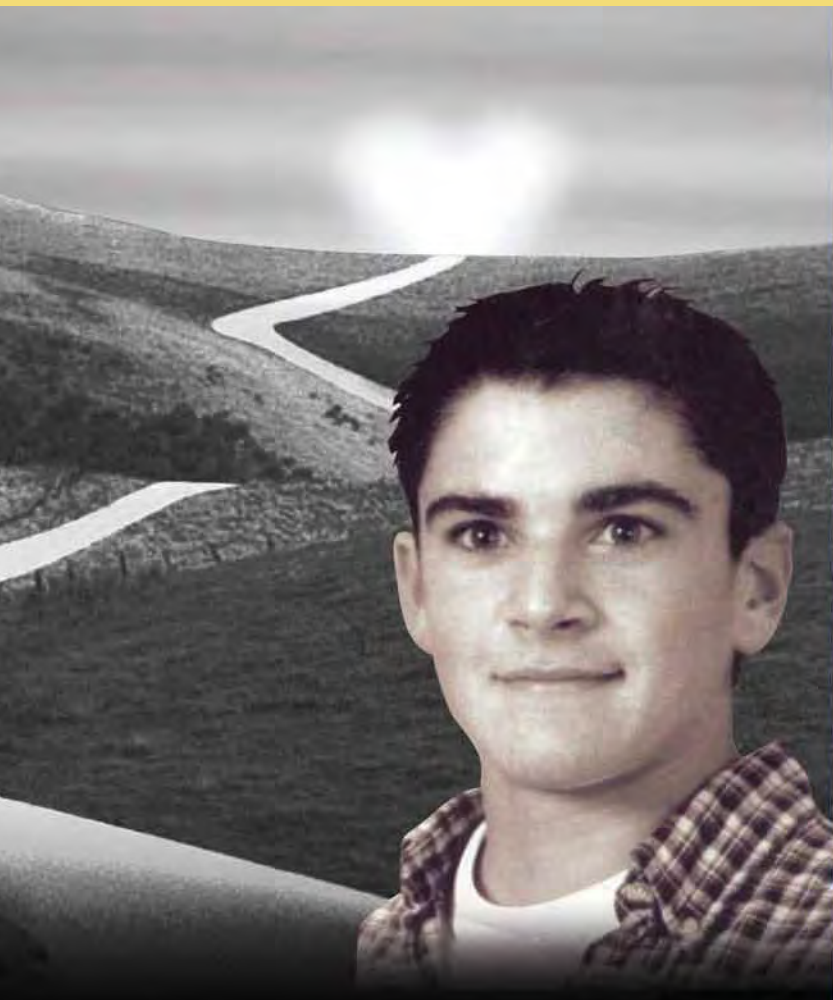
Andreani of S. Katzman adds customers love the freshness of local produce. “Once you start with transportation, you lose flavor” he says. “With local, you could be picking corn in the morning and roasting it at



LA12.ORG



Survivors of "Louis' Law" in New York State Public Schools.



The Louis J. Acompora Foundation would like to thank our friends in the Produce Industry who have supported the Foundation and have helped us continue our mission across the country. Without the support of this industry our voice would not be heard.

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Andrew, 18, went to sleep and did not wake up. Danielle, 11, was playing with friends when a car honked and startled her. She collapsed and died instantly. Bryan, 15, died following a PE class. Gregory, 15, died during half time of a high school basketball game. Stacey, a 15-year-old gymnast, Brian, a 17-year old football player, a 14-year-old swimmer, a 20-year-old college student ...the list goes on and on.

On March 25, 2000, in Northport NY, our 14-year old son, Louis, lost his life during his first high school lacrosse game from a syndrome known as Commotio Cordis. Louis, the goalie, was struck in the chest, which caused his heart to go into an irregular rhythm called ventricular fibrillation. An AED (Automated External Defibrillator) was needed on the field to correct this irregularity, but it was not available.

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In June of 2002, Governor George Pataki of New York signed Louis' Law, which requires AEDs in all public schools. Both the Senate and the State Assembly unanimously passed this bill.

New York has seen first hand the importance of Louis' Law. Already 33 lives have been saved in New York State Public School districts because there was an Automated External Defibrillator on sight. School districts across the state, with the assistance of the foundation, have supported the training of staff in the use of these life saving devices.

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Contact www.LA12.org or the American Heart association for more information

SECURITY A PRIORITY

There was a time when, from certain vantage points at the Hunts Point Market, one could view the twin towers of the World Trade Center peeking over the city. Many left their posts to stop and stare on Sept. 11, 2001, as the towers – still occupied by thousands of fellow New Yorkers – collapsed. Today, many agree that what they saw that day and in the months following, as smoke continued to rise into the empty space in Manhattan's skyline, horrified, saddened, enraged – and warned.

"We think that making this market more secure is an important thing to do," says Matthew D'Arrigo, co-president of the Hunts Point Terminal Produce Cooperative Association and co-owner of D'Arrigo Brothers Co. of New York, Inc. "It's a very big place. At any one time, you have complete strangers here." While keeping the market safe from crime has always been a high priority, after 9/11, "It took on a whole new meaning."

"The food chain is a target," says Steve Katzman, owner, S. Katzman Produce and co-president of the Association. "We don't know how serious a target right now. We've taken steps to ensure nothing happens at our level."

"You have 10,000 people here. Also it's a place where you furnish food," says Salvatore Vacca, a member of the Association's board and president of A.J. Trucco. In the case of an attack on the market, he says, "The metropolitan area would be without fresh produce for weeks."

"In a 20-mile radius, we probably feed 30 million people," estimates Joe Palumbo, CEO of Top Banana and president of the New York Produce Trade Association. "Terrorists want to cause fear. What better way than to cut off people's food supply? I can't stick my head in the sand and pretend this couldn't happen."

Others disagree on the severity of the situation should terrorists disrupt business at Hunts Point. "I do understand it would impact the business here, but I don't think New York would go hungry," says Paul Kazan, president, Target Interstate Systems, Bronx, NY. "It would be disruptive from a business standpoint. Restaurants would suffer, without a doubt. The ripple effect is what you'd look for."

"Let's not get so full of ourselves," suggests Joel Fierman, president, Joseph Fierman & Son, Inc. "I don't think we're the focal point of an attack." He notes that many bigger, easier targets exist. "The area is much safer than it was 25 years ago. We're standing in a renaissance Bronx where all of those burned-out buildings have been restored."

There is a question of just how much money should be spent on security. "We spend over a million dollars on security a year as it is," notes Katzman.

Nearly all agree security is highly important "We're being very proactive. We're coordinating with the New York task force, trying to get on different programs to make the market a safe place for us," says Palumbo. "We all have a vested interest here. We have a moral obligation to the people who work here and the people of New York."

In addition to working with the city, the Hunts Point Terminal Produce Cooperative Association has hired experts and professionals to ensure a higher level of safety. One consultant is Nick Rodelli, director of the Hunts Point Department of Public Safety as well as a retired New York City detective and owner of two large security companies. "This



Simon Tirado and James Tewari of Hunts Point Public Safety/EMT

board is very dynamic. They understand the reality of what we're looking at," he says.

The New York Police Department (NYPD) has learned not to take security for granted, and neither should Hunts Point, according to Rodelli. "You've got to look at Wall Street as a model. Years ago, you wouldn't see men in flak jackets walking around there, but now you do," he notes.

"Everything is based on criminality and the possibility of terrorist acts. We're very aware of vehicles coming in, strangers, conditions that suggest we're being observed from afar," he continues.

Rodelli believes in preparing for the worst. "What if they ignited an explosive device? What if they released anthrax? How long would that close the market?" he wonders. He hopes to provide CPR training for two members of each company in the near future, as well as defensive driving classes for those who drive on-site.

The Market often works with a specialized unit of the NYPD designed for the private sector and providing intelligence and education for the security workers at Hunts Point. Rodelli says the NYPD has visited Hunts Point to perform a critical point inspection and offer suggestions on how to tighten security.

He cites high visibility as an important deterrent against terrorist acts, and D'Arrigo agrees. "We now have a two-shift, two-person-per-shift uniformed patrol walking the platforms," says D'Arrigo, to deter crime. There is also talk of hiring drug- and explosive-sniffing dogs.

Vacca believes the dogs would be a good deterrent against both drug trafficking and terrorism. "If they know we have these dogs, I don't think they'll come in."

"We're looking at a new fence project with the city," adds Katzman. "Something a little bit higher and more aesthetically pleasing."

In addition to professional security guards, Rodelli believes everyone at Hunts Point can be on the alert. "It's awareness. It's getting people out there to think." Anyone can notice something suspicious "such as a truck misplaced outside the premises for a long period. The more people you have with awareness, the less of a target you're going to be," he relates.

Palumbo notes there are evacuation plans in place and the market has already undergone a practice drill. "God forbid something happens here, we have a plan to get out of here.

"The question is not 'Is there going to be a next attack?' It's when. Our hope is to get this place so secure the terrorists go someplace else," he concludes.

pb



10:00 that night.”

“Local farmers have been our main-stream for years. That’s where we started,” says Porricelli of Jerry Porricelli. “I used to go with my grandfather to the farms.”

Years ago the company, which specializes in herbs among other produce items, was only open from April through Thanksgiving. These days, the months when local produce is not available are filled in with produce from afar. But Porricelli still relies on local produce when he can. “I don’t think there’s anything we don’t get locally. The quality growers that we deal with — we hope they stay in business and their sons go on in the business so we can keep the relationships going.

“What I like about my local farmers is I can go there,” he continues. “We’ll go up and down the fields and he’ll show me what he’s growing.”

“There are all kinds of crops from New York and they sell for less than California,” adds D’Arrigo. “There’s plenty of great stuff that’s local.” But a shorter season also means local produce is harder to sell.

“November 1 to May 1, you can’t grow that stuff here. The local strawberry crop is, like, two hours long,” D’Arrigo Brothers’ D’Arrigo says. A few items, such as potatoes and onions, are available year-round. “New York state apples — those last a really long time.”

Koppert Cress USA in Lake Success, NY, offers locally grown produce year-round. The company, which originated in Europe, uses greenhouses to grow hard-to-find micro-greens, such as daikon and spicy, hot Sichuan buttons, for Coosemans Worldwide Specialty Produce, based in Miami, FL. The sprouts are shipped live, which gives them a long shelf life, and are especially prized by restaurant chefs for their flavor and unique appearance.

“People like the idea that it’s locally grown,” says Nicolas Mazard, Koppert’s manager. “Normally, they are used to getting all the products like these from Europe. The thing that they like is that it’s here — it’s always available. It’s easy to get.”

Farming locally has become harder over the years, as labor shortages and the cost of doing business continue to help larger suppliers farther away edge out these smaller farms. Many long-time growers opt to sell


land for a high price to developers.

“I’ve always got a sympathetic heart for the local farmer,” says Porricelli. “A farmer has to get something at the end of the day. I’ve got one farmer who says he can’t farm this year. He can’t make a go of it.”

Often, local farmers are unable to make enough profit from their produce to keep going. “Buyers just feel it’s a local farmer — why have you got to pay a lot of money?”

Continued on page 80

The Legacy Continues!



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Reader Service # 99

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Reader Service # 102

Continued from page 77

That's the mentality. The local farmer needs a break, too. But he's the last one on the totem pole," notes Porricelli of Jerry Porricelli. He hopes buyers will give local farms a fair price so that his suppliers will continue to stay in business.

Organic Is "In" — Or Is It?

Produce is a very fashionable business, according to D'Arrigo. Buzzwords such as

organic, natural and sustainable are in style right now. "They all want to change the world," he explains, but "it costs more money to grow it organically." When too much organic produce is grown, the price drops, but not the cost of production.

D'Arrigo is in the right position to see when supply outpaces demand. "I think the demand is amplified," he says. "We sell overflow. Whenever markets are really bad, we reflect it."

"It's a much smaller niche, organics. It's much more expensive. You have to do it right," notes Katzman of S. Katzman. "Organics is growing, but it still has to prove itself."

Andreani of S. Katzman believes much of the organic produce at retail is sold when consumers are not even paying attention.

"Fifty percent of the business of organics anywhere in America is driven by middle-class families. Hispanics, too — they grew up on all those little farms where that was how it was grown."

— Peter Kroner
Eli & Ali's Love Tomatoes

"Fifty percent of all organics are sold by accident," he claims.

Still, many consumers really do want more organic produce. "We did twice as much organic kiwi as we expected to do this year," says Trucco's Pacia. "Next season, I'm expecting to do an organic program twice as big as last year."


"Our organics are in chains like A&P and Food Emporium," explains Ornstein of Eli & Ali's. "There are some areas where a couple of years ago I thought organics wouldn't fly. But it's selling in some more middle-class areas, and that's been a surprise for me."

"Fifty percent of the business of organics anywhere in America is driven by middle-class families," says Eli & Ali's Kroner. "Hispanics, too — they grew up on all those little farms where that was how it was grown."

"It has potential, but the knowledge of some consumers is not there yet," according to Joseph Benjuya, sales, Top Katz. "With advertising, commercials, maybe. Price-wise, we have to help them lower the price a little, because it's very high. Organics are mostly likely the future. The only thing is, it will take time."

pb

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Reader Service # 70



davidburke & donatella

This Upper East Side restaurant delights diners with its produce-driven upscale creative cuisine.

By Jacqueline Ross Lieberman

SINCE OPENING IN DECEMBER 2003, DAVIDBURKE & DONATELLA HAS WOWED DINERS WITH ITS WHIMSICAL CREATIONS. THE PRESS HAS OFTEN RELATED THE RESTAURANT'S DISHES (AS WELL AS THE BOLD, SLEEK DÉCOR AND FANTASTICAL ARTWORK) TO WILLIE WONKA AND DR. SEUSS. YET THE CUISINE MANAGES TO BE FUN WITHOUT CROSSING OVER INTO THE ABSURD. TAKE, FOR EXAMPLE, WHAT MIGHT BE THE RESTAURANT'S MOST WELL-KNOWN DISH, THE CHEESECAKE LOLLIPOP TREE: CREAMY, RICH CHEESECAKE LOLLIPOPS COATED IN A VARIETY OF TOPPING AND INSERTED INTO A SILVER TREE-SHAPED STAND WITH SWEET, FLAVORFUL RASPBERRIES REPRESENTING FLOWERS. IT IS SERVED WITH BUBBLEGUM-FLAVORED WHIPPED CREAM.

Entrées and appetizers, such as the peanut butter and jelly foie gras (the "peanut butter" is actually made with macadamia nuts and the "jelly" is strawberry-vanilla jam), are just as innovative. A lobster "steak" comes topped with curried shoestring potatoes and citrus fennel candy. Brunch options include a "Reuben Benedict" made with zucchini kraut, Gruyère, pastrami salmon and Russian dressing.

"I think we do something kind of unique," explains chef de cuisine Eric Hara, who has been with the restaurant for just over a year. "We try to be creative without going too cuckoo. We don't scare people too much. We don't do things that sound kind of gross. Our goal is to keep it exciting — and to keep ourselves happy. We like to be creative."

Produce is extremely important at davidburke & donatella. "I spend more on produce than on every other thing in our restaurant.

We're really produce-driven. My produce list is huge," says Hara, who hails from Los Angeles. "I'm a California boy — it's produce first and then protein."

"Seasonal produce plays a large role in what I put on the menu at all my restaurants," says David Burke, executive chef, who is also the co-owner along with restaurateur Donatella Arpaia. (Burke has several restaurants around the country and this spring opened David Burke Las Vegas in the Venetian Resort, Hotel and Casino.) "If I see something that looks particularly amazing, I'll even create a dish around it. And since I have restaurants all across the country, I like to use local specialties for inspiration. I especially like experimenting with seasonal fruit."

Perhaps because he was trained in California, where the local movement is considered to have originated, Hara also favors using the local produce that is available. "I love fresh fruit when it's in season, whether it's watermelon or Bing cherries. I love lettuces — lettuce foams, lettuce soups, braised romaine."

