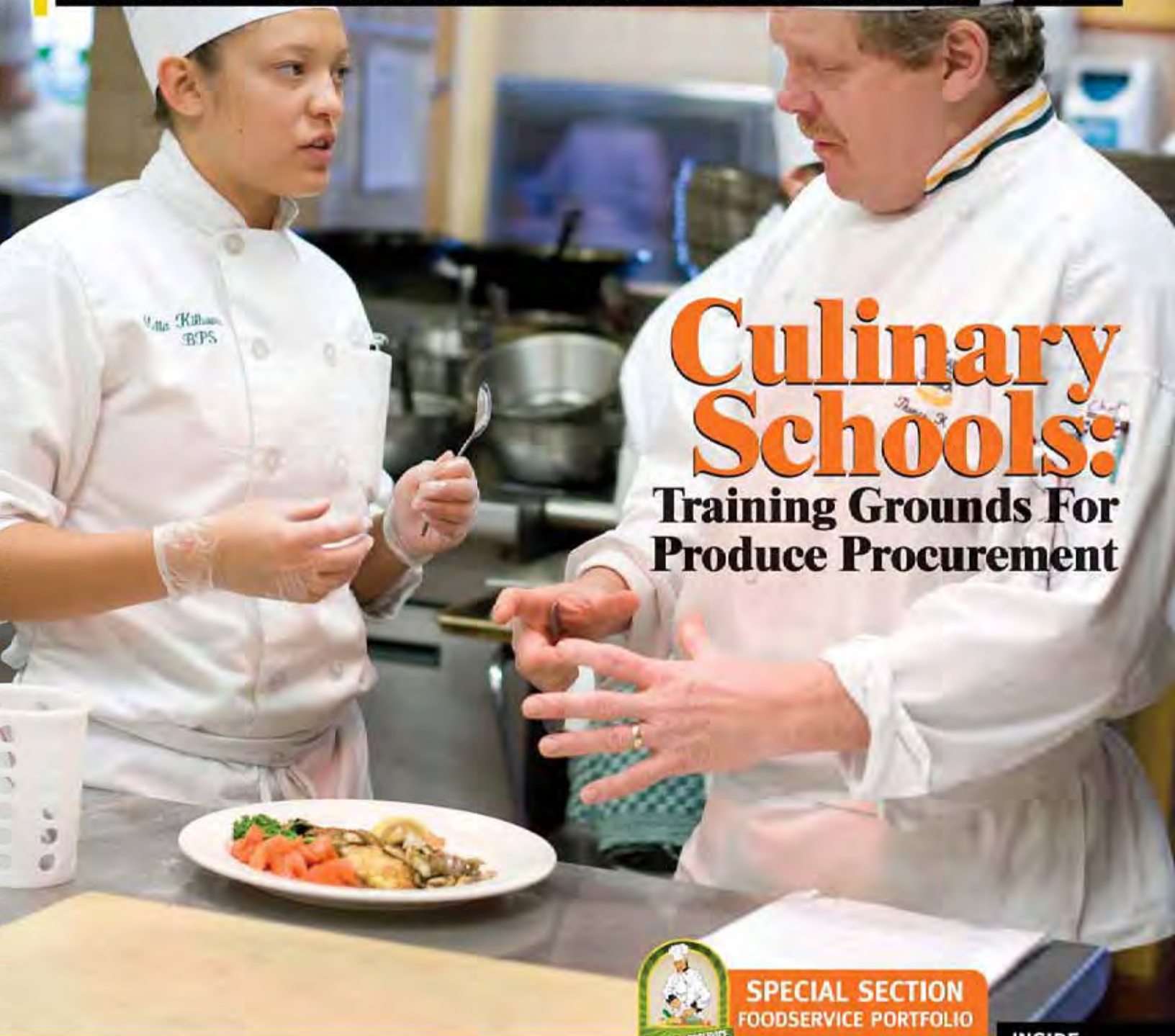


producebusiness

MARKETING • MERCHANDISING • MANAGEMENT • PROCUREMENT

25
YEARS
INITIATING
INDUSTRY
IMPROVEMENT



Culinary Schools: Training Grounds For Produce Procurement



SPECIAL SECTION
FOODSERVICE PORTFOLIO

INSIDE:

THE PUNDIT LOOKS AT EWG'S "DIRTY DOZEN" • SPECIALTY PRODUCE JUICES • NEW YORK STATE VEGETABLES • HERBS DISTRIBUTION SOFTWARE • GARLIC DATES AND FIGS • HOLIDAY FLORAL PLANNING
PMA FOODSERVICE CONFERENCE AISLE-BY-AISLE
NEW YORK MARKET PROFILE



GRILLING SEASON



It's time to Go Bananas After Dark. Encourage customers to pick up a bunch (or two) of DOLE Bananas and visit Dole.com/bananas for delicious banana recipes, ranging from desserts to cocktails to cooking on the grill. Our recipes are bound to make bananas the official fruit of summer!