While some dishes remain on the menu year-round, seasonality is extremely important, according to Hara. For example, he says, "In the summer I like to go light. Peaches are in season, so we might do truffled peaches. You try to stick to what's available. All the herbs we use come from Israel. You've got those Holland tomatoes — they're great. But keeping in season is important to us," he says. "During the spring and summer and even fall, local produce is best. In the winter, you've got to get winter vegetables. You're going to do rustic dishes, richer food."

Produce that is not available locally in season makes a smaller appearance during the colder months. "I won't do a gazpacho or a heavy tomato-based dish in winter. But I'm going to use tomatoes. I'm not going to completely cut them out. They become more of a component to another dish," he notes.

Because it is such an important part of the menu, produce makes up a large part of the restaurant's food costs. "Produce is not cheap. Some of my best sellers are salads. I use baby heads," explains Hara, that raise the price dramatically. A radish salad includes not one but several types of radishes.

"Getting specialty items costs money. For entrées, it's usually a \$30 to \$40 dish. When white truffles are in season, it could be a \$100 dish," he says. Appetizers run from \$14 for a simple salad of fresh greens with mari-

nated tomatoes and fresh herbs to \$25 for the "Crisp and Angry" lobster cocktail with crisp basil and lemon-chili sauce. "Generally, people know the expense of the ingredients and they appreciate it."

Most weeks, the restaurant buys produce from six or seven purveyors, including Baldor Specialty Foods, Inc., Bronx, NY, and Sid Wainer and Son, based in New Bedford, MA. At one point or another, "Pretty much all the produce comes through Hunts Point," Hara notes. In-season, some comes directly from

small local farms. And, he adds, "I go down to the Union Square farmers market once in a blue moon."

When working with purveyors, Hara knows what he wants and the prices he can expect to pay. "You've got to know what you're talking about. You've got to do your homework. If they know that you know what you're doing, they respect you and do what they can to keep your business."

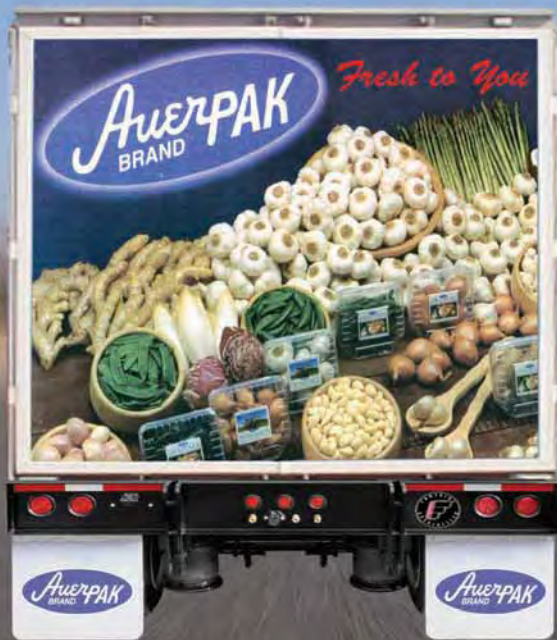
Healthful Choices

Certainly, a restaurant that offers a "smoking limo" parked just outside for the nicotine-addicted is not going to be the most health-conscious of eateries, but many options exist for those with dietary concerns.

Diners who prefer organics are happy to find that the percentage of organic produce served at davidburke & donatella is unusually high. "Eighty percent of everything we use is organic," relates Hara. The reason for this is quality — in his experience, Hara has found organic produce usually tastes better. "We don't advertise it too much. Some people ask."

For those who do not eat meat, "I do vegetable tastings when people are vegetarian and want to do a tasting menu," he says. One of his favorite vegetarian bites is vegetable consommé-filled ravioli that bursts in your mouth as you bite down. Vegetarians are delighted to find an array of options that are not usually available at restaurants. **pb**

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Upscale Mediterranean-style food in a casual, comfortable setting.

By Jacqueline Ross Lieberman

FOR MICHELE GATON AND CHEF JOSEPH FORTUNATO, THE GOAL WAS TO CREATE AN AFFORDABLE YET HIGH-END RESTAURANT FOR THE RESIDENTS OF MANHATTAN'S TRENDY WEST VILLAGE. FORTUNATO'S COOKING STYLE — MEDITERRANEAN-INSPIRED CREATIVE AMERICAN, RELIES ON FRESH INGREDIENTS AND GOOD-QUALITY OLIVE OIL — HENCE THE RESTAURANT'S NAME.

"From day one, it was a neighborhood success. And then it became critically successful," says Fortunato, who studied classical French cooking in Paris. "The idea was to keep the place affordable. We wanted it to feel like your home away from home. The prices are reasonable and the food is high quality. It's very casual."

Entrées are priced under \$25; appetizers range from \$8 to \$12. "It's unheard of, especially in this neighborhood," he says. Food costs must be kept within limits. "We can't use white truffles, but I try to keep it so people can try interesting stuff at affordable prices."

One of restaurant's most popular dishes is grilled halibut with fresh herbs, tomato "carpaccio" (very, very thinly sliced tomatoes) and a salad of peppers, onions and fennel with citrus vinaigrette dressing. "It's garnished with a special Umbrian olive oil that's kind of spicy," says Fortunato. "The ingredients are all super-fresh and the dish is kept very simple."

Another popular item is the mushroom-crust chicken with sweet pea risotto, cippolini onions and truffle broth. Again, it is very simple. "If I take it off the menu, people who come in on a regular basis are in an uproar," he notes

The signature Extra Virgin Salad is made with baby arugula, cucumber, tomato, red onion and avocado with Chianti vinegar and extra-virgin olive oil. It is garnished with grilled Tuscan bread.

While these staples can be found on the menu year-round, much of what is offered changes with the seasons. "We change the menu every four months," says Fortunato. Lighter dishes may feature locally grown produce in the summer and heavier, heartier dishes are made with produce from farther away in the winter.

"In June, the local corn will be really super-sweet. I might use local corn and tomatoes in the summer months. Then you get

beautiful tomatoes from South America in February," he continues.

Other items are so seasonal they can be used only in specials. "Porcinis — there are certain times when they're perfect and beautiful," says Fortunato. "Ramps are a seasonal thing you can get for two months. They're very special."

When local fruits and vegetables are available, they make up about 20 percent of the restaurant's produce. Fortunato's customers let him know how much they enjoy eating food that was grown on local farms. "People will say, 'Oh, I drove by that farm when I was in the Hamptons,'" he relates.

Although he will occasionally use services such as Baldor Specialty Foods, Inc., and Dairyland USA, both in Bronx, NY, most of the produce is delivered by D'Arrigo Food Service, Inc., at the Hunts Point Terminal Market. "I have a rapport with the salesperson and the owner. They say, 'We've got these great tomatoes coming in,' or 'We've got ramps coming in,'" claims Fortunato. "I try to get to the market, but it's difficult for me to hop in a cab and go to the green-market and get stuff. It's easier to have my purveyors help me out and tell me what's coming in right now and what's really beautiful."

Getting consistent, high-quality produce is extremely important to Fortunato. "Basically, it's 50 percent of the menu. The rest is the protein and either a potato item or a starch like polenta or couscous. Produce plays a huge role in every single dish I have. Even a simple thing like stock gets its flavor from the sweetness of the carrots and the sweetness of the onions." **pb**

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Reader Service #20



Corrado's Family Affair

In an era when independent supermarkets struggle to survive, Corrado's doesn't just live — it thrives.

By Jacqueline Ross Lieberman

LOCATED IN CLIFTON, NJ, CORRADO'S FAMILY AFFAIR IS NOT JUST ONE STORE, BUT SEVERAL. ON ONE SIDE OF THE ROAD LIES THE MAIN RETAIL STORE WITH 44 REGISTERS AND 56,000 SQUARE FEET, SOON TO BECOME 80,000 AS THE STORE EXPANDS OVER THE NEXT TWO YEARS. ACROSS THE STREET IS A WHOLESALE MARKET OPEN TO THE PUBLIC, A GORGEOUS GARDEN CENTER BIG ENOUGH FOR LANDSCAPERS TO DO ONE-STOP SHOPPING, AND A WINE- AND BEER-MAKING CENTER WHERE AMATEURS CAN STOCK UP ON ALL THE SUPPLIES THEY NEED, FROM CALIFORNIA GRAPES PRESSED BEFORE THEIR EYES TO AGING BARRELS TO BOTTLES WITH CUSTOM LABELS. SHARING A PARKING LOT IS CORRADO'S CHILDREN'S CLOTHING STORE. NEXT TO THE RETAIL STORE, A CORRADO'S GAS STATION WILL SOON BE ADDED TO THE MIX.

Independently owned and family-run for about 50 years (many of late founder James Corrado's grandchildren now work there), Corrado's is home to an eclectic mix of specialty items — many of which are private-label — and one-stop produce shopping, all with excellent quality at value prices. It is no wonder that customers travel for miles to shop here.

"We open at 5 AM and there are people waiting for the retail store to open," says Jerry Corrado, co-owner with brothers Joe and Peter. "We get them from everywhere — from Connecticut, from New York."

Outside the main doors to the retail store, shoppers immediately notice beautiful, bountiful displays of produce. Inside, produce takes up one-third of the store. It takes 51 people working in the produce department alone to keep things running as smoothly as they do here. In an area of New Jersey not known for upscale shopping, the high-quality produce sold at Corrado's is a huge draw for customers. "Everybody loves produce," he relates. "Every nationality. We do have something for everyone here."



(Left to right) Peter Levantino of L.V.G. Produce Corp., Joe Corrado and Jerry Corrado

Indeed, the produce aisles are filled with not just American staples like tomatoes, lettuce, apples and bananas, but several varieties of peppers and squashes, ripe avocados, plantains and even fresh raw almonds, which are popular in Middle Eastern cuisine. "We try to make everybody happy," notes Jerry.

That goes for environmentally conscious consumers, as well. While organic is still a small part of produce sold here, "It's getting more and more popular," he adds.

The value also makes everyone happy. "When we sell peppers at \$1 a pound, everyone else is getting \$3," explains Joe. So why not undersell the competition by just a little? "It's the way we always did it. We love our customers. Instead of selling for \$2.50 and selling two boxes, I'd rather sell it for 89¢ and sell half a load. And everyone smiles at you as they leave."

While 90 percent of the produce comes direct from the growers, an important 10 percent comes from the Hunt's Point Terminal Market in the Bronx, NY. During the summer months, Corrado's stocks the freshest produce possible by buying whatever is available locally. In season, says Jerry, "We have a trailer in South Jersey every day."



The concern for freshness carries over to cut produce. Customers can watch as a worker behind glass cuts fruit, packs it and places it on display. In addition to being

During the summer months, Corrado's stocks the freshest produce possible by buying whatever is available locally.

fresh, the produce displayed is also at its peak ripeness. To ensure this, Corrado's has its own ripening and gassing rooms.

While what can be found in the produce section may be surprising, what cannot be found is just as interesting. "You don't see too many paper products here," says Jerry. "No soap."

And, adds Joe, except for produce, "There are no staple items. It's all specialty." Below a ceiling hung with specialty meats and cheeses, an international deli section caters to those with a nose for quality. Mozzarella, for example, is made in-store for optimum freshness, and other specialty items are shipped in from around the world. Other sections of the store offer items such as

high-quality fresh meat, fresh fish, grocery items (including an entire aisle of private-label imported pastas) and wines.

Supplying The Trade

Across the street is the 200,000-square-foot wholesale store. Although it has 30 delivery trucks offering service to local restaurants, many bring their own trucks. Amid the hustle and bustle, "It's like Hunt's Point Market out here in the morning," notes Jerry.

Inside, shelves are stacked high with more specialty items, such as bottles of private-label olive oil and capers from Spain and Italy. The wholesale produce is sold in bulk — not packaged — and customers can pick and choose the pieces they like, loading boxes of everything from lemons to tomatoes themselves.

The store also offers canning equipment for New Jersey's rightfully famous tomatoes. Jerry estimates that the brothers sell about 20,000 bushels of plum tomatoes for canning each year.

At the adjacent garden center, landscapers and homeowners alike can get everything from rose bushes to plum trees to fountains and pottery imported from Italy. The area stays active even after summer ends. "During Halloween, it's all pumpkins. Christmas, it's all Christmas trees," says Jerry.

An Amateur Winemaker's Paradise

Winemaking is a growing hobby, and Corrado's — which offered wine grapes from its beginning — has everything an amateur could want to make several types of wine, plus beer. "We sell the hops, we sell the

grapes, we sell the juice, and all the possible equipment that you need," explains Jerry. "There are a lot of knowledgeable people working here to get you through it."

Winemakers can choose from several varieties of grapes from famous winemaking regions, such as Napa and Sonoma, which are squeezed in a press right in front of them. Other important items, such as stainless steel barrels for aging and oak chips used to infuse flavor, await their purchase.

The store is known for its annual amateur winemaking competition, held each January. "We get about 500 entries each year," says Jerry. "The American Wine Society [based in Lawrenceville, GA] and some individuals help judge it."

An estimated 1,800 people attended last year's competition. "It's a great party," proclaims Joe. "They come in by busloads and in limousines."

pb

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DeCicco's Ardsley

Second generation assumes the mantle with youth's fresh perspective.

By Peter G. Lavery

THE SECOND GENERATION OF DECICCOS, THE FAMILY BEHIND THE 6-STORE DICICCO FAMILY MARKET CHAIN BASED IN PELHAM, NY, OPENED ITS FIRST STORE IN ARDSLEY, NY, LAST JUNE. JOHN (AGE 29) HANDLES MARKETING AND FINANCE, CHRISTOPHER (AGE 26) SPECIALIZES IN BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AND JOSEPH (AGE 22) FOCUSES ON THE ACCOUNTING, AS THE THREE BROTHERS SHARE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR GENERATION'S FIRST STORE. THEY ARE ALL GRADUATES OF FORDHAM UNIVERSITY IN THE BRONX, NY.

The Ardsley store began in one of John's classes at Fordham Business School, when he told his professor, Leon Shilton, that his goal was to find a location for the store. "I met with Ardsley's Mayor, Jay Leon, and he agreed. He felt a great need for a supermarket in Ardsley," John says. The location the DeCiccocos settled on was an empty warehouse that had been an A&P store a decade before. It is on Center Street, a block from Ardsley's main thoroughfare, with access to several major highways within a couple blocks.

Real estate in Westchester County ranks among the most expensive suburban land in the nation. As with many of Westchester's villages and towns, Ardsley is a densely populated, tony bedroom community just a half hour commute from New York City's Grand Central Station.

Joseph points out that the store's focus from the start has been "High End Produce without the hoighty toighty prices," according to a teaser ad run in local newspapers.

DeCicco's has responded to the lack of diversity in product selection in the area by stocking heirlooms and "doing lots of produce-specific advertising focused on freshness," Chris adds.

Despite an open, airy feel, DeCicco's Ardsley does not waste any space. "All design, layout and merchandising for this store was done internally. It has been very successful," notes John.

The store is immaculate and well stocked, with interesting heirloom and organic displays set side-by-side at eye level throughout the produce department. A uniformed, ubiquitous staff works to keep it that way. A key to the store's success, notes Chris, is offering a lot of service. "We have a high payroll and good management."

The second generation has developed a company program to groom college graduates for management positions, rotating them monthly through a store's different departments, John adds. "Produce is a really big part of that program."

Value-added produce plays a major role in DeCicco's blend, with proprietary labeled overwraps everywhere. Value-added averages 22 percent of all produce sales, John explains. "We focus on value-added. It is the largest segment in produce for us. We offer 15 or 16 salad types, cut fruit and veggies, sliced and diced peppers, onions and soup mixes, both ready-to-cook and ready-to serve."