Join us on
[Facebook.com/DOLEbananas](https://www.facebook.com/DOLEbananas)

Scan the Dole Bananas QR code or text
"trade" to 47170 for instant recipes.
standard msg & data rates may apply



PHOTO COURTESY OF CULINARY INSTITUTE OF AMERICA



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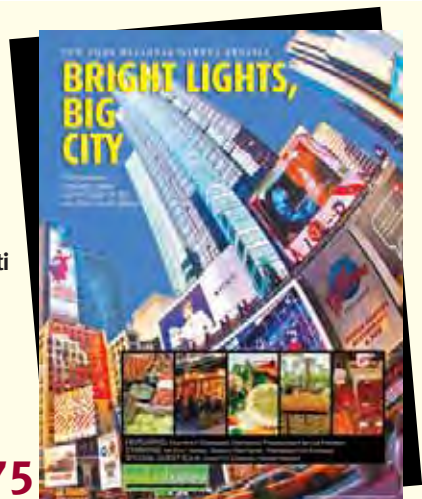
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THIS MONTH'S WINNER



Kevin Weaver
Vice President of Produce & Floral
A&P
Montvale, NJ

As the vice president of produce merchandising for A&P, a position he has held since March 1 of this year, Kevin Weaver is responsible for all things produce and floral for the 310 stores that are included under the five different banners of A&P. "This means I need to keep an eye on product standard, merchandising standards and P&L standard," he says.

Weaver began his career in the produce business 30 years ago, and can't imagine doing anything else. "The produce industry is so dynamic; it's always changing. We have

to contend with the challenges of Mother Nature and seasonality."

Additionally, over his tenure in the business, Weaver, as well as his team, has had to adapt to an ever-changing customer. "Consumers are more educated today than they have ever been before," Weaver acknowledges. "They are concerned about what they are putting in their bodies and they are looking to us to help them out with that."

It's a good thing Weaver has been reading **PRODUCE BUSINESS**, gleaning the knowledge needed to pass onto his employees, who can then help their customers. **pb**

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.

WIN A PORTABLE LCD TV

Haier's portable 7-inch LCD TV lets you enjoy your favorite television shows anywhere, anytime. A built-in tuner with detachable antenna provides crisp reception. A rechargeable battery offers up to 2 1/2 hours of power.



QUESTIONS FOR THE JULY ISSUE

- 1) When did Manuel Villafana start working at Boskovich Farms? _____
- 2) Name three products offered by California Sun Dry Foods. _____
- 3) What is the address for Lucky's Real Tomatoes? _____
- 4) What is Ira Nathel's email address? _____
- 5) How many units does Morris Okun have on the Hunts Point Market? _____
- 6) Who is the contact person at PMA FIT's Career Ambassador program? _____

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

Name _____ Position _____

Company _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Fax _____

Photocopies of this form are acceptable. Please send answers to:
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JIM PREVOR'S

PERISHABLE

PUNDIT

*Where the subject may be perishable
but the insight isn't.*

What is a Pundit?

Merriam Webster — a person who gives opinions in an authoritative manner usually through the mass media.

What is the Perishable Pundit?

Just ask our readers —

“... providing substance, thought-provoking opinions and, at the very least, waking up many.”

“Excellent commentary on the status of regulators’ positioning on food safety for the produce industry.”

“... bringing some common sense to the E. coli issue of late.”

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“... thought-provoking commentary with robust dialog.”

“... keeping the debate going...”

“... kind of an investigative reporter...”

“... extensive coverage leaves no subject without great healthy discussion, and no topic is too sacred.”

“Your courage in stating your opinion and your reaction to criticism is respectful and honest.”

“... focused on the complicated issues relating to food safety in produce.”

“... teaching the industry quite a bit about the power of the internet.”

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“... a valuable service.”

“... the most important journalism in the industry, and now we get them every day... you have become the ‘voice’ ...”

“Your analysis of the state of leadership in the produce industry past, present, and future is right on!”

“... a welcome part of the day that stimulates the mind and encourages us to think about and consider a different point of view.”

“... writing with heart and insight...”

“... one of my ‘must-read’ e-mails everyday!”

“Our industry has traditionally not been associated with being ‘deep thinkers’, and you have definitely become our Thought Leader.”

“... a resource that delves deeply into issues impacting our industry. Kudo’s!”

“Keeps us thinking.”

“... spreading your abundant common sense on a daily basis.”

“... most refreshing.”

“The Pundit does, in fact, incite reactions and cause good thinkers to think harder and longer on topics that are current and newsworthy.”

Catch the Perishable Pundit every day. Go to www.perishablepundit.com click on the “Subscribe Today” button and receive a daily copy of Jim Prevor’s Perishable Pundit via e-mail.

TRANSITIONS

**DUDA FRESH FARMS
OVIEDO, FL**

John Alderman has recently been promoted to senior account manager. He will work with the company's East Coast vegetable and Florida citrus growers to coordinate harvests, strengthen relations, share commodity market insights and champion the conventional and organic celery and citrus programs for Duda's Eastern fresh sales. Alderman has worked for Duda Farm Fresh Foods for six years as an account manager.



Christina L. Monnin has joined the team as account manager of Eastern vegetables and citrus. She will be responsible for servicing, strategizing and developing opportunities for the company. Christina brings to Duda Farm Fresh Foods a blossoming career that includes work experience most recently from South Florida Produce in the capacity of marketing, sales, grower relations and logistics.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

**VILLAGE FARMS EXPANDS U.S.
GREENHOUSE OPERATIONS**

Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada-based Village Farms International announced plans to build a state-of-the-art greenhouse located in Monahans, TX, in 2011. This will be the fifth greenhouse built in Texas by Village Farms, and will be based on a hydroponic growing system. In keeping with the company's "good for the earth" sustainability philosophy, the project is focused on water conservation, land preservation, food safety, integrated pest management and reducing the overall carbon footprint.



**DUDA FARM FRESH FOODS LAUNCHES
FACEBOOK CONSUMER PROMOTION**

Oviedo, FL-based Duda Farm Fresh Foods announced the launch of its newest consumer promotion, Sweet Vidalia Recipe Rescue. The promotion is hosted on the Dandy Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Facebook page. On a weekly basis, Duda Farm Fresh Foods offers consumers various recipes featuring sweet Vidalia onions for nearly every meal of the day. In addition to featuring recipes on the company's Facebook page, Duda will give away a Dandy Vidalia onion rescue gift basket each week to one lucky fan for the duration of the promotion, planned to go through July 30, 2011.



LOOK FOR THESE COMPANIES AT
THE PMA FOODSERVICE CONFERENCE
IN MONTEREY, CA, JULY 31, 2011

**CALIFORNIA ASPARAGUS
COMMISSION**

Sonoma, CA
New materials and programs designed for foodservice will help you take full advantage of America's most popular side dish.

BOOTH #4



**CALIFORNIA VEGETABLE
SPECIALTIES**

San Francisco, CA
Visit us in Monterey to learn how America is discovering California endive. We are the only grower of regular and organic endive in the United States, and the largest grower of red endive in the world.

BOOTH #131



**CHILEAN BLUEBERRY
COMMITTEE**

Sonoma, CA
The Chilean Blueberry Committee is interested in learning what materials and programs are needed to help you increase sales of fresh blueberries in foodservice.

BOOTH #3



**CHILEAN FRESH FRUIT
ASSOCIATION**

Sonoma, CA
Visit the CFFA booth to review the materials and programs designed to help you increase your fresh fruit volume through foodservice channels.

BOOTH #2



CLIFFORD PRODUCE

Ruthven, Ontario, Canada
Clifford Produce is a family of farms dedicated to providing the highest quality greenhouse-grown tomatoes, pepper, cucumber and eggplant that are consistently high yielding, high quality, fully traceable and extremely flavorful.



BOOTH #150

dPRODUCE MAN SOFTWARE

Half Moon Bay, CA
With dProduce Man Online, users can be up and running in hours, not days. You can get the same infrastructure as a five-user in-house system for as little as \$500 - \$700/month — with no long term commitment including 24/7 tech support.

BOOTH #106



FOXY PRODUCE

Salinas, CA
See the newest additions to the line-up of fresh premium Foxy brand vegetables, including a full line of organically grown vegetables.