Diverse selection is one of the primary elements of this store's mission statement. That diversity is part of the young store's success and, John comments, "Customers say, 'You brought us back to cooking because you have everything I am looking for.'"

DeCicco's Ardsley intentionally works with several suppliers to achieve its produce array. "Bigger is not always better when it comes to suppliers," Joe notes.

"We focus on quality and selection, even if it means using unconventional means of supply," John adds. "The trick is finding the right suppliers. We work with at least five or six produce wholesalers." DeCicco's Ardsley works with Baldor Specialty Foods in the Bronx, with both R Best and A. J. Trucco at Hunts Point, and with J. P. Jarjura & Sons in Waterbury, CT.

Displays include side-by-side merchandising of organics and conventionally grown produce. Segregating the display does not work for shoppers or for the store, says John. "We believe in integrating organics and conventional because the consumers see the price difference is not as drastic as they might think, and they buy more as a result."

pb

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Software Targets A Safer Food Supply

New functionalities open up more information sharing.

BY DUANE CRAIG

Long before food safety and traceability were making headlines, software companies were including trace-forward and trace-back functionality in produce industry programs.

Here is an alphabetical overview of industry software and its contribution to keeping the food supply safe.

dPRODUCEMAN SOFTWARE

Charles Shafae, president, dProduceMan Software, Half Moon Bay, CA, worked his way through college at a California produce market. "I knew the specifics that existed at the [produce] market and I had the background for both computers and business," he says. Since then, dProduceMan has grown from an accounting package to include all other aspects needed by a produce business.

The ability to trace product runs throughout the software package. "To be able to trace, you have to be able to trace through the invoice, the order and the payables," he explains. "The idea is to know where it came from and where it went as well as when it came in and exactly where it was stored."

dProduceMan has a stand-alone version and a Web-based edition. Both have the same functionality but the Web-based version is maintained on dProduceMan servers and is fee based. The benefits include not having to have the hardware in-house, information available anywhere the user can access the Internet plus data and content backed up in two places each night.

The company is currently looking for customers to beta test a new functionality that will allow anyone with the proper authorization to enter a lot number and track the lot's origin. "This will allow our

clients' customers to track the origin of the products they have purchased," he explains.

FAMOUS SOFTWARE, LLC

In 1975 Famous Software, LLC, Fresno, CA, provided software for inventory management and grower accounting. Today, it provides an all-inclusive business solution for thousands of produce industry customers in North America and beyond.

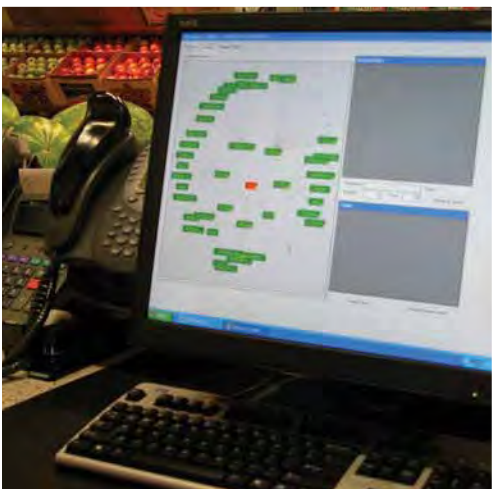
The software keys on the purchase order (PO) and sales order. In between, pallets are identified with a ticket linked to the sales order. Pallet tickets can be bar code or RFID. The system is made up of several modules that fit businesses throughout the chain up to retail. The software also integrates with all e-commerce packages adding more functionality to traceability through the various portals.

"You can identify where the crop came from," explains Ray Connelly, sales manager. "We're able to do that with Famous all the way from field to fork. We can track it from the field of origin where it was harvested, when it was received into inventory, when it was packed, all the way through to when it was sold and who it was sold to. Quantity is tracked through the systems and dollars are tracked as well."

Using a drill icon, the user can see where more information resides and easily call it up to the screen. The company is currently in a pilot to integrate all Famous sites. So if growers and packers and their marketing or distribution companies are running Famous, their systems will be able to talk to each other and even accomplish front-end transactions. "This is all how we're trying to enhance visibility to the complete supply chain and provide full traceability," he adds.

KIRKEY PRODUCTS GROUP

According to Don Walborn, vice president of sales and technology, Kirkey Products Group, Longwood, FL, all produce industry software companies provide traceability. The ongoing challenge is making the information more easily accessible. "We need to continue to work to consolidate all the information



throughout the supply chain."

Walborn sees a need for all software manufacturers to design packages that can talk to one another. "We have to be a repository," he explains. "That's crucial. Does the software store external information? Is it easily accessible?"

Kirkey's goal is to make the database more accessible more efficiently. "The technology is there. It's technically possible to get the information, but technology doesn't help if you don't know the nomenclature.

"We need a data pool so the end users can get to the data they need. Kirkey has opened its database and made it more user-friendly in terms of data extracts and data pools," he notes.

MEASURE

Measure, Las Vegas, NV, creates software for fresh-cut companies and other processors. Its software tracks all purchases of raw components incorporated into a recipe. When a commodity is purchased, each container is issued a PO lot number linked to the database record that reveals the vendor, receiving date and person who received it. The record might also include inspection information such as time, temperature and condition. When the lot is ready for processing, it is added to a work order for a particular recipe.

All the people who handle the lot become a part of the record. "We have touch screens on the shop floor. As employees are clocking in and clocking out of each job, we track who's touching the product and what they're doing with it," says Mark Van Leeuwen, president.

As work orders are closed, their numbers plus the sales order number travel with the finished product to the customer. The final customer can tell when the item was produced, what raw materials were used, where they came from, who the processor was, who handled it, what they did to it and temperature and condition information at various stages in the product's life.

"We're one of the few that has that level of detail available with just a few clicks of the mouse," says Van Leeuwen. "We're successful because we have the ability to provide that information accurately, consistently and quickly. We do inventory control, payables, receivables and general ledger — we do all the main business functions but what we do that sets us apart is we have all that plus traceability and lot recall."

MOTEK

Motek, Beverly Hills, CA, focuses on warehouse management. Priya, its only software product, notes Caroline Neal, director of marketing, is "a warehouse management sys-

tem that manages all aspects of inventory and labor within the four walls of the warehouse." The package, which includes lot code tracking, operates in real time while tracking things such as expiration dates and shelf life.

The software allows a wide range of data to be captured. For example, a location is assigned to a forklift so the user knows not only the product was at Point A and later at Point B but also how it got between the two points. If workers sign on to forklifts, the person who moved the product is also identified. Storage conditions, such as temperature and humidity, can be tracked, and inspections and their results are also recorded.

Priya excels within the warehouse but is not confined to it. "A good WMS [warehouse management system] will also reach beyond the walls," says Jay Dinwoodie, CIO. "We reach out to other systems so we know a lot about the origins of products. Our customers run very high percentages of accuracy. What they think they received, they really received; what they think is on the shelf is really on the shelf; when they think they got it is when they really got it; where they think they put it is where they really put it; and when they think they shipped it and to whom really shipped it and where they shipped it are all what really happened."

PARK CITY GROUP

The software from Park City Group, Park City, UT, sells primarily to supermarkets, convenience stores and restaurants; it specializes in production planning, inventory control and product quality.

"Our primary mission is to help retailers monitor freshness so they're not overextending shelf lives," says CFO Will Dunlavy. A client building recipes includes procedures and the software can provide online training to get employees up to speed. It also ties into the front end of the store so out-of-code items cannot be rung up, preventing potential foodborne illness problems. The software can also be set up to trace a product through its cycle.

"The ability to tie a barcode into the register system is a unique opportunity that we offer," says Park City's Dunlavy. "That is a very strong item for food safety. Procedures have to be followed and our software helps to track those procedures."

Online task management allows a store to specify a task for a produce worker and follow up to ensure it was completed. The software also offers a method for coaching and teaching about produce handling. In addition, it can tie into refrigeration systems that generate status messages, thereby providing a way to send notifications when products are threatened by environmental factors.



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PRODUCE PRO

The software from Produce Pro, Inc., Woodridge, IL, is an all-in-one package with a few modules to be added as needed.

"Every component of the system software is under our control," says Steve Reilly, national sales manager. "Everything is fully integrated — all the data, all the logic flows as it should. We don't have anything off the shelf from another vendor that we forced into our system.

"From day one, the software has had traceability by default," he adds. "It's not a new feature — it's here full-blown. It answers all questions users would need to know about the product they are distributing. Every step of the way, from the moment an item is procured, it is fully traceable."

Even before the product is physically received, the system is tracking it as a lot. Any information the user wants to have associated with the product is easily accommodated. Beyond the physical movement of produce, the software allows users to track a record of the people who handled the lot and records of inspections. Lots can also be identified by quality and all documents associated with them are available to authorized users. Another unique aspect of Produce Pro is that it goes beyond just software. Of the approximately 40 people who work

for the company, 75 percent or so are technically oriented to both software and the produce industry. Reilly emphasizes the system evolves daily by following ideas from employees and produce companies.

SILVER CREEK

Boise, ID-based Silver Creek Software (SCS) "is many things for many people, from the inexperienced users who want their software to simplify their business and automate their processes, to the users who like to learn and do things on their own," says Tina Reminger, vice president. "Our clients can delve into more complicated things, like designing data drillers and writing complex technical reports. The program can also accommodate those who want to keep things simple and spend as little time as possible on their computers to get their essential duties done."

The lot tracking options in SCS' Visual Produce accounting and management software allow for tracking items and/or lots. Users can look up where the product came from and which customers the product was shipped to. Another built-in food-safety option involves food inspection records. Visual Produce records the frequency, quantity and reasons food products are returned. This history helps when choosing suppliers

for new orders. Reminger emphasizes the software's ability to track rapidly moving inventory in a time- and cost-effective manner, minimizing the difficulty of implementing warehouse inventory systems. She stresses a warehouse system is useful to determine the source of food contamination and minimize the scope of recalls.

Visual Produce Grower Accounting software pinpoints the exact location on a farm where a particular product originated and helps make food recalls more effective. SCS has also created an audit report that keeps track of food-safety information for each item a grower supplies, including expiration dates, audit numbers and inspection numbers.

SOLID SOFTWARE SOLUTIONS

Henri Morris, president, Solid Software Solutions, Houston, TX, maintains that huge volumes of produce moving quickly through terminals and distribution centers are crying out for some type of efficient tracking — and his company's Edible Software offers just that in the form of software that works on personal digital assistants (PDAs).

"It is difficult for the vast majority of companies to track produce because it moves so incredibly fast," says Morris. "The turnover is so fast and furious that between when it is



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received and when it is sent out, there's no way they can adequately track and monitor it. We saw that technology was moving into handheld capabilities, so we've come up with a number of handheld PDA solutions."

The PDAs, supplied by others, are industrial strength; they hold up to cold, hot and wet conditions and can survive being dropped. They include barcode readers and scanners and have wireless capability.

When a PO is created or a shipment arrives at the warehouse, the software produces large pallet labels with bar codes, which are affixed to the pallets. Using a PDA to scan the bar code on the label, users can identify what is on the pallet, the vendor, pallet number and PO number. A clear plas-

tic pouch that includes labels for each individual case on the pallet is put on the side of the pallet. If the pallet is broken down, the individual case labels are affixed to the product being removed so the record of that item's identity is maintained as it continues through the supply chain. In this manner, the system satisfies the requirement to be able to trace the origins of a produce item.

WAUDWARE

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, F. Charles Waud, president, WaudWare, Brampton, ON, Canada, supplied accounting systems to produce companies. One wanted to do more on the inventory side so Waud created software to fit the bill. It started with

inventory counting and lot control and went on to become PICS (Produce Inventory Control System), a full-blown system that has general ledger, accounting and everything else a produce company would need. Originally marketed to wholesalers, today's package also is used by jobbers, packers, growers, a catering operation and even a flower store.

"Around 9/11, we started becoming more aware of traceability and food safety," notes Waud. "Food safety is a lot about people keeping their plants and facilities clean and making sure the components going into their products are watched."

A Web-based track-and-trace module is due out this summer. Customers will be able to put it online and open it up to their customers and vendors to see what was sold and where it went. On the flip side, a customer could log in and look at the product it bought from the company and see where it came from. "So it would go up and down the distribution chain by one level," he confirms.

Another aspect helps with lot control, keeping incoming product shipments separate. The software is also ported to PDAs. WaudWare provides full service, which includes the hardware, or they hook the customer up with a hardware provider. **pb**

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New York State Vegetable Report

In season, New York state provides the East Coast with a long list of fresh vegetables.

BY JACQUELINE ROSS LIEBERMAN

According to the New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets (NYSDAM) Albany, NY, the state's top vegetables are sweet corn, potatoes, cabbage, snap beans and onions.

"We're the second leading producer of cabbage in the nation. It's our second biggest crop — second to sweet corn," notes Jessica Chittenden, NYSDAM director of communications. New York's sweet corn production ranks fourth in the nation, potatoes 14th, snap beans fifth and onions sixth. The state ranks fifth for principal fresh market vegetable production.

New York's total value of vegetable production in 2006 was \$376 million, according to NYSDAM, \$339 million of which was fresh market.

Most New York vegetables are available in summer and fall. "We also have some vegetables started in hoophouses, also called greenhouses," Chittenden adds, allowing for early spring items, such as salad greens and asparagus. "It allows our farmers to get a little bit of a head start on the season.

"Then it goes to the first snowfall, with squashes and cabbage," she continues. Storage items, such as onions and potatoes, are available from New York year-round.

New York growers are harvesting a wider variety of vegetables for the area's changing demographics. "We are a melting pot here in New York state, so farmers are growing different crops," says Chittenden. Many are growing ethnic specialties. "We're seeing tomatillos, bok choy and various green leafy Asian vegetables. Instead of growing masses of traditional crops — especially farmers with crops going into New York City — we're seeing farmers grow these specialty crops."

Asian and Latin specialties top the list. "The Asian and Hispanic communities are demanding fresh

produce," she notes. "We're also seeing demand from the restaurant industry for these specialty crops, and when they're looking for these products, they're often looking locally."

Most of what is grown in New York stays relatively local. "Given that the majority of our vegetable production is fresh market, the main markets for vegetables in New York state are urban areas like New York City and the upstate cities, as well as out-of-state markets in New Jersey, New England, Pennsylvania and Canada," says Thomas Lindberg, NYSDAM assistant commissioner.

"We are marketing more regionally, from Florida all the way to Ontario, generally east of the Mississippi," notes Sam Zappala, owner, Empire Fresh-Cuts LLC, Oswego, NY. "We're in a hub section."

QUALITY MATTERS

New York has a reputation for flavorful vegetables. It "is generally known for a very pungent onion. It's a good onion for cooking and adds a great deal of flavor to whatever's being cooked," says Joel Fierman, president, Joseph Fierman & Son, Inc., Bronx, NY. "We use their onion crop all winter long."

Sweet corn is one of the state's most cherished vegetables. "Our sweet corn growers take pride in growing different varieties," says Chittenden. "It's amazing the difference between the varieties — the flavor and the texture."

New York state growers, shippers and processors rely on the latest technology and methods. "You try to buy the best seeds and stay with a strict packing program. You stick with a good crew," explains Andrew Gurda, manager, A. Gurda Produce, Inc., Pine Island, NY. "You have to have a strict nutrient program and fertilizer program."

Phillip Schmidt, president, Philip A. Schmidt & Son Farms, Inc., Riverhead, NY, says his farm's 10,000 square feet of greenhouses let him plant earlier and ensure a more consistent crop. "Early on, it is transplanted, so we have a more uniform quality at harvest," he explains. Later, "We vacuum-cool the lettuce so it has a better shelf life once it leaves here."

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Other companies take technology a step further. Koppert Cress USA, Lake Success, NY, grows live micro-greens for Coosemans Worldwide Specialty Produce, Miami, FL, which sells them to restaurants and restaurant distributors with some to retail stores. The sprouts are grown in a cellulose medium and shipped live throughout the United States and to the Bahamas and Caribbean. "They are unknown aromatic herbs and they are still alive. Nobody else does that," says Nicolas Mazard, Koppert's manager.

New techniques also help processors. "In our business, when you go from a raw product to create cuts and slices, you're using new technology every day," says Zappala. Empire also uses the latest technology to ensure security at its facility. "When you're marketing a product with the bio-terrorism and homeland security issues, people feel that food security is important."

NYSIDAM does its part to help growers ensure good food-safety practices. "Our produce quality-assurance program provides third-party certification of growing practices," says Chittenden. "It's for food safety, basically. More and more companies are looking for that third-party certification."

MARKETING

New York companies offering packaged

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Pine Island, NY

Reader Service # 96



NY Growers Suffer Labor Problems

Labor issues have plagued American farmers for years. This is very apparent in New York, where expenses are high and many vegetable crops are labor-intensive. "The government has made a terrible situation for us," says Maureen Torrey Marshall, vice president, Torrey Farms, Inc., Elba, NY. If the federal government does not enact a guest worker program soon, she fears it could be the end of American farming as we know it.

While growers try to employ only legal workers, many farm workers present false documentation, so approximately 70 percent are illegal immigrants, according to Torrey Marshall. The result is that many in this unstable workforce are often forced to leave without notice.

For growers in New York state, she says, "Labor last fall was as high as 30 percent short. Some growers were even greater than that."

The underlying problem may be that Americans simply do not want to work in the fields. "They don't want to get their hands dirty," claims Torrey Marshall. "Teenagers today — do they want to go out in the field to pick strawberries or cut cabbage? No. They'll go out and work at Starbucks, no matter what the pay is."

Immigrants are often the only people willing to work in the fields. "They want to come to our country to work. Farm work has always been a traditional entry-level job," she explains.

"If we don't get something passed this year, any vegetable that requires a lot of labor is going to be grown somewhere else," says Torrey Marshall. "The question becomes, 'Are we going to import our food or are we going to import our labor?'"

"Some people are looking to move their farm operation abroad. Some people are just quitting," she notes. "The best farmland also builds the best houses."

Other growers may stop producing vegetables. "Quite a few of them will go to grain or what will be machine-harvested," predicts Torrey Marshall.

"What's so hard is we can look across the border and Canada's got a workable guest worker program," she adds. "Retailers and wholesalers need to lend their support and call their congressmen and senators and help keep their suppliers in business."

pb

vegetables often include information about the product's origin on the package. Many of Schmidt & Son's packaged products have a *Grown on Long Island* logo.

NYSIDAM also helps market New York vegetables. "Numerous programs support our New York farmers," says Chittenden. One of the best-known is *Pride of New York*, which uses an emblem to identify New York-grown products in stores and restaurants and participates in cooperative advertising and marketing materials.

A grant program helps farmers with cost-sharing projects, such as the *Farm-to-Chef Express*. NYSIDAM helps fund a truck that chefs and small stores in New York City can contract to go to small farms and bring produce directly back to them, addressing the distribution problem to the city. The truck often makes several stops before heading back to the city.

LOCAL PRODUCE

"People like New York state-grown," proclaims Charles Cassaro, produce manager, Grace's Marketplace, an independent grocery store on Manhattan's Upper East Side. "They ask for it. They think it tastes better. They love it."

"With the food safety issue, people are starting to say, 'We want it locally grown,'"

says Schmidt.

"There have been a lot of articles about the benefits of buying local," says Joseph Casa, president, Harbor View Foods, Inc., Mt. Sinai, NY. "King Kullen is a Long Island-based, family-owned company that's active in the community and wants to support Long Island businesses. In summer, when Long Island product is available, they give it precedence over everyone else. They have over 100 SKUs of Long Island-grown produce.

"They have advertising at the store level. If they have Long Island-grown lettuce, they have a sign saying this is a Long Island produce," he continues. "It's very important to King Kullen's shoppers. The people out there know King Kullen has a lot of local product, and they go in for that."

"Now the other chains are getting involved in Long Island produce and getting into their stores," says Casa.

Signs let shoppers know what comes from New York, adds Cassaro. "When people come into the store, they see New York produce right away. It's in the front of the store."

"We get our product to our customer in hours, not days," says Zappala. "Moving product from the West Coast to the East Coast is a three-, four-day trip. We're able to move our product to the market with almost next-day delivery."

pb

PRODUCE FOODSERVICE PORTFOLIO

For distributors and wholesalers, the information that follows — *recipes, tips and techniques, product availability, unique attributes, company contact information and much more* — is perfectly designed to be passed down to operators.

For retailers, this information is ideal for your own prepared food operations.

Restaurant operations will also find it perfectly on the mark for everyday use.

The Ninth Annual PRODUCE BUSINESS Produce Foodservice Portfolio is filled with fresh ideas for using fresh product. Use the portfolio often and wisely, and get valuable fresh ideas to help make the foodservice market a growing part of our bottom line.

FOR ADDITIONAL COPIES OF THIS YEAR'S PRODUCE BUSINESS FOODSERVICE PORTFOLIO, PLEASE CONTACT US AT 561-994-1118 OR EMAIL AT PRODUCEBUSINESS@PHOENIXMEDIANET.COM

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Caribbean Sunrise and Caribbean Red Papayas



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CALIFORNIA TOMATO FARMERS
Tomatoes



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DRISCOLL'S
Premium Fresh Berries



Pg. 104

HMC GROUP MARKETING
Grapes



Pg. 106

HOLLANDIA PRODUCE
Live Gourmet Living Watercress



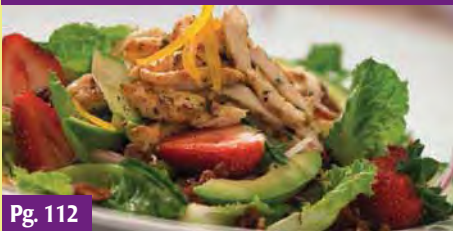
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Onions



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BROOKS TROPICALS LLC

Caribbean Sunrise and Caribbean Red Papayas

Papaya And Crabmeat Supreme Salad

Serves: 4

Ingredients

- 1 6½-ounce can of crabmeat, flaked
- 8 ounces celery, thinly sliced
- 1 lime
- 8 ounces toasted slivered almonds
- 2 Caribbean Sunrise papayas, halved and seeded

1. Mix crabmeat and celery. Chill.
2. Slice lime in half and add juice from one of the halves to the crabmeat and celery. Add slivered almonds.
3. Spoon into papayas and garnish with wedges of lime, cut from the remaining ½ lime.

Source: *Episoft Systems, Meal-Master Recipe Database*



Products Available

Chop them up or scoop them out and fill them up. Papayas contain their own dish. Fill them with crabmeat salad, yogurt or other fresh fruit, and your diners will be asking, "What's that customer getting?"

For the perfect sized 'dish,' try Caribbean Sunrise papayas, naturally sweet — between 11 and 13 on the Brix scale. Caribbean Red papayas are large and quick-and-easy to chop for appetizers, entrées or desserts. Brooks grows both the Caribbean Red and the Caribbean Sunrise papaya on its farms in Belize. Both papayas are available year-round.

Papayas are great for breakfast, lunch or dinner. For more recipe ideas go to www.brookstropicals.com/chefscorner.



Brooks Tropicals, LLC

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305-246-5827

maryo@brookstropicals.com

Tips And Techniques

Availability: Year-round

Description: The Caribbean Red is a large, Maradol-type papaya. The Caribbean Sunrise is a solo papaya that is oval to round in shape

Storage temperature: 55° to 58°; to ripen faster store at 72° to 78°

Humidity: 85% to 95%

Ethylene production and sensitivity: High

Shelf-life: 3 to 10 days. Once ripen, 1 to 2 days.

Ripeness: Papayas should have smooth skins that often appear mottled or freckled. The freckles do not impact flavor. With a high sugar break, papayas may be ready to eat starting at half color if the fruit yields to gentle pressure.



PAPAYAS

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Papaya and crabmeat supreme

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Reader Service # 79

CALIFORNIA TOMATO FARMERS

Tomatoes

California Tomato Farmers Announce *The Fresh Standard*

Recently a new organization called California Tomato Farmers was formed in California's fresh tomato industry. California Tomato Farmers is a cooperative made up of farmers committed to a new standard for how we grow tomatoes. We call these guidelines *The Fresh Standard*, which means when you buy a tomato from one of our members you can be assured the tomatoes are of the highest quality, grown under the strictest food safety standards by workers who enjoy a positive work environment.



California Tomato Farmers recognizes food safety is a priority concern for our foodservice customers. That is why we have developed mandatory standards for growing and packing tomatoes and all California Tomato Farmers members are being audited by USDA inspectors to verify the standards have been met.

Members of California Tomato Farmers include the most reputable producers of California field grown tomatoes repre-



senting nearly nine out every 10 fresh tomatoes produced in the state. Below is a list of our membership. For more information, please visit the cooperative's Website at www.californiatomatofarmers.com.

Members of California Tomato Farmers grow tomatoes for the following companies: Ace Tomato Company Inc.; The DiMare Company; Gargiulo, Inc.; HS Packing/JTL Produce Sales; Live Oak Farms; Oceanside Produce/Harry Singh & Sons; Pacific Triple E/Triple E Produce, San Joaquin Tomato Growers and Sun Pacific.

Tips And Techniques

USING CALIFORNIA FIELD GROWN TOMATOES:

Whether round, Roma or grape, field-grown tomatoes from California Tomato Farmers are perfect for use in a variety of restaurant applications. Use California field-grown tomatoes on sandwiches, burgers, salads, garnishes and even drinks. Pair with lean, healthful meats and whole grain breads, include in decadent burgers, serve with artisan cheese, add to meal-sized salads of every sort and just imagine a delicious Bloody Mary made with fresh California-grown tomatoes.

HANDLING

Maintaining proper temperature is the most important factor in ensuring quality of fresh tomatoes. UNRIPE tomatoes should be stored at 55° to 65°F and 85% to 95% relative humidity to complete the ripening process. RIPE tomatoes should be held at slightly lower temperatures — 50° to 60°F — and 85% to 95% relative humidity. For the best quality, ripe tomatoes should not be refrigerated below 50°F.

Products Available

Fresh field-grown California tomatoes are available through California Tomato Farmers members from mid-May through November and are produced in the California growing regions of the San Joaquin Valley along with Ventura and San Diego counties.



**California Tomato
Farmers**

Fresno, CA

Phone:

559-261-2630

Fax:

559-261-9804

www.californiatomatofarmers.com

TOMATOES FOR EVERY TASTE.
FROM GROWERS WITH A TASTE FOR QUALITY.



The members of *California Tomato Farmers* are as different as the varieties we grow, from mature greens to Romas, grapes to vine ripe, representing the entire tomato category. But we're united in our commitment to quality... to growing tomatoes that go beyond industry requirements and meet our own demanding standard – “The Fresh Standard” – incorporating cutting-edge farming practices, the strictest food safety measures, a passion for social accountability and a commitment to sales support. Quality tomatoes from quality members. So you can pick the best – and most profitable – variety for your needs.



California Tomato Farmers is a producer owned cooperative composed of members whose fresh tomatoes are grown by or for Ace Tomato Co. Inc., The DiMare Company, Gargiulo Inc., HS Packing/JTL Produce, Live Oak Farms, San Joaquin Tomato Growers, Oceanside Produce/Harry Singh & Sons, Pacific Triple E/Triple E Produce and Sun Pacific.

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Mix all ingredients to taste.



Tips And Techniques

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Trust the Driscoll's Brand – The Finest Berries in the World®.

- Berries should be moved quickly to refrigerated storage. Hold them at 32° to 34° F.
- Avoid standing water. Do not store under refrigerator condenser units.
- Wash berries with a light rinse *immediately before serving*.

Unique Attributes

Fresh Driscoll's Berries add excitement and sales to any menu. From luscious, traditional dessert items, breakfast toppings and entrées, to salads, even center of the plate — the great assortment of Driscoll's berries means excitement and increased check averages any time of day. Look for Driscoll's strawberries, raspberries, blueberries and blackberries. Add even more delight with specialty berries such as Driscoll's famous long stem strawberries and unique golden raspberries.

Products Available

Our mission is to continually delight berry consumers by providing the highest quality berries in the world. To do this, Driscoll's develops superior berry varieties grown by independent farmers in carefully chosen locations to produce a truly delightful eating experience with every Driscoll's berry – The Finest Berries in the World®.

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Reader Service # 19

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- Available Year Round from your local produce distributor



The Lunch Bunch



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- 2 ounce single serve bags
- 1 lb bags ideal for salad bars and restaurants

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Chicken Salad With Pecans And Grapes



Ingredients

- 2 Cups cooked chicken meat
- 1 1/2 Cups seedless Grape Escape grapes, rinsed and cut in half
- 1/4 Cup celery, diced
- 1 Cup pecans, toasted and coarsely chopped
- 2 Tbsp basil, fresh, chopped
- 1/2 Cup green onions, thinly sliced
- 1 Cup mayonnaise
- 1/4 Tsp salt
- 1/4 Tsp black pepper, ground
- 1 Tbsp lemon juice, fresh

Directions

Combine all salad ingredients in a bowl and mix well.
To make sandwiches, use about 1/4 cup salad and layer between bread and lettuce.

Serving Suggestions

Serve as a side or entrée salad, or as a sandwich filling.

Other Notes

This works great with rotisserie chicken from the deli counter!



Products Available



Lunch Bunch Pack Size	Cartons/Pallet	Tie/Hi	Cube
150 Count (21lbs)	88	8 x 11	.903
5# Cartons	240	24 x 10	.277
4# Clam Shells	264	24 x 11	.277
Grape Escape			
150 2 oz. Bags	66	6 x 11	1.29
18 1 lb. Bags	66	6 x 11	1.29

Tips And Techniques



- The ideal holding conditions for grapes are 32 -34 F with a 90 percent to 95 percent relative humidity.
- Avoid storing grapes next to green onions, as their odor will tend to be adsorbed by grapes.
- Never store or display grapes where they will come in direct contact with ice or iced products, as this will damage the grapes.
- Stack grape lugs to allow for air circulation around all sides.
- Generate add-on revenue as a take-out item.
- Provide a signature ingredient for sensational salads and entrees – they're always juicy and beautiful, even when heated
- Plate enhancement: What's better than a plump, colorful cluster of fresh Lunch Bunch grapes?

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Unique Attributes



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Ideal for

- Camps
- Restaurants
- Schools
- Hospitals
- Country Clubs

the Lunch Bunch®



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Available in

- 2 ounce single serve bags
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- Plums
- Nectarines
- White Flesh
- California Table Grapes
- Red Seedless Green Seedless
- Black Seedless
- Lunch Bunch Grape Escape



For more information call 1-800-LunchBunch

HOLLANDIA PRODUCE

Live Gourmet Living Watercress

Watercress Salad with Beets and Pistachio-Crusted Brie

A restaurant-quality salad with great flavors and simple enough to make at home.

Serves 4 as an appetizer.

Ingredients

- ½ cup chopped pistachios
- 1 8-ounce wheel triple crème Brie, cut into 12 wedges
- 12 baby or 6 regular beets, greens trimmed (about 1 pound)
- ¼ cup white balsamic vinegar (see note)
- 1 shallot, minced
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt, plus more to taste
- ¼ teaspoon finely ground pepper, plus more to taste
- ¼ cup pistachio oil (see note)
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 2 heads Live Gourmet Living Watercress, top half (leafy parts) only

Place pistachios on a plate. Gently press cut sides of Brie wedges into nuts. Place coated wedges on a plate and freeze for at least 1 hour.

Combine beets and enough cold water to cover by 1 inch in a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil over high heat, reduce to a simmer, cover, and cook until tender, 20 to 30 minutes.



Drain, and under cold running water, slip off and discard skins and stems. Cut beets into wedges, place in a medium bowl, and set aside.