BOOTH #17



**FRESH SOLUTIONS
NETWORK LLC**

Loveland, OH
Fresh Solutions is a grower-owned potato and onion operational and strategic marketing solutions company that delivers results. The Network Partners are: Serman Masser Inc.; Keystone Potato Products LLC; Michael Farms Inc.; Basin Gold Cooperative Inc.; Green Thumb Farms Inc.; and Red Isle Produce Company Ltd.

BOOTH #148



GILLS ONIONS

Oxnard, CA
Gills Onions is a family-operated grower and fresh-cut processor delivering convenient, 100 percent usable fresh yellow, red and sweet onion solutions direct from our farm to your kitchen.

BOOTH #67



THE GIUMARRA COMPANIES

Los Angeles, CA
The Giumarra Companies supplies fresh fruits and vegetables year-round, sourced from some of the world's finest growers. We also offer comprehensive logistic solutions to meet our customers' needs.

BOOTH #87



HAMPTON FARMS

Edenton, NC
Hampton Farms is devoted to producing the finest peanut products available. Operating four facilities all across the country, we supply products to the bakery, dairy, confection, foodservice and grocery industries.

BOOTH #77



HMC FARMS

Kingsburg, CA
HMC Farms, "the foodservice grape company" is your year-round solution for grapes the way you serve them. Portioned or washed and ready-to eat, we've got you covered!

BOOTH #149



ANNOUNCEMENTS

NEW COMPANY OPENS ON THE HUNTS POINT MARKET

The newly formed Bronx, NY-based produce wholesaler FresCo LLC has recently purchased Units 258-259 on Row B of the Hunts Point Market. Starting in the produce industry at a young age with his father, Charlie DiMaggio grew up on the market and eventually worked for other companies on Hunts Point. Before moving into the market, FresCo invested in climate-controlled refrigeration with advanced software and video monitoring systems to ensure food safety, traceability and quality. FresCo specializes in watermelon, tomatoes, citrus and Eastern and Mexican vegetables.



POTANDON PRODUCE ANNOUNCES POTATO LOVER'S MONTH DISPLAY CONTEST WINNER

Dawn Beckby with Henderson's IGA in Valentine, NE, is the winner of the Idaho Potato Lovers Month Display Contest romantic getaway for two to Jackson Hole, WY, sponsored by Idaho Falls, ID-based Potandon Produce. The Jackson Hole getaway was offered as an added bonus to Potandon's prize-matching program for Idaho Potato Commission's Potato Lover's Month Display Contest winners who used Green Giant Fresh Idaho Potatoes or Sunspiced fresh Idaho Potatoes in their displays.



CALIFORNIA AVOCADOS ADD SIGNATURE STYLE TO COMFORT DISHES

Operators using their creativity with fresh California avocados are transforming American comfort menu standards into menu standouts and instant customer favorites. The Irvine-based California Avocado Commission reports a fresh California avocado riff on a Bloody Mary, the Avo Maria, thanks to inspired mixologist Kim Haasarud. At the Cheese Board in Reno, NV, owner, Deborah Branby, deconstructed a classic sandwich into a bite-size Bacon, Avocado and Tomato Club.



CALIFORNIA GIANT ANNOUNCES RECIPE CONTEST WINNERS

Watsonville, CA-based California Giant Berry Farms partnered with the Food and Culinary Professionals division (FCP) of the American Dietetic Association this spring to host a recipe contest that encouraged participants to develop recipes incorporating fresh berries as part of a healthy lifestyle. The Grand Prize in the Reciberries for Life contest was awarded to a Double Berry Rice entry that includes both blackberries and raspberries. Other winning recipes featuring the full range of the company's berries included Strawberry Basil Bruschetta and Very Berry White Chocolate Smoothie.



LOOK FOR THESE COMPANIES AT THE PMA FOODSERVICE CONFERENCE IN MONTEREY, CA, JULY 31, 2011



HOLLANDIA PRODUCE

Carpinteria, CA
Hollandia Produce is home to the award-winning line of Live Gourmet brand living lettuces and leafy greens, which are sustainably grown and harvested with their roots intact to promote freshness and flavor.

BOOTH #115



IDAHO POTATO COMMISSION

Eagle, ID
Idaho grows more potatoes than any other state, and our brand awareness is recognized as the highest in the industry. Stop by to see our new size guide, foodservice tool kit, reinvented themed recipe cards and to speak with our regional marketing directors about promotion programs for the new season.

BOOTH #76



MIXTEC GROUP

Pasadena, CA
MIXTEC Group is the No. 1 executive search firm in produce. We provide exceptional executive recruitment and leadership consulting to the "who's who" of the industry.