In a large bowl, whisk together vinegar, shallot, salt and pepper. Whisk in pistachio and olive oils. Drizzle about 2 tablespoons dressing over beets and toss. Add additional salt and pepper to taste. Add Live Gourmet Living Watercress to bowl with remaining dressing and toss. Add additional salt and pepper to taste. Divide watercress among 4 serving plates. Arrange beets around watercress, dividing evenly.

Heat a 10- or 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add Brie wedges, crusted side down, and cook until browned, about 1½ minutes. Carefully turn and cook other crusted side until brown, about 1½ minutes more. Arrange three Brie wedges on each plate and serve.

Note: White balsamic vinegar and pistachio oil are available at many specialty food stores.

Tips And Techniques

- To maximize shelf life, keep refrigerated at 34° to 40° F
- Rinse thoroughly before use.
- Use what you need from the bunch, leaving any unused portion with its roots intact and return to refrigeration.

Unique Attributes

Live Gourmet Living Watercress is iceless and stays fresher longer than conventional watercress because it is harvested with its roots intact to preserve freshness.

Live Gourmet Living Watercress requires nominal processing and no discarding of woody stems. Our smaller, more delicate stems are edible, contain flavor and can be incorporated into your recipes.

Watercress is a very nutritious leafy green rich in vitamins A and C, calcium and iron.

Our living watercress has a peppery flavor providing a zesty contrast to other greens, it complements meat and cheese dishes and makes great sandwiches and wraps.

Products Available

At Hollandia Produce, we back all of our Live Gourmet Living Lettuces and Living Watercress with category-leading quality assurance and food safety programs. Unmatched product uniformity and stable year-round pricing helps fix your cost and provides a consistent quality for all your signature dishes.



Hollandia Produce

P.O. Box 1327
Carpinteria, CA 93014

Phone:
805-684-4146
Fax:
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info@livegourmet.com
www.livegourmet.com



Living Watercress

It's Fast

Live Gourmet Living Watercress is so easy to use because prep time is minimal. There's no woody stems, it's iceless and it only needs a quick rinse. Then it's all ready to go!

It's Fresh

Hydroponically-grown and harvested with its roots intact, Live Gourmet Living Watercress is the freshest watercress you can buy! "It's absolutely fresh because its still alive!"

It's Flavorful

Award-winning Live Gourmet Living Watercress received a Gold Medal for Superior Taste from the American Academy of Taste. Just like the rest of the Live Gourmet Family!



"Live Gourmet Living Watercress is rich in color, loaded with flavor and uniform bunch after bunch. It adds a zesty flavor to wraps, salads, soups and sandwiches and can be highlighted in an entrée or used as a garnish. I just love using it!"

Chef Jill Silverman Hough

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Stringless Sugar Snap® Peas

Lively Lemon Sugar Snap® Pea Salad Topped With Crunchy Almonds

According to research, the popularity of salads seems to increase every year as diners include more vegetables in their diets. Here, sweet Sugar Snap® Peas pair perfectly with tangy lemon and toasted almond slivers. This appealing duo will please your customers and enhance your profit margins. They make a better dish worth a better price.

Yield: 24 Servings ½ cup each

Ingredients

- 3 pounds (3 quarts) Mann's Stringless Sugar Snap® Peas
- 3 tablespoons finely chopped lemon zest
- 6 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 6 cloves finely chopped garlic
- ½ tablespoon salt
- ¾ teaspoon crushed red pepper (optional)
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- ¾ cup olive oil
- 1 pound (1½ cups) thinly sliced green onion
- 6 ounces (1½ cups) toasted slivered almonds

Toppers

Mixed baby lettuces for garnish



Lemon slices for garnish

1. Blanch Sugar Snap® Peas in salted, boiling water for 45 seconds from the moment the peas are added. Do not overcook even briefly or peas will become too soft.
2. Drain immediately plunge into ice water for several minutes until cool. Do not soak. Drain thoroughly; reserve.
3. Whisk together lemon zest, lemon juice, garlic, salt, crushed red pepper and black pepper. Whisk in oil; reserve.

PER ORDER

Toss ½ cup Sugar Snap® Peas and 1 tablespoon green onion with 1 tablespoon dressing. Arrange on a serving plate. Garnish with a small bouquet of baby lettuces and lemon slices. Sprinkle with 1 tablespoon toasted almonds.

Tips And Techniques

Delicious raw. Offer as a fresh, simple appetizer and serve with citrus-based dips. When cooking, blanch or sauté very slightly. These peas cook quickly and over cooking can cause a loss in flavor, color and texture. Sugar Snap® Peas will not hold up well in steam trays.

- Sauté lightly in olive or sesame oil and serve on the side or in pasta and stir-frys
- Color and shape make for perfect side substitute for green beans or asparagus tips
- Blanch and toss in salad classics like Chinese chicken, or add for variety to Niçoise salad
- Blanch and season with BBQ seasoning or taco seasoning and substitute for french fries or potato chips
- Serve as an appetizer — raw or tempura style with different dips
- Stuff with gorgonzola or salmon mousse and serve tray passed for hors d'oeuvres

Unique Attributes

Mann's Stringless Sugar Snap® Peas have a sweet flavor, crunchy texture and brilliant color, which make them a perfect fit for wide range applications. The product is available year-round, at a stable price, with 16 days of shelf life. Mann has professionally developed recipes available to help you fit this new and innovative fresh vegetable onto your menus year-round!



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Daniel Bone, consumer market analyst, Datamonitor

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*Datamonitor: Profiting from Changing Snacking and Beverage Occasions



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Reader Service # 2

MILLS FAMILY FARMS

Whole Leaves

Citrus & Tarragon Tossed Chicken Salad

Serves: 6-8

Ingredients

- 2 bags of Mills Family Farms Green Cascade Mix®
- 4 boneless skinless chicken breasts
- 1 basket strawberries, top off and quartered
- 1 small red onion, sliced
- 10 cherry tomatoes, cut in half
- 1 avocado, diced
- 10 radishes, quartered

Dressing

- 2 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 2 tablespoon honey
- 2 tablespoon orange juice
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 2 teaspoon minced shallot
- 4 tablespoon rice vinegar
- 2 tablespoon red wine vinegar
- ¾ cup olive oil
- 1 teaspoon salt & pepper
- 2 teaspoon minced tarragon



Combine in medium bowl and mix well to make dressing.

Over medium heat, grill chicken breasts until done and let cool. Once cool, cut into ¼-inch thick slices. In a large bowl, toss together Mills Family Farms Green Cascade Mix®, strawberries, red onion, tomatoes, avocado and radishes. Drizzle with dressing, add chicken and toss. Serve immediately.

Tips And Techniques

By gently hand tearing each leaf from the stem, each leaf's vital tissue remains intact, retaining flavor, crispness and freshness. Simply re-fold the Wholeleaves® carton liner to cover the product and refrigerate to maximize Wholeleaves® freshness and superior shelf life.

Unique Attributes

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Products Available

Available in Romaine, Romaine Hearts, Green Leaf, Red Leaf, Green Cascade Mix® and Celery, in 5- or 10-pound refrigerator-friendly cartons, Wholeleaves® offer a variety of creative uses: low-carb wrappers, deli sandwiches, burgers, plate garnish, mixed green salads, salad liners, entrée underliners, delicious ingredients in pesto, soups, wraps or appetizers



Mills Family Farms Wholeleaves®

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Phone:

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Reader Service # 3

NATIONAL WATERMELON PROMOTION BOARD

Watermelon

Weight Watchers' Thai Style Fruit Medley

Serves: 4; Per serving: 127 calories;
3.5 g fat; 2.5 g fiber

Ingredients

- 2 cups watermelon chunks (seeds removed or seedless)
- 2 cups honeydew melon chunks
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 1 ripe medium banana
- 2 tablespoons shredded coconut
- 2 tablespoons chopped peanuts

1. In large bowl combine watermelon chunks, honeydew chunks, lime juice, and sugar, tossing well.
2. Peel and slice banana; add to melon mixture and toss well.
3. Fold in coconut and peanuts; divide mixture evenly into 4 small bowls.



Selection

Pick a perfect melon — it's as easy as 1, 2, 3.

1. Look the watermelon over — choose one that's firm, symmetrical and free of bruises, cuts and dents.
2. Lift it up — it should be heavy for its size. No wonder, watermelons are 92 percent water!
3. Turn it over — on the underside there should be a butter-colored spot from where the melon sat and on the ground and ripened in the sun.

Tips And Techniques

FOOD SAFETY TIPS:

Want to be sure all that fresh-picked melon will be delicious from first bite till last?

1. Wash melon under running water and pat dry, then place on a clean cutting surface. (Handle gently to keep it from bruising.)
2. Using a clean knife, slice melon into wedges or cut the flesh from the rind into 1-inch cubes.
3. Place cut melon in a covered container or wrap securely with plastic wrap and refrigerate.

Products Available

Watermelon is not just for picnics anymore. U.S. peak production is generally April through September, but imports from Mexico and Central America are steadily rising to meet the year-round demand. Watermelon is a nutritious and delicious menu items for every day of every month, having lots of vitamins A, B6 and C, as well as lycopene, potassium and citrulline — to keep your heart healthy!



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OCEAN MIST FARMS

Artichokes

Fire-Roasted Artichoke And Tomato Balsamic Chutney

Created by: Chef Tony Baker of Montrio Bistro, Monterey, CA

Serves: 4

Portion: 1 Artichoke each

This appetizer can be scaled up for large production. I recommend the 24-count globe artichoke from Ocean Mist Farms. They are consistent and the size works well for a single serving or a shared item. Artichokes have a high perceived value yet low plate cost, making artichokes a menu winner! If you have a wood-fired grill, the flavor is truly amazing when reheating the artichokes in the fire.

Cooking An Artichoke

Preparation Time: 1 minute per an Artichoke

Cook Time: 35 minutes

This is a simple way of cooking an Ocean Mist Farms Globe Artichoke. Some people steam them, others use a pressure cooker. All are acceptable, however, the method below brings complementary flavors to the artichoke and requires no special equipment. I cook a case of 24-count artichokes at a time, for this large sized artichoke; the cook time is about 35 minutes.

Ingredients

- 1 gallon water
- 12 fluid ounces white wine vinegar
- 6 cloves garlic, peeled
- 15 peppercorns, black
- 1 bay leaf (optional)
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 4 artichokes, large

1. Place, water, vinegar, garlic, pepper, bay and salt into a large pot and bring to a boil.
2. Using a sharp serrated knife, cut the top 1½ inches from the artichoke.
3. Using a pair of scissors, trim the sharp thorns from the tips of the remaining leaves.
4. Place all of the artichokes into the boiling liquid and cover with a saucepan lid smaller than the pan you are using. This will help keep the artichokes under the liquid and keep them from discoloring.
5. Simmer for 30 to 35 minutes, depending on size.
6. The stem of the artichoke will soften when cooked.
7. Remove from cooking liquid, place on a tray upside down to cool and drain
8. Using a dessert spoon, remove the center leaves, exposing the furry choke. Remove the choke taking care not to damage the heart
9. Now the artichoke is ready for any number of preparations, stuffing, grilling or simply eating like this with some melted butter or mayonnaise.



Grilling an Artichoke

To finish off the Artichoke preparation on the grill, pre heat your grill. Wood, charcoal or gas will work, wood is best. Place the cooked artichokes in the hottest part of the fire for about 5 minutes on each side. A little char on the outside is preferred.

Tomato Balsamic Chutney

Preparation Time: 20 minutes

Cook Time: 30 minutes

Ingredients

- 5 tomatoes, large, ripe
- 1 tablespoon ginger, fresh grated
- ½ yellow onion, medium
- ½ bunch green onions
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- ½ cup brown sugar
- ½ cup golden balsamic vinegar
- ½ teaspoon cumin seed, whole toasted
- 1 bay leaf
- Salt and pepper to taste

1. Remove core and cut the tomatoes in half. Squeeze to remove seeds
2. Roughly chop the tomatoes into large diced pieces
3. Add tomatoes to the rest of the ingredients and simmer for 30 minutes.
4. Serve chutney at room temperature. The chutney can be made in bulk and canned.
5. Serve chutney over the grilled artichoke to complete the dish.



Ocean Mist Farms

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Reader Service # 71



Forked Klondike Rose™ Potatoes With Niçoise Olives & Parmigiano-Reggiano

Serving Size: 4

- 1½ pounds (680 g) Klondike Rose potatoes
- 1 cup (250 ml) Niçoise olives, pitted and roughly chopped
- 3 ounces (85 g) Italian parsley, cut julienne
- 2 ounces (57 g) extra virgin olive oil
- Kosher salt and white pepper to taste
- 2 ounces (57 g) Parmigiano-Reggiano, grated fine

Boil the Klondike Rose potatoes in well salted water until tender through. Strain potatoes and place in a bowl. Add the olives, parsley, oil and a touch of the salt and pepper. Using a dinner fork, gently “fork” the potatoes, keeping them quite chunky but mixing the other ingredients throughout. Adjust the seasoning to your taste. Sprinkle the cheese on top or feel free to mix into potatoes if so desired.

The essence of cooking is creativity. Have fun and add your own favorite ingredients. Potatoes lend themselves to many wonderful flavors!



Tips And Techniques

Potatoes should be stored in a cool, well ventilated place between 50° F and 60° F, preferably in closed or covered cartons on pallets for air circulation.

Potatoes should be stored in a dark area with a humidity of 95 to 100 percent to prevent greening.

For the fluffiest, best-tasting potatoes, wash them and place them on a baking sheet in a single layer. Pierce the skin to allow steam to escape and add a light coating of oil. Bake at 450° for 50 to 60 minutes.

Products Available

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Sweet Onions

Spinach & Cheese Stuffed Sweet Onions

Serves: 4

- 4 Tanimura & Antle® Certified Sweet™ Yellow Onions
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 tablespoons butter
- ½ cup finely diced Tanimura & Antle Red Bell Pepper
- 2 teaspoon minced garlic
- 3 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 1 tablespoon water
- 1 cup shredded white Cheddar cheese
- 8 cups coarsely chopped, rinsed Tanimura & Antle® Spinach

1. Heat oven to 425°F. Cut top one quarter off each onion. Cut out centers, leaving ½-inch thick shell; reserve tops and centers. Brush onions with oil; place cut side down in baking pan. Bake for 10 minutes. Turn onions right side up; continue baking until just tender, 10 to 15 minutes longer.
2. Chop enough reserved onion tops and centers to make 1 cup. (Reserve remaining onion for other use.) Heat butter in large skillet over medium-high heat. Sauté chopped onion until tender, 4 to 5 minutes. Add bell pepper and garlic; sauté 1 minute.
3. Reduce heat to medium. Add cream cheese and water; stir until blended. Add Cheddar cheese; stir until melted. Stir in spinach; cook just until wilted. Remove from heat; season with pepper. Spoon filling into baked onions.

Certified Sweet™ is a trademark of National Onion Labs, Inc.



Tips And Techniques

Treat sweet yellow onions as multi-purpose and flavorful additions to a wide array of dishes. With their familiar, appetite-enhancing aroma, yellows are also particularly helpful when trying to enhance plate appeal, as their color when grilled lends a visually compelling richness. The sweet red onion, with a flavor reminiscent of lighter, Mediterranean fare, lends itself more to fresh, non-cooked dishes, where its color can be the focal point to grilled meats and freshly tossed salads.

Onions are a fast, healthful way to add flavor to an array of dishes, without adding fat. Sweet onions, in particular, are welcomed as a seasonal treat, and should be noted on the menu as “sweet”, as their flavor does differ from the more common white and red storage onions. Promote sweet yellow and sweet red onions as a flavorful late-spring and summer onion varietal, and generate excitement amongst your customers.



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Reader Service # 91

PHILLIPS MUSHROOM FARMS

Mushrooms

Marinated Grilled Portabellas



Ingredients

- 4 large Phillips portabella caps, 4-6 inches in diameter
- 1 cup good-quality olive oil
- 1 cup red or white wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 tablespoon dried herbs
- ½ cup fresh herbs, finely chopped

1. Cut the stems from the caps of the mushrooms.
2. Slice each stem lengthwise.
3. Combine the rest of the ingredients and blend well with a whisk for a minute or two. Let the marinade sit for 1 hour until the herbs soften.
4. Prepare the grill*.
5. Place the mushrooms in a shallow dish or pan and pour the marinade over the mushrooms. Let the mushrooms marinate for 10 minutes, turning occasionally to ensure uniform coating.
6. Remove the mushrooms from the marinade and place on the hot grill. Grill on each side for 2-3 minutes.
7. Remove from the grill, slice and serve immediately.

**If you don't have a grill, bake the portabellas in a 350° oven for 5 to 7 minutes.*

Products Available

- Prepared salads
- Mushroom varieties

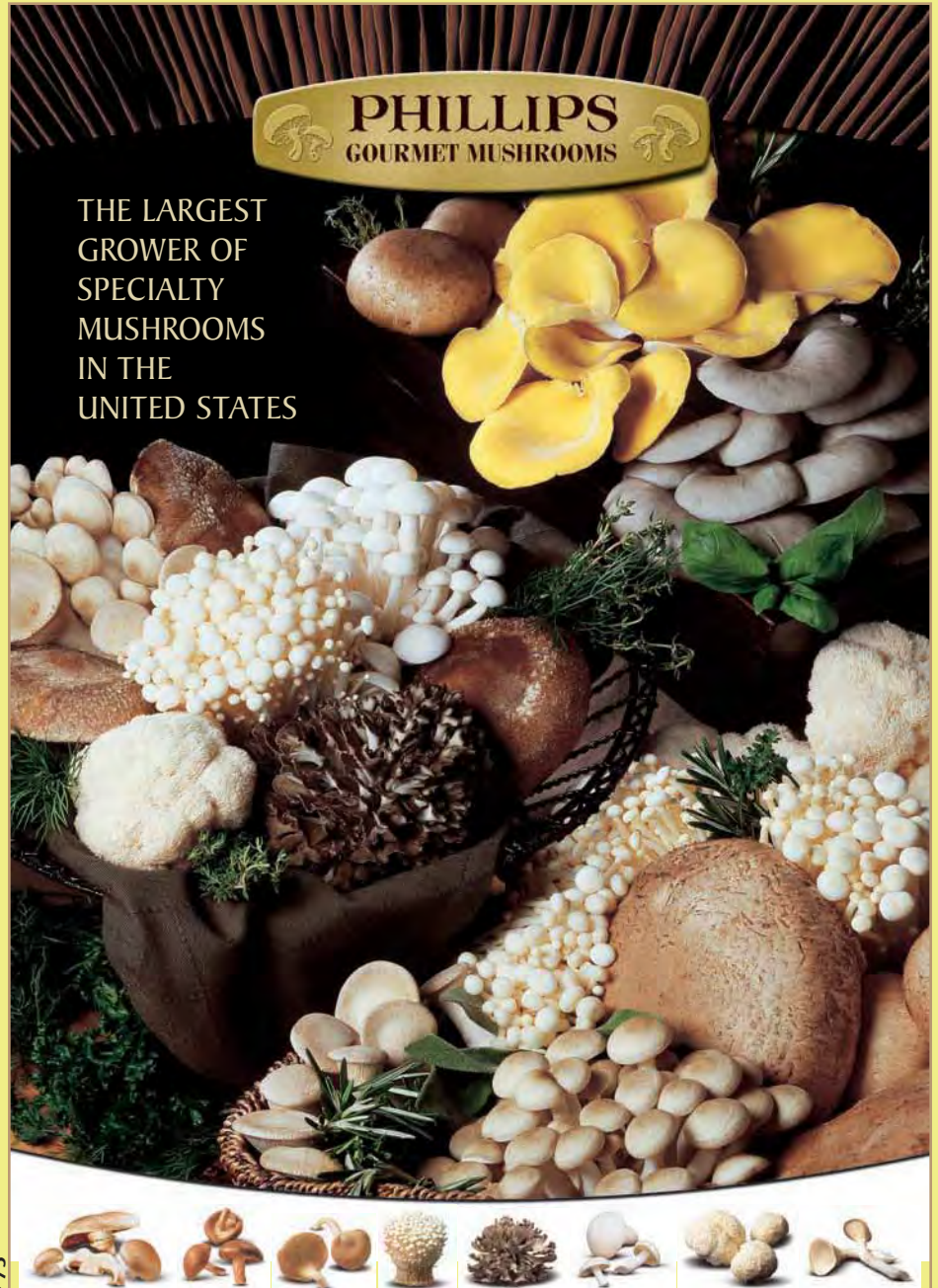


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Reader Service # 73



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The Dish On Garlic

Consumers need garlic for many dishes and retailers should capitalize on that need.

BY LYNN GALANIS

Some consumers are as passionate about garlic as others are about wine. Though garlic's bouquet may not be comparable to a Cabernet Sauvignon's, its origin can still spark heated debate. Preference for red versus white comes into play as well — California's white garlic is prized, China's garlic is extra-white, and Mexican and Argentinean varieties, with their purplish skins, are specialty items. Wherever retailers source their garlic, it's unlikely they'll be able to lure shoppers to their bins using scent.

Here, several purveyors weigh in with their opinions on the state of the industry and their best ideas for merchandising and promoting their favorite bulb.

"Everybody cares where garlic is coming from. They want the best value. So, wherever the value is, that's where they're buying garlic," claims Jim Provost of I Love Produce in West Grove, PA. "California says they have a stronger flavor than Chinese garlic. Cottage industry farmers who grow hard-neck varieties say their garlic's a lot better than California garlic, so it's all relative, but there's a market for everything."

Salvatore Vacca, president of A J Trucco, Bronx, NY, says, "I prefer the California and the Mexican garlic. We have had an influx from China, which for my taste is not as good as the California, Mexico or Argentine garlic. When I can, I always try to get the red garlic. It is very tasty."

According to Patsy Ross, vice president of



Whether bulk, packaged or processed, garlic is highly sought after by consumers.



marketing at Christopher Ranch in Gilroy, CA, "Some of our focus studies show that people are very passionate about garlic, and they told us point-blank they'll pay more for California garlic for lots of issues, so I think that actually plays out."

Provost hits on another industry hot topic. "Organics are the fastest-growing category in the produce industry. There's a pretty high margin for organic products versus conventional; however, when it comes to garlic, China is able to produce organic garlic at a price that enables supermarkets to get close to the same retail as they would normally get for conventional garlic. They can increase the usage of organics. They can achieve sales from both the conventional and the organic consumer. So it's increasing the category of

both garlic and the organic category.

"China has transformed the garlic industry," Provost continues. "China grows 66 percent of the world's garlic — 12 billion pounds — so because of the economies of scale they have, the labor advantages they have on cost, and the ability they have to choose from that amount of product and pick the very best for export, they're shipping the highest quality garlic in the market — the whitest, the biggest and the most cost effective."

It is not surprising that a California grower's thoughts lead to terroir, even when it comes to garlic. "There are only about six major growers left in the industry. Most of us grow just a couple of varieties. Different varieties will produce different color skin, but then again, the same seed in a different soil may not work," says Ross. "There's a very purple-skinned garlic grown in Mexico. It's beautiful, but we've taken that same garlic and planted it in California, and we just get little streaks of red. I think there's really

something to do with the soil, air, water and natural components probably in all of those items."

Labeling is an important issue in merchandising garlic, even when it is fresh and unprocessed. According to David Grimes, sales manager for Vessey & Company in Holtville, CA, "Stores are marketing a lot of Chinese products and the consumer doesn't have any idea that it is Chinese product. They don't know the difference. We in the industry can tell the difference on sight. I think you just need the country-of-origin labeling to know where the product comes from, and it's not in the storefronts right now. The California garlic is prevalent, but a lot of the consumers don't know where it's coming from. If the consumers had a choice, I think they would buy California garlic versus Chinese garlic."

"Mini displays of garlic next to different items such as salad mixes, potatoes or corn will drive incremental sales. Garlic is highly impulse driven. Visibility is a must!"

**— Louis Hymel
Spice World, Inc.**

MARKETING OPPORTUNITIES

A bounty of attention-getting ideas is readily available to help increase garlic sales volume. Louis Hymel of Spice World Inc., in Orlando, FL, suggests merchandising garlic based on holidays and events, such as garlic-and-guacamole dip for football season and Cinco de Mayo, and various Italian dishes for Italian festivals. "Garlic also ties in well between Memorial Day and Labor Day for barbecues and during Thanksgiving and at Christmastime when garlic is used in a lot of home cooking," he says.

"Promotions may be four times a year to do a little push on garlic. There are some natural times where that makes sense, like

Jarred Or Fresh?

Consumers need to make choices about garlic packaging, whether it is jarred or loose. B & G Foods Inc. of Parsippany, NJ, merchandises its Polaner brand garlic using a 3-tiered rack that holds 144 4½-oz. jars (it can include the company's spices and its garlic) and a shelf-extender rack that holds 12 jars. Brandi Unchester, the director of marketing for Polaner, says, "That could go in the produce section."

"A lot of retailers enjoy a rack system that will support our jarred products, the fresh bulk, and recipes," says Patsy Ross, marketing department at Christopher Ranch in Gilroy, CA. "We have many different styles of racks and different kinds of merchandising." She says even an informal display as part of a promotion can bring attention to an item that may not always make the grocery list.

Jim Provost of I Love Produce in West Grove, PA, indicates changes in the industry that enhance jarred garlic's marketability. "When garlic is produced in California, it's machine-peeled, and that process starts the natural breakdown of the garlic. So it might have about three weeks' shelf life at the store level. When the product is produced in China, it's hand peeled. They nitrogen-flush the package so it has a modified-atmosphere package. And also because the facilities are so clean, the shelf life is generally six to eight weeks."

Salvatore Vacca, president of A J Truc-co, Bronx, NY, a self-proclaimed "old-fashioned fellow," thinks garlic is best sold loose; he believes packaged garlic tends to dry up slightly.

Even frozen-food manufacturers are using a lot of fresh now, adds Ross. "The quality of frozen foods in my lifetime has changed dramatically," she says, adding that the switch from dehydrated to fresh is prevalent in soups and salad dressings as well. "You only have to use half as much and you get so much more — and better — flavor."

Says Vacca, "Of course, now we make packages, like the 1- or 2-pounds. I have a young partner with me [Nick Pacia, vice president] who loves and is doing very well with the packaged garlic. But old-fashioned is old-fashioned."

According to Provost, retailers should take the appearance of the display into account. "Loose garlic in a bin sometimes gets handled. Maybe people break cloves off; maybe some of the bulbs are no good. More and more of the retailers that I am seeing are going to net bags. I'm not talking about loosely packed, where you might buy a pound of garlic and it's all kind of loose in a bag. It's very tight and uniform. So I'd say, on the fresh side of the market, at the retail level, 50 percent of supermarkets are selling that either in addition to, or in lieu of, bulk garlic on the shelf."

pb

festival time," Christopher Ranch's Ross notes, adding, "That's the end of the summer months because that's when it's harvested, so it's very plentiful and it's going to be extremely fresh." Christopher Ranch has also created boxes with vampires on them for Halloween as well as a *Garlic Is For Lovers* theme for Valentine's Day.

Sometimes another organization will provide tie-in items for a promotion that typically includes a themed header card, recipe tear-pad, and coupons. A promotion between B & G Foods, Inc. of Parsippany, NJ, makers of Polaner brand, with the Idaho Potato Commission, Eagle, ID, included a recipe for garlic mashed potatoes and even a Spuddy Buddy character that consumers could get by mail. For Columbus Day, the brand has provided a garlic bread recipe along with a \$1 off coupon for Italian bread.

"Instilling ideas through cross-merchandising in other departments can create

incremental sales — garlic in the pasta and sauce sections, garlic in the seafood section or in the bakery section along with bread for garlic bread," according to Hymel. "Make sure the best-selling items — 4.5-, 8- and 32-ounce minced — are on the shelf at all times. Shoppers should never walk through the produce department without seeing a very visible garlic display. Mini displays of garlic next to different items such as salad mixes, potatoes or corn will drive incremental sales. Garlic is highly impulse driven. Visibility is a must!"

Since garlic stores for several weeks on the counter at home and is useful in many preparations, buying larger quantities should present the consumer with lots of options and little waste. To prove this point, consider how many of the Food Network's recipes — and those found in cooking magazines and cookbooks — begin with onion, garlic and extra-virgin olive oil.

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Reader Service #22

Dates And Dried Figs — More Than Holiday Treats

Offering dates and dried figs year-round will garner sales year-round.

BY BOB JOHNSON

In years past, dates and dried figs were considered winter holiday treats, but that is no longer the case. Benefiting from the demand for healthful and convenient snacks, they have become profitable year-round produce items.

"We're seeing our sales escalate — it seems that figs have been discovered," says Linda Cain, vice president for marketing at Valley Fig Growers, Fresno, CA. "We're climbing every year — consumers are definitely looking for figs."

The single most important aspect of increasing sales is making sure consumers see dates and dried figs on display so they will come to rely on their availability.

"Prominently display them so they're not hidden," suggests Dave Nelson, vice president of the Bard Valley Medjool Date Growers Association, based in Bard, CA. The Association's growers produce 70 percent of all the Medjools grown in California, which is the largest Medjool date producing region in the world.

Other growers and shoppers agree that keeping the dried figs and dates visible will generate sales. "Continue to make displays — keep the product out there," advises Greg Glasser, vice president, Torn & Glasser Co. Inc., Los Angeles, CA, an importer, processor and packer of dried fruits and nuts, including both dates and dried figs.

Offering a reliable variety will also increase sales.

"Retailers should have a couple of varieties on display," says Richard Matoian, manager of the California Fig Advisory Board, based in Fresno, CA. Sales increase if both Black Mission and green Calimyrna figs are displayed, rather than just one of the two varieties, he continues.

As with most varieties of dried fruit, the

best place to display dates and dried figs is in the produce department.

"They should be in the produce department," claims Sal Vacca, president of A.J. Trucco Inc., Bronx, NY. The firm imports figs from Greece, Italy and Turkey. Trucco's dates, however, are all from California.

The produce department is also the best place to capture the attention of impulse buyer, who buy most of the dates and figs. "When people see us, they buy us — but figs are not usually on the shopping list," according to Cain. "For us, the produce department is best because that area is shopped more than the interior of the store. That is also where customers expect to find us."

What is true for dried figs is also true for dates. "Dates are becoming more of a presence in the produce department, and not just with the dried fruit," says Lorrie Cooper, manager of the California Date Commission, Indio, CA. More and more stores are setting up displays of dates with the fresh fruit.

Stores sometimes put up temporary displays for dates during the winter holiday season, but they would be better served by finding a permanent home for these healthful and delicious fruits.

"If a chain is to have a successful year-round date program, it must have a permanent place, preferably in the produce department — which screams 'healthful,'" says Andrew Stillman, president of Minneapolis, MN-based Ampport/American Importing, the largest handler of dates in the country.

THE 12-MONTH PROGRAM

Starting in the 1990s, sales of dates and dried figs began a steady increase in the months following the winter holidays.

"We've been selling both dates and dried



Offering dates and dried figs year-round can lead to substantial sales increases.

figs all year-round," says Vacca. However, "It's not the same volume because some of the customers cut them out." He says post-holiday sales of dates and dried figs began to pick up around 10 or 12 years ago.

"Some of our customers have ethnic clientele because of immigration," Vacca says. People from the Middle East, in particular, are accustomed to eating dates and figs throughout the year.

One reason volume continues to increase is that Trucco maintains inventory all year-round. "If you keep figs in a cool dry place, you can store them for six to eight months," Vacca says. "When you freeze them, they keep their shape and last even longer. The Greek figs freeze better because they have thicker skin."