BOOTH #132



PRODUCE BUSINESS

Boca Raton, FL
PRODUCE BUSINESS provides a monthly dialogue of marketing, merchandising, management and procurement information that "initiates industry improvement." Foodservice executives look to Produce Business, PerishablePundit.com and www.PerishableNews.com for insights and analysis into the big issues that affect their day-to-day operations.

BOOTH #8

PRODUCE PRO SOFTWARE

Woodridge, IL
Produce Pro Software provides sales order entry, purchasing, inventory management, routing/logistics, accounting, EDI, E-commerce, analytics and warehouse management features specifically designed and customized to each clients' unique needs. Produce Pro is the last system your company will ever need.

BOOTH #82



SAN MIGUEL PRODUCE INC.

Oxnard, CA
San Miguel Produce is a grower and processor of farm-fresh specialty and Asian greens including: Cut 'n Clean Greens, conventional, organic, Jade and Asian greens available year-round. Visit our booth to see new items as we celebrate 35 years of quality and freshness.

BOOTH #64

SUNKIST GROWERS INC.

Sherman Oaks, CA
Robert Danhi, professional chef, award-winning cookbook author and renowned specialist in Southeast Asian cuisine, is passionate about citrus. Visit him at our booth and sample Grilled Sunkist Lemon Planks with Salmon, Green Tea & Jasmine Oils.

BOOTH #141



WADA FARMS

Idaho Falls, ID
Wada Farms has been cultivating excellence for over 65 years as a leading grower and packer in the Idaho potato industry. Wada Farms is the exclusive marketer of Dole fresh potatoes, onions and sweet potatoes in North America. We pack a variety of labels in addition to Wada or Dole.

BOOTH #62



WAYNE E. BAILEY PRODUCE CO.

Chadbourn, NC
One of the biggest trends happening right now in restaurants is sweet potatoes. Nature's super food is taking off. If you want to get in on this foodservice movement, stop by our booth.

BOOTH #34



WEST PAK AVOCADO INC.

Temecula, CA
West Pak Avocado is an industry leader in the global supply of quality avocados. We specialize in value-added services such as our JustRipe! pre-conditioning program.

BOOTH #98



Premium Quality Peppers.
365 Days A Year.

PRIME TIME.

THE PEPPER PEOPLE
www.primetimeproduce.com

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 Sales Phone **760.399.4166**

NOGALES, ARIZONA USA
 Sales Phone **520.281.4993**

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Conference Venue: Walter E. Washington Convention Center, Washington D.C.

Conference Management: NASFT, New York, NY

Phone: 212-482-6440 • **Fax:** 212-482-6459

Website: www.fancyfoodshows.com

July 13 - 16, 2011**FRESH PRODUCE & FLORAL COUNCIL**

Southern California Expo

Conference Venue: Disneyland Hotel, Anaheim, CA

Conference Management: Fresh Produce & Floral Council, La Mirada, CA

Phone: 714-739-0177 • **Fax:** 714-739-0226

Email: carissa@fpfc.org

Website: www.fpfc.org

July 29 - 31, 2011**PMA FOODSERVICE CONFERENCE TOURS & EXPO**

The PMA Foodservice Conference and Exposition is the only event focused exclusively on fresh produce in foodservice and is widely rated by attendees as one of the industry's best values for learning and networking.

Conference Venue: Portola Plaza Hotel, Monterey, CA

Conference Management: Produce Marketing Association, Newark, DE

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

Email: solutionctr@pma.com

Website: www.pma.com

AUGUST 17 -19, 2011**TEXAS PRODUCE CONVENTION**

Conference Venue: Isla Grand Beach Hotel & Resort, South Padre Island, TX

Conference Management: Texas Produce Association, Mission, TX

Phone: 956-581-8632 • **Fax:** 956-581-3912

Email: johnmclung@msn.com

Website: www.texasproduceassociation.com

August 18 - 19, 2011**APPLE CROP OUTLOOK AND MARKETING CONFERENCE**

Sponsored by the U.S. Apple Association, this conference offers an insider's view on the upcoming apple season.

Conference Venue: Ritz Carlton, Chicago, IL

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

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

Email: info@usapple.org

Website: www.usapple.org

August 31 - September 2, 2011**SIAL MERCOSUR**

The 9th International Food and Beverage Exhibition of the Mercosur

Conference Venue: Centro Costa Salguero, Buenos Aires, Argentina

Conference Management: IMEX Management, Inc., Charlotte, NC

Phone: 704-365-0041 • **Fax:** 704-365-8426

Email: EricH@ImexManagement.com

Website: www.imexmgt.com

SEPTEMBER 6 - 9, 2011**35TH JOINT TOMATO CONFERENCE**

During the conference, key tomato industry leaders meet to review the past year and to share projects for the forthcoming campaign.

Conference Venue: Ritz Carlton, Naples, FL

Conference Management: Florida Tomato Committee,

Maitland, FL

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

Email: samantha@floridatomatoes.org

Website: www.floridatomatoes.org

September 18 - 20, 2011**FLORIDA FRUIT & VEGETABLE ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONVENTION**

Conference Venue: Ritz Carlton, Palm Beach, FL

Conference Management: Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association

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

Email: information@ffva.com

Website: www.ffva.com

September 20 - 23, 2011**FOOD & HOTEL MALAYSIA MALAYSIA'S OFFICIAL FOOD & HOTEL SHOW**

Conference Venue: Kuala Lumpur Convention Center (KLCC), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Conference Management: Oak Overseas, Concord, NC

Phone: 704-837-1980

Email: enquiry@mesallworld.com

Website: www.foodandhotel.com

September 21-24, 2011**NATURAL PRODUCTS EXPO EAST**

Conference Venue: Baltimore Convention Center, Baltimore, MD

Conference Management: New Hope Natural Media, Boulder, CO

Phone: 303-939-8440 • **Fax:** 303-939-9559

Email: info@newhope.com

Website: www.newhope.com

September 22 - 24, 2011**SEPC FALL CONFERENCE 2011****2011 ANNUAL FALL CONFERENCE**

Conference Venue: Gaylord Opryland Hotel, Nashville, TN

Conference Management: Southeast Produce Council, Inc., Sun City Center, FL

Phone: 813-633-5556 • **Fax:** 813-653-4479

Email: info@seproducecouncil.com

Website: www.seproducecouncil.com

OCTOBER 8-11, 2011**ANUGA**

The world's leading food fair for the retail trade and the foodservice and catering market.

Conference Venue: Cologne Exhibition Centre, Cologne, Germany

Conference Management: Koelnmesse GmbH

Phone: 49 (0)221 821 2240 • **Fax:** 49 (0) 221 821 3410

Email: anuga@koelnmesse.de

Website: www.anuga.com

October 14 - 17, 2011**PMA FRESH SUMMIT 2011**

Fresh Summit International Convention and Expo is the largest produce-centered convention in North America.

Conference Venue: Georgia World Congress Center, Atlanta, GA

Conference Management: Produce Marketing Association, Newark, DE

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

Email: solutionctr@pma.com

Website: www.pma.com

To submit events to our Forward Thinking calendar, please email info@producebusiness.com

CELEBRATING FRESH



NETWORKING



EDUCATION



RETAIL TOURS



CHEF DEMOS



WHOLESALE TOURS



RETAIL THOUGHT LEADERS



GLOBAL TRADE



FOODSERVICE FORUM



TRADE SHOW



THE NEW YORK
PRODUCE SHOW
AND CONFERENCE

Presented by
Eastern Produce Council
AND
Produce Business

November 7-9, 2011

New York City

www.nyproduceshow.com



WITH NEW ICON, PRODUCE STEPS UP TO THE PLATE

By Lorelei DiSogra,
Vice President of Nutrition and Health

Dust off your favorite baseball analogy, because communicating about better nutrition just got a whole lot easier. You could call it a home run for fruits and vegetables, or a triple play for America's dietary health, or even a perfect game for a nation with an epidemic obesity rate, but any way you word it, USDA's unveiling of the new MyPlate dietary guidance in May is a game-changer for nutrition in the United States.

MyPlate replaces the nearly two-decade-old pyramid as the federal government's illustration of the recommendations contained in the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which calls for half a plate of fruits and vegetables at every meal. As the pyramid took its hits on the way out — comedian Stephen Colbert called it his “favorite Egyptian mortuary-based nutritional diagram; even better than the food sphinx” — the MyPlate visual was heralded as a far simpler way for Americans to understand what they should eat at every meal. A half-plate of fruits and vegetables, a quarter-plate of grains, a quarter-plate of protein and a side serving of dairy, all simply depicted by color-coded sections on a round plate. As First Lady Michelle Obama said, “Parents don't have the time to measure out exactly three ounces of chicken or to look up how much rice or broccoli is in a serving, but we do have time to take a look at our kids' plates.”

The First Lady is absolutely right in her assessment of the need for simplicity in nutritional messaging, and MyPlate goes a long way toward satisfying that need. United Fresh has long been among the leading advocates for increased fruit and vegetable consumption, and has consistently underscored the need for simple, easy-to-understand consumer education that can effectively change eating

habits. With that in mind, United Fresh provided input to USDA and the Department of Health and Human Services on ways to implement the core messages in the 2010 Dietary Guidelines. The association recommended that USDA and HHS provide clear, strong, compelling and actionable messages to consumers to increase fruit and vegetable

consumption in the Dietary Guidelines; a landmark characterization in its own right.

Because of the recommendation to eat half a plate of produce, the MyPlate concept has the potential to revolutionize the American meal, and with it, the dietary habits of all Americans. By making fresh produce the focal point of the meal, rather than proteins or grains, MyPlate is the first visual guidance from USDA that moves the meal's emphasis away from these groups and focuses it on fruits and vegetables. The breakthrough message to “make half your plate fruits and vegetables” is simple, compelling and effective, and one that consumers can practice at every meal.

Where MyPlate has the potential to make the most progress is at the school salad bar. As kids travel through the lunch line and down the salad bar in a school that has fully embraced the MyPlate message, they look up, see the MyPlate graphic, and fill half their plates or trays with the fruits and vegetables available to them at the salad bar. It is an extremely simple scenario, and one that we hope will

be repeated many times over in cafeterias across the country. In this sense, MyPlate goes a long way toward complimenting the Let's Move Salad Bars to Schools initiative, which supports First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move! initiative to end childhood obesity.

USDA deserves kudos for its foresight and progressive step with MyPlate, recognizing the importance of eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables. The onus is now on the members of the produce industry to promote MyPlate and the “make half your plate fruits and vegetable” message at every opportunity, and continue doing what we do best: providing the American people with a bounty of fresh, healthy and safe fruits and vegetables.



consumption and other necessary dietary changes; use “Half Your Plate Should Be Fruits and Vegetables” to illustrate how many fruits and vegetables children and adults need to eat at every meal; and commit to implementing policy and environmental changes that will create healthier food environments and systems-wide approaches.

The new image, if leveraged properly, has the power to create a sea of change in the way Americans visualize what they put on their plates for each meal. Perhaps most importantly for the produce industry, the MyPlate graphic places paramount importance on the half a plate of fruits and vegetables recommendation

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MINDSHIFT NEEDED IN PRODUCTION AGRICULTURE

By James Prevor
President & Editor-in-Chief



A great challenge for the produce industry is that our culture's current locally grown focus is pushing for a deconstruction of the existing food system. Oddly enough, the local movement will probably lead to more produce consumption, but whether it leads to a larger produce industry depends on the extent to which the industry at large is able to surf this wave of consumer and activist interest. It will also depend on whether the industry can integrate the consumer desire for a less homogenized but more socially and environmentally friendly food supply with an intimate relationship between producers and consumers.

Much of the initiative behind this culture-shift is coming from food-service. Local and sustainable products offer chefs a new opportunity to add value. Few consumers are going to visit farmers or other food producers, and even fewer have the skills to vet these producers. If a chef can vouch that these items are local and that the producers act in sustainable ways, etc., the chef is doing things for patrons that they can't easily do for themselves.

There are loads of problems with this approach. Few chefs have the time to roam the countryside identifying fantastic local suppliers; even fewer have the skills and systems required to vet these producers. Plus verification isn't a one-time thing, it is a perpetual challenge. Indeed fraud is rampant, and many a chef who thinks he is getting product from some specific local acreage is actually getting something else entirely. He also may be getting local and sustainable, but perhaps the product has not been properly vetted for food safety issues. It is also highly likely to be much more expensive than mainstream product and that poses challenges all of its own.

Still, the chefs have tapped into a current in the *zeitgeist* and the industry ignores it at its peril. The challenge is how the mainstream production sector can engage with the foodie uprising. To date, much has been marketing, with regional producers emphasizing geography.

That is appropriate, but the whole foodie/locavore/sustainable/artisanal/terroir movement is best understood as a kind of rebellion against a world where everything is so similar everywhere. Farmer's markets and CSAs are not popular because so many consumers have suddenly developed deep moral commitments to supporting the local foodshed. It is because they are fun, variable and entertaining in a way few supermarkets are anymore.

A whole new category of restaurant — Farm to Table — has started to spring up not because so many consumers really know or under-

stand the purposes of the founders of the movement, but because it is interesting and fun.

However, all this is a challenge for the produce industry as these producers and restaurants are rarely involved in the trade's associations or industry food safety or traceability initiatives.

They may not realize it, but the true believers desperately need the mainstream produce industry if their ideas are ever to be more than a curiosity on the food scene or an indulgence for the rich and trendy.

The answer may just lie in a reinvigoration of the wholesale sector. This is symbolized most obviously in the stunning new Philadelphia Market, which serves as the perfect regional foodshed hub, but with all the modern bells and whistles related to food safety and quality. We also see it in a changed attitude at the ownership level of these facilities. Hunts Point, for example, has teamed up with the American Cancer

Society and Star Boxing Inc. to host its First Knock Out Cancer event at the terminal market. This integrates the market with its region and elevates its purpose in a way exactly in alignment with those seeking more purpose in the supply chain.

The big foodservice distributors such as Sysco and US Foodservice all have local procurement programs, and it is going to be in some combination

of localization by national distributors and reinvigoration of local wholesaling that smaller scale restaurants will wind up being served.

Regional producers can't begin to meet the need for food, so the final link in the chain has to be national and international shippers ready to take advantage of the opportunity. We already have seen lots of fresh-cut operators opening regional facilities. The next step has to be the large national and international shippers emphasizing their own authentic place in the food supply.

With the big growth in private label, one also begins to imagine a hybrid at retail and foodservice. In retail, we have a frontside package that reflects a supermarket brand or a national brand and a reverse side that tells the story of the actual farm and farmer. At restaurants, the menus have the name of the restaurant, of course, thus rooting things locally, but they celebrate the handiwork of the chefs in selecting ingredients from around the world by rotating highlights of farms and artisan producers.

Much depends on getting the economy right. Mass production is cheapest, but food is very inexpensive when judged as a percentage of personal income. If the economy starts to grow robustly and incomes start to rise, more and more people will be willing to pay a little more to have something less homogenous and more interesting. Meeting that challenge and seizing this opportunity will require a mind-shift in production agriculture.

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How can the mainstream production sector engage with the foodie uprising?

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More Rollbacks: Wal-Mart Challenges Continue

BY DIANE FREDERICK, CEO OF BLUEOCEAN MARKET INTELLIGENCE

Wal-Mart's same store sales in the United States fell 1.1 percent in the first quarter of this year, making it the 8th straight quarter of declining same-store sales for Wal-Mart. The company's own sales data and projections are not fully accessible to suppliers, leaving many to wonder, "What's happening at Wal-Mart?"

As such, the team at Blueocean Market Intelligence created a Shopper Behavior Monitor to investigate how and why Wal-Mart shoppers are changing their shopping habits.

In the first wave of the study, fielded in September, 2010, Blueocean found that customer loss, price competition and Project Impact, a remodeling and reorganizing effort designed to streamline the store and attract more affluent shoppers, negatively affected 2010 sales compared to 2009. The second wave, fielded in April, 2011, was conducted to discover how Wal-Mart customers were responding to efforts to reverse Project Impact, as well as the continued slow economic recovery.

In Wave 2, we asked Wal-Mart customers if their shopping habits have or will change from the fourth quarter in 2010 versus the first quarter in 2011, and the next six months versus current period.

Our study found that the overall state of the economy continued to negatively affect customers' willingness to shop and spend. Additionally, high gas prices, increasing price pressure and negative impressions about the Wal-Mart shopping experience are all impacting Wal-Mart shopping behavior.

Wal-Mart Goes The Way Of The Greater Economy

When asked why they are spending less at Wal-Mart, the majority of customers cite universal spending cuts as their main reason. Also, many shoppers, including Wal-Mart's top customers, are reducing their Wal-Mart shopping trips, in part due to high gas prices and an ability to find bargains closer to home.

Customers remain pessimistic about the state of the economy and don't expect much improvement in the next six months. Most expect to maintain spending at Wal-Mart, but many plan

cuts at other channels, including grocery stores.

Wal-Mart Is Facing Price Pressure Across Departments, Especially In Grocery

The majority of Wal-Mart's Grocery shoppers maintained their grocery spending in the first quarter of 2011, compared to the previous quarter. Among those making changes to their spending habits, a greater number increased spending than decreased. This is positive news for Wal-Mart, especially compared to significant spending and trip frequency reductions noted in other more discretionary departments.

However, Wal-Mart customers also increased their grocery spending at rival low-priced outlets, including dollar stores and limited assortment retailers. While these channels represent a small share of total grocery spending, Wal