Others in the industry agree the season for dates and dried figs has been greatly

extended. "We have a bag business and that has become pretty stable throughout the year," explains Cain of Valley Fig Growers. Besides being eaten out-of-hand as a snack, figs are used in a variety of ways in cooking and baking.

"We don't see the seasonality that we did 10 years ago," she notes. However, that does not preclude increased sales tied to the seasons. In addition to a sales surge during the winter holidays, figs also show a spike around Easter and Passover, Cain adds.

"Over the last 10 years or so, there has been a large increase in sales after the holidays," claims Nelson of the Bard Valley Medjool Date Growers Association. "It's a 12-month proposition now. We sell out."

The opportunity to increase sales of dates and dried figs is there for retailers who are willing to pursue it. "If you have dates available only during the holiday season, of course you're only going to sell them then," Amport's Stillman says. "If you don't build it, they can't come."

In the 1960s and earlier, dates were used almost exclusively for baking, according to Stillman. But today a roughly equal amount goes to baking and to snacking.

Around 30 percent of the dates sold are pitted and 70 percent of those are diced,

which makes them more convenient to use on cereal or as a snack ingredient. "Every year we get more complaints from people who can't find dates starting around February," according to Stillman. "Wal-Mart is the only store that keeps diced dates year-round, and they've had tremendous success with it."

The Healthful Choice

Dates and dried figs are healthful, tasty and convenient snacks, making them a profitable year-round item.

"The biggest problem with dates is that the supermarket industry acts as if they can't be sold after the winter holidays – and this at a time when dried fruits are more popular than ever because of their health benefits," according to Andrew Stillman, president of Minneapolis, MN-based Amport/American Importing. Dates are very high in antioxidants and an excellent source of fiber.

"There are health and nutrition benefits with dates," agrees Dave Nelson, vice president of the Bard Valley Medjool Date Growers Association, Bard, CA.

The nutritional value of dates and dried figs makes them good candidates to ride the wave of interest in healthful eating. "The theme seems to be good nutrition, and dates are a fresh natural fruit," says Lorrie Cooper, manager of the California Date Commission, Indio, CA.

The producers are working on disseminating the details of this healthful message. "A lot of produce buyers need to be educated on the range of produce that is out there," Cooper adds. "We are currently working on an updated nutritional analysis of dates that will be posted on our Web site."

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For stores that develop a year-round program, dates can be a profitable item. "Dates are not cheap," Nelson notes. "If retailers display them prominently and always have them in the store for repeat customers, dates can become a good square-foot item for them."

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Engineer A Stunning Floral Display

Customers are more likely to buy flowers from a display that catches their attention — and holds their interest.

BY TRISHA J. WOOLDRIDGE

Supermarket floral displays need to work hard to garner sales from consumers who entered the store without fresh flowers on their lists. While trends show home décor is becoming a more popular reason to purchase flowers than is gifting, consumers still need to see what flowers can do for them — and what they can do with flowers. An effective display makes an impact with color and design.

“A good display needs a lot of excitement,” explains Julie Anderson, president of Julie Anderson Consulting in Albuquerque, NM. Getting customers excited has more impact than just showing them how pretty the blooms are. “In everyday business displays, I’m not seeing a lot of excitement. They’re pretty, clean and full — but not exciting.”

According to Tom Lavagetto, president, Floral Consulting Group (FCG), Spokane, WA, an effective floral display “must have visual impact. It must catch the eye. It must stop customers. It can’t be cluttered or look like a collage. I see a lot of displays with a little of this and a little of that. It may be fresh, it may look nice, but there’s not a lot of impact. It may look cute, but cute doesn’t sell.”

“A great way to teach entry-level clerks how to merchandise is show them the basics of merchandising in the produce department,” offers Megan Buchanan, public relations, FTD Group Inc., Downers Grove, IL. “Vertical merchandising and keeping comparable sizes, varieties and colors together are applicable to any floral department. A florist can then take the concepts of design — height, dimension, texture and symmetry — into consideration to build a display that turns basic into beautiful, shouts ‘Buy me’ and makes customers stop in their tracks. It’s the wow factor that turns ordinary into

extraordinary.”

The main selling point with flowers is color. “Color is the quickest and most effective way to create merchandising impact and is one way to make less product look like more,” says Buchanan.

A frequent bit of advice on creating a display is to use color blocking. At its most basic, color blocking is grouping together products of the same color or color tone. “A series of color-massed, monochromatic displays is eye catching,” notes Kerry Herndon, owner of Kerry’s Bromeliad Nursery in Homestead, FL. “It’s visually exciting!”

Louise Strutner, company representative for Nurserymen’s Exchange, Half Moon Bay, CA, says color blocking “is effective because it allows customers to zero in on a color palette that will complement their home décor, plus it looks neat and tidy. A mass of color catches our eye in a setting where colors are so jumbled. It creates interest and draws customers into the department.”

Color blocking can also use matching or contrasting accents, such as wraps, pots or sleeves. Noam Temkin, vice-president of sales and marketing, Temkin International Inc. in Payson, UT, explains, “Stores can choose [packaging] colors for color blocking. Choosing all orange, for example, can add impact to a display. The most successful stores boil it down to simple colors.”

Even display fixtures can add to the power of color blocking or color massing. MEI, LaGrange, IL, offers a variety of colors and finishes on its fixtures “so it blends nicely and flows throughout the store,” explains president Marcy Britigan.

THEMATIC PRESENTATION

Effective color usage is a powerful tool, but it is not the only one available. Stunning

Part 2 of a 2-part series
Part 1 of the series ran in the
June issue of PRODUCE BUSINESS.



Floral displays need excitement and impact in order to sell flowers.

displays can come from floral associates using their imagination to combine a number of techniques to grab customers.

“Color blocking is part of a display,” states Anderson. “You can color block five different items, all yellow, or you can group products together by size and type. You can have auxiliary displays throughout the store with a single product at a promotional price.”

“Each merchandising promotion should follow a theme,” suggests Buchanan. “The theme of a promotion or display can be based on a price — dozen rose super sale; a variety — sunflower sale; a color — pretty and pink; a holiday — Mother’s Day; a non-holiday — graduation/prom; or a created event. However, the product within the display should center around a theme.”

While holidays and events make for easy themes, many store associates draw a blank when it comes to creating excitement in



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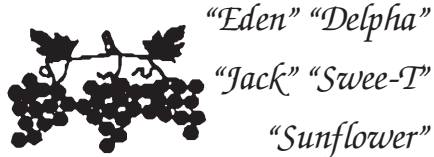
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everyday displays. FCG's Lavagetto suggests seasonal themes, such as a Dutch theme, incorporating windmills and wooden shoes, in spring for tulips.

Kerry's Herndon agrees seasonality is a good theme and suggests retailers think white in June — for example, a wedding theme with flowers and accessories to match.

Fixtures can help set the stage. "They set the tone for the theme," explains Nurseryman's Strutner. "Use crates for a country theme or Plexiglas for a contemporary look."

"Start with a theme," recommends Anderson's Anderson, "and set the product into it. If you are near a hospital, you can have get well or new baby themes. Have things for people to pick up on the way in." She also suggests anniversary, birthday and buy-yourself-a-gift themes. "There is always something going on. June is National Rose Month for example." Lulls between holidays and events are chances to encourage creativity in the floral department. "The best time is slow time."

THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

Displays throughout the store and cross-merchandising can spur sales.

"Rather than one department with a single area, consider multiple smaller fixtures throughout the store," advises Michael Wetzel, president and CEO of the Floratech division of Air Innovations Inc., Syracuse, NY. This can be especially useful for stores with floral departments at their entry point.

"The entry can be a challenge because it's hard to buy flowers at the beginning. There are lots of reasons not to buy flowers first." Buying fresh flowers first means they might be without water for an extended shopping trip and/or children might play with them while parents shop. Finding a safe place to keep the flowers in a shopping cart can also be problematic. Smaller displays near the end of the store traffic flow can make it more convenient for customers.

Strutner suggests a number of thematic displays that can work outside the floral department. "In the bakery, if someone is picking up a birthday cake, it would be effective to have a birthday display [with flowers] in the bakery. In the wine aisle, a Cabernet grape plant is a natural for wine lovers or a bottle of wine with an orchid is an elegant hostess gift. In produce, use a pepper plant alongside the peppers in the summer, a pomegranate plant in the fall just before pomegranates are coming into season."

For all inter-department displays, she stresses, "Place your floral department items creatively throughout the store by creating mass groupings of them in other departments. Placing one or two makes it look like

Short Tips For Effective Color Blocking

Color-blocking or color-massing has become a floral design buzzword. Most people have a good idea how to color block — place together items of the same or similar colors. But what really makes an effectively color-blocked display? Floral experts share their secrets:

- "More successful color displays are blocked by color or color tones versus a mass of one color." — Megan Buchanan, public relations, FTD Group Inc., Downers Grove, IL

- "Simpler is better; have fewer choices. It sounds counterintuitive but that's what research shows. Too many choices confuse customers. Have no more than three types of flower per color block." — Kerry Herndon, owner, Kerry's Bromeliad Nursery, Homestead, FL

- "Take a few different varieties in the same shade, such as yellow, or try using one item and massing it in one color." — Tom Lavagetto, president of the Floral Consulting Group, Spokane, WA

- "Arrange the display based on the color wheel. For interest and contrast, use opposing colors [on the color wheel] next to each other. Train your eye to see like colors and textures across your product line from cuts to plants, decorative accessories, pottery, containers and wraps." — Louise Strutner, company representative, Nurserymen's Exchange, Half Moon Bay, CA

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an afterthought instead of a well-thought-out program."

Within the department, cross-merchandising can also make a difference. "Putting [complementary items] with [floral products] elevates sales of both items and saves the customer time," explains Herndon, who cites some ideal cross-merchandising products like pots, containers, potting mix and fertilizer. The latter should not be near food items for health reasons. "Place gift cards with plants since a high percentage are purchased as gifts," he adds.

When it comes to flowers, showing their beauty is not always enough. Floral displays must have impact and they must intrigue the customer. Using a variety of techniques from color-blocking to imaginative cross-merchandising can make the difference between a display that really looks good and a display that really sells product.

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Taste Or No Taste?

In our community, the majority of the families hosting bridge for the evening will have fresh fruit and cheese available for snacking during the competition and usually afterwards with coffee or another favorite beverage.

To be sure, the fruit selected normally has excellent flavor. Recently I remarked to the hostess hers was the best early spring cantaloupe I had ever tasted. Her reply, "I usually choose the ripest available."

And then this wife of a radiologist went on to tell a story about when her daughter was in high school. Financially it was unnecessary, but this good Jewish family believed their children should have some work experience each summer. On one occasion, the oldest daughter found a job working at a New Jersey farm market but realized the day before she started that her only knowledge about the fresh fruit and vegetables was that of consuming them.

Enter Mother, who took her that afternoon to the local supermarket for a crash course in identification and characteristics of various vegetables, but time ran out before they were able to discuss the fruit category.

During the daughter's first day at work, she was approached by women demanding to be provided with the best cantaloupe available for eating that evening. Unfortunately, the mother had never gotten to provide any education of melons.

The young girl was almost at a loss but, nevertheless, she acted as if she had been working at the market for several years and walked over to the melon display and very methodically went about selecting a melon. The next day the customer returned, ecstatic with glowing praise for this young girl's ability to make such an excellent choice. Later that day her mother asked her how she did it. The reply — "I just picked out the melon with the little fruit flies around it."

Very few would consider this as a satisfactory method, but that is unimportant. It does, however, show that many consumers enjoy great tasting fresh fruit and vegetables, regardless of certain conditions. In *Into The Mouths of Babes* in the March issue of *PRODUCE BUSINESS*, Bryan Silbermann referenced a survey in which 82 percent of shoppers chose "taste factors, such as kids not liking the taste of some fruits and vegetables, were a somewhat to very significant barrier" to higher produce consumption.

In his response, *Parental Cry For Help*, Jim Prevor noted, "We need deeper research on this subject to understand it better." Many

of Jim's comments were related to his involvement with his own children, witnessing their reactions and the reactions of other children involved with his own.

When will the produce industry develop a coordinated approach to address the opportunities presented by satisfying the importance of the taste factor to stimulate kids to eat more fresh fruit and vegetables? For most children, the taste decision is not maybe. It is yes or never.

Asking consumers questions over the phone scratches the surface. Observing what happens in the home, in the school and at foodservice locations presents an opportunity to see and hear first-hand what is actually occurring with children and their parents. This type of activity is more costly and time consuming but potentially

more accurate and informative. As I wrote in *Learning from Procter & Gamble* in that same March issue, P&G has found increasing success incorporating this type of methodology into its research program. The company is not exactly a novice in the development of product to meet the needs of consumers.

However, this would be just a start. Not only are improved taste and consistency needed but so also are information programs highlighting more flavorful varieties. Too often great-eating product is available one day and disappears by the next. Young children give second chances to very few.

Equally important is preparation. Unquestionably, the great tasting french fries of yesterday are rapidly losing their appeal to this writer because the base product and the preparation have been altered. But today I ate lunch at a local restaurant. My guess is the fries were prepared in-house, providing a wonderful taste I hadn't experienced in years. This is just an example how *fresh* can taste good when the correct product and preparation methods are utilized. But these have to be discovered and taught to those at home and in foodservice.

A few retailers are attempting to obtain a competitive advantage with ready-to-eat foods to-go by doing their own experimentation to develop perfect taste and texture. Some growers are looking for the latest varieties, each with an objective of competitive advantage. In the meantime, whether by accident or design, others continually prioritize production above long-term market growth. This subject requires more than lip service. In order to grow markets, leadership equivalent to the food-safety initiative will be required to satisfy consumers' demand for consistent taste.

Too often great-eating product is available one day and disappears by the next. Young children give second chances to very few.

May You Live In Interesting Times



By Cindy Seel, Executive Director, PMA Education Foundation

Today's produce industry is the embodiment of this old Chinese saying. We certainly are in the midst of interesting times. Opportunities abound, yet things are different, we say, from the produce industry we've known and loved. We're challenged on a variety of fronts — food safety, advances in technology, ever more discerning consumers, increasing costs, tighter labor markets and an increasingly competitive global marketplace. At the same time, greater awareness of the healthful aspects of produce and its contribution to wellness has the potential to expand the markets for our products if we just know where to look for them.

Food safety continues to be at the top of nearly every list of industry issues. Last year's spinach crisis reminded us of the vulnerability of our industry and how easily profitability can be lost even for those not directly connected to a crisis. The industry must be able to ensure safe and healthful products for consumers to restore and maintain their confidence.

Consumers are more discerning and more diverse than ever. A "one size fits all" message no longer works. We need to develop innovative ideas for marketing to and educating consumers fitting a variety of new and different demographic characteristics. There is an unprecedented level of obesity in children and adults, and health professionals are encouraging better eating habits. With the right elements in place, the industry could make great strides in increasing consumption of fruits and vegetables.

Costs are increasing everywhere, at faster-than-ever rates. Talk to any produce professional, at any point in the supply chain, and "cost of doing business" is one of the key challenges he or she is facing. Fuel prices are skyrocketing, and changes to minimum-wage laws mean greater labor costs in the largest segments of our workforce. Developments in technology mean investments have to be made in order to remain competitive.

There's a common thread running through all these issues — people.

Regardless of the challenges the industry faces, it's the people working in the industry who will find ways to overcome them — or not. It's the people who will make every effort possible to ensure the safety and security of produce all along the supply chain. It's the people who will find more efficient and cost-effective ways of doing business. It's the people who will develop and execute plans for increasing consumption.

People are the heart and soul of the produce industry. Even with all these challenges, those who grew up in the industry — or have come to it from elsewhere and discovered in it their life's work — remain passionate about their commitment to produce and its potential. That passion, and the relationships fostered between buyers and sellers throughout the supply chain, is what makes the industry so exciting and dynamic.

People are the industry's strength and now are also its

biggest challenge. Labor/employee issues rated second only to food safety/security in a recent PMA study asking members to identify the most important issues facing the industry today. And in recent conversations with industry leaders from a cross-section of the supply chain, the most commonly mentioned challenges for business growth and industry sustainability all come down to finding, hiring and keeping the right people.

That's getting harder to do in a world where the labor pool is shrinking and college graduates have so many attractive career choices. Those currently 20-44 years old — the age group from which many new hires and new managers come — are projected to have the slowest growth rate of any age cohort in recent history. Coupled with an anticipated 52 percent of workers aged 55-64 nearing retirement, there will be an unprecedented shortage of qualified people in the very near future. The competition for those people will be very intense.

Statistics aside, it's the dramatic changes in young people's (those now in their 20s) expectations of work that have many in the produce industry scratching their heads. Produce professionals speak often of looking for new hires with a "strong work ethic" and committed to "doing what it takes," even if that means working long hours in pressure-filled environments. It's the nature of the work, they say. Today's 20-somethings, however, don't have much interest in making that kind of commitment — at least not without good reason.

As a generation, according to an article in the May 28, 2007, online edition of *Fortune*, "[T]hey're ambitious, they're demanding and they question everything, so if there isn't a good reason... don't expect them to do it." The article goes on to say, "[W]hen it comes to loyalty, the companies they work for are last on their list — behind their families, their friends, their communities, their co-workers and, of course, themselves." On the other hand, the same article shares good news from Bruce Tulgan (founder of leading generational-research firm RainmakerThinking): that this generation is likely going to be the highest-performing workforce in history.

Like it or not, the produce industry will have to adapt at least to some degree in order to ensure its continued success. What might that mean to the way we do business?

Enter the PMA Education Foundation (PMAEF). Founded in 2006, PMAEF's mission is to partner with produce businesses to ensure a strong talent pool and continued leadership for our future. In *PRODUCE BUSINESS* articles over the next few months, we'll be exploring some of these issues, sharing insights from industry members and describing the foundation's plans to help the produce industry find and keep the talent it needs.

People are the industry's strength and now are also its biggest challenge.



Global Warming Will Not Go Quietly

Hello from Europe. As we approached mid-summer night in June, we Northern Europeans could enjoy long days until almost 11:00 PM — and thanks to global warming, my country of residence — Netherlands — now has the same climate as France’s Burgundy wine growing area. With the rain in Spain delaying the stone fruit crop and decimating the cherry crop, it is only half in jest that we call Northern Europe the new Southern Europe!

We have just concluded our grape season, which for once ended on a high note, as supplies ran out sooner than normal. Combined with a strong Euro, growers can look forward to the “best” returns in five years. Stone fruit has also had a reasonable run, whilst pears ended with a strong sprint. Kiwifruit has been “lackluster” and with a reported record harvest in New Zealand, this category has more than a few challenges ahead. Apples have been teetering on the brink, and much will depend on the demand in the coming weeks.

In Europe, May is cluttered with public holidays; this year it also negatively impacted consumption of fresh produce. With summer holidays from now till the end of August, exporters across the globe need not have any expectations of runaway demand for any imported product; consumers prefer a ripe nectarine, berries or melon over a pineapple, mango or orange. Nothing beats locally grown, tree-ripe, flavorful fruits.

Day-to-day business aside, several developments of interest merit a more detailed look in this column in the coming months. However, this month, we will look at a (disturbing) trend among retailers to demand grapes, for example, packed and sold in fixed-weight punnets of 500 grams. To some retailers, the punnet packaging equals a discount, whereas the operators in our industry know the costs are such that unless you achieve a guaranteed premium of 30 percent over the market price, you do the grower no favor at all. It is a logistic nightmare and you simply never sell the same tonnage compared to grapes sold in ziplock bags. Not to mention the added waste of packing material.

But looming over our industry in a big way is the impact of “global warming.”

Thomas Friedman, the *New York Times* columnist, is right when he declares, “Green to be

the new black.” Before we know it, our industry will be focussing on carbon-neutral production and distribution. First we will be going neutral by buying uploads of trees in the Amazon, but soon we will realize (even though planting trees ALL over the world is a major response to reducing CO₂ levels. It is that simple!) that we need to make our production and distribution facilities carbon neutral through new technologies. We then need to focus on renewable energy — so our growers can become self sufficient and reduce costs of diesel, so waste can be turned into renewable energy and crops no longer get dumped, and so we can eventually turn over-production into a balanced supply as we produce biofuels on a critical mass. The step from growing vegetables to producing biofuel is very small. Just imagine hauling your fresh produce on trucks driving on natural gas to the store. It will (partially) kill the “food miles” hysteria in an instant.

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We also need to take a close look at biodegradable packaging. The organics industry is already onto this but, in my opinion, this is an issue that should not be confined to one niche. It affects us all — and it is not hype. Our industry needs to find solutions — fast. We may be getting more aware of global warming, but we also produce more packaging — water now has to be in plastic bottles and the ideal is for every single fruit to be wrapped or pre-packed for whatever marketing or produce safety or traceability reason.

New techniques of biodegradable packaging — e.g., corn based — are making inroads and our industry — organic or conventional — should make one of its top priorities the conversion of the punnets, ziplocks and wrappers as soon as possible. Seems like a no-brainer. Just think about how long that oil-based plastic bottle takes to decompose and how long it takes for a corn-based variant. The former will still be around 2,000 years from now. The latter will be “one with nature” again in 45 to 60 days. The cost to produce biodegradable packaging is still more expensive, but retailers and consumers should be willing to pay a premium to those suppliers that get on the bandwagon first.

The fresh produce industry has, in my opinion, always been largely about distribution. For the next 50 years, everyone will have to find his/her way to turn this into “green distribution.” That combined with a great product, such as “fresh produce,” should make our category very sexy for years to come.

Finally, if you think this is all nonsense, visit the Website of Marks & Spencer. It has introduced its Plan A “Because there is no Plan B.” It claims: “Five years. Five commitments. One world. And 100 things we want to change.” The five commitments are climate change, waste, sustainable raw materials, fair trade and health.

And you think selling fresh produce is hard...

pb

Retailers and consumers should be willing to pay a premium to those suppliers that get on the bandwagon first.

**“Plan A
Because there is
no Plan B”**

— Marks & Spencer
Web site

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The Alphas Cmpany, Inc.....	56	50	718-893-0222	718-378-3058
Amport Foods.....	128	29	612-331-7000	612-331-1122
E. Armata, Inc.....	49	38	800-223-8070	718-991-1599
Maurice A. Auerbach, Inc.....	82	36	888-AUERPAK	201-807-9596
Maurice A. Auerbach, Inc.....	126	15	201-807-9292	201-807-9596
Ayco Farms, Inc.....	84	94	954-788-6800	954-788-5600
Wayne E. Bailey Produce Co.....	38	17	800-845-6149	910-654-4734
David H. Berg & Co., Inc.....	132	25	661-721-7900	661-721-7910
Black Stallion Logistics.....	70	86	646-401-9995	646-514-1614
Blue Book Services.....	133	6	630-668-3500	630-668-0303
Brooks Tropicals.....	100-101	79	800-327-4833	305-246-5827
Bucolo Cold Storage.....	84	30	716-778-7631	716-778-8768
California Tomato Farmers.....	102-103	31	559-261-2630	559-261-9804
California Tree Fruit Agreement.....	13	10	559-638-8260	559-638-8842
Canada Garlic.....	126	12	905-362-1888	905-362-1889
Capital City Fruit Co., Inc.....	38	54	515-981-5111	515-981-4564
CF Fresh.....	26	65	360-855-0566	360-855-2430
Chelan Fresh Marketing.....	140	11	509-682-3854	509-682-5766
Chilean Avocado Importers Association.....	21	27	202-626-0560	
Christopher Ranch.....	126	51	408-847-1100	408-847-0581
Robt. T. Cochran & Co., Incorporated.....	70	42	718-991-2340	718-589-6704
Colorado Potato Administrative Committee.....	22	101	719-852-3322	719-852-4684
Coosemans New York, Inc.....	47	37	718-328-3060	718-842-6545
D'Arrigo Bros. Co. of New York.....	62-63	44	800-223-8080	718-960-0544
Dole Fresh Fruit Company.....	2	8	818-879-6600	818-879-6628
Dole Fresh Vegetable Co.....	52-53	93	800-333-5454	831-754-5243
dProduce Man Software.....	94	68	888-PRODMAN	650-712-9973
Driscoll Strawberry Associates, Inc.....	104-105	19	831-763-5000	831-761-5988
Duda Farm Fresh Foods, Inc.....	35	69	561-978-5714	561-978-5705
East Coast Brokers & Packers, Inc.....	139	16	800-557-7751	813-869-9850
Eaton & Eustus Co.....	126	22	617-884-0298	617-884-2611
Eli & Ali, LLC.....	64	26	866-354-2547	718-389-1514
Joseph Fierman & Son, Inc.....	61	92	718-893-1640	718-328-3738
Food Barn.....	54	32	718-617-3800	718-617-3854
Fresh Partners AB.....	128	56	46-8-742-1215	46-8-742-6201
Garber Farms.....	84	84	337-824-6328	337-824-2676
Genpro Transportation Services, Inc.....	46	14	800-243-6770	973-589-1877
Giorgio Fresh Co.....	84	7	800-330-5711	610-939-0296
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Green Giant Fresh.....	118-119	48	800-767-6104	208-524-2420
Gurda Gardens, Ltd.....	84	95	800-475-4732	845-374-7204
A. Gurda Produce Farms.....	98	96	845-258-4422	845-258-4852
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Hiawatha Evergreens.....	132	82	800-421-4791	360-426-9987
HMC Group Marketing, Inc.....	106-107	66	800-LUNCHBUNCH	559-897-1610
Hollandia Produce.....	108-109	9	805-684-4146	805-684-9363
Hunts Point Terminal Co-Op Assn.....	90	87	718-542-2944	718-542-2971
Hunts Point Terminal Co-Op Assn.....	Null	88	718-542-2944	718-542-2971
S. Katzman Produce.....	51	41	718-991-4700	718-589-3655
Kingsburg Orchards.....	7	64	559-897-2986	559-897-4532

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Kirkey Products Group, LLC.....	94	49	407-331-5151	407-331-5158
Kleiman & Hochberg, Inc.....	67		718-991-2100	718-991-6494
Krisp-Pak Sales Corp.....	59	89	718-991-4800	718-617-7304
Lucky Strike Farms, Inc.....	85	80	650-877-8333	650-877-0727
Mann Packing Company, Inc.....	9	1	800-884-6266	831-422-5171
Mann Packing Company, Inc.....	110-111	2	800-884-6266	831-422-5171
J. Margiotta Company.....	60	90	718-378-5800	718-378-3304
Melissa's/World Variety Produce, Inc.....	28	34	800-468-7111	323-588-7841
Mexico Quality Supreme.....	15	23	52-55-90-00-30-54	
Mills Family Farms.....	85	4	831-757-3061	831-424-9475
Mills Family Farms.....	112-113	3	831-757-3061	831-424-9475
Mooney Farms.....	37	18	530-899-2661	530-899-7746
Morris Okun, Inc.....	69	97	718-589-7700	718-328-6143
Nathel & Nathel.....	78-79	102	718-991-6050	718-378-1378
National Watermelon Promotion Board.....	114-115	47	407-657-0261	407-657-2213
New York Apple Association, Inc.....	45	59	585-924-2171	585-924-1629
New York Dept of Agriculture.....	97	74	800-554-4501	
Ocean Mist Farms.....	116-117	71	831-633-2492	831-633-4363
Pacific Tomato Growers/Pacific Triple E.....	28	35	209-835-7500	209-835-7956
Pacific Tomato Growers/Pacific Triple E.....	85	81	941-722-0778	941-729-5849
Pandol Brothers, Inc.....	19	63	661-725-3145	661-725-4741
Phillips Mushroom Farms.....	122	73	800-722-8818	610-444-4751
Jerry Porricelli Produce.....	71	43	718-893-6000	718-893-0158
Potandon Produce.....	118-119	48	800-767-6104	208-524-2420
Pride of New York.....	97	74	800-554-4501	
Produce for Better Health Foundation.....	131	55	888-391-2100	302-235-5555
The Produce Marketing Association.....	39	52	302-738-7100	302-731-2409
The Produce Marketing Association.....	95	53	302-738-7100	302-731-2409
Produce Pro, Inc.....	93	39	630-395-0535	630-572-0390
J. Renella Produce, Inc.....	56	28	718-991-4210	718-991-4210
Rosemont Farms Corporation.....	5	57	877-877-8017	561-999-0241
Rubin Bros.....	52-53	93	718-589-3200	718-589-6544
Sambraio Packaging.....	32	75	800-563-4467	831-724-1403
The Sample Dome.....	38	58	800-596-3676	403-936-5868
Silver Creek Software.....	92	33	208-388-4555	208-322-3510
Spice World, Inc.....	125	61	800-433-4979	407-857-7171
Spice World, Inc.....	126	62	800-433-4979	407-857-7171
Sun World International.....	33	60	760-398-9430	760-398-9613
Sunlight Int'l. Sales.....	23	72	661-792-6360	661-792-6529
Tanimura & Antle, Inc.....	120-121	91	800-772-4542	831-455-3915
Target Interstate Systems, Inc.....	65	40	800-338-2743	800-422-4329
TC Marketing, Inc.....	85	21	800-533-2116	419-592-7909
Tennessee Dept. of Agriculture.....	36	67	615-837-5517	615-837-5194
Top Banana.....	57	76	718-328-6700	718-378-1591
Top Katz, LLC.....	50	78	718-861-1933	718-861-9011
Torrey Farms, Inc.....	85	24	585-757-9941	585-757-2528
United Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association.....	41	13	202-303-3400	202-303-3433
Ven-Co Produce, Inc.....	55	100	718-893-3311	718-893-3193
Well-Pict Berries.....	25	5	831-722-3871	831-722-6340
Western Fresh Marketing.....	129	45	888-820-0001	559-662-0306
Weyerhaeuser Paper Co.....	31	85	800-TOP-BOXES	
Young Pecan Co.....	85	20	800-469-6607	843-664-2344

Blast from the Past

John Garcia, president of Krisp-Pak Sales Corp. on the Hunts Point Terminal Market, Bronx, NY, supplied this 1948 picture of his mother Milly Garcia cleaning the feeder of the radish machine on the Krisp-Pak warehouse factory production line.

In the 1940s, Milly frequented Martin's Diner by the old Washington Street market, where she met many of the market's vendors. She got a job on the market as a way to earn a living and raise her son. Once ensconced on the Krisp-Pak soup green production line, her natural intelligence and creativity began to shine through. When she started, most of the work was done by hand, with the various ingredients being sorted into bins. Milly realized customers and consumers would be better served by having all the produce items bagged together and convinced the company to package soup ingredients in cellophane bags. Krisp-Pak began marketing these packages to major retailers in the area in the fall of 1948.

She eventually became the supervising manager and director of the company — at a time when virtually no women participated in the produce industry. Milly also led the way in repacking value-added spinach, long before it became the commodity it is today. In 1985, she and John bought Krisp-Pak outright. Today the company is a leading distributor on Hunts Point, representing top labels and continuing to repack bagged spinach. Milly remained a force in the company until her death in 2002.

She was — and still is — an inspiration to many women who benefited from her trailblazing. Despite working long hours, Milly also managed to find time for personal pursuits — including making the tapestries she became known for.



The Blast from the Past is a regular feature of PRODUCE BUSINESS. We welcome submissions of your old photos, labels or advertisements along with suggested captions. Please send materials to: Editor, PRODUCE BUSINESS, P.O. Box 810425, Boca Raton, FL 33481-0425, or e-mail ProduceBusiness@PhoenixMediaNet.com

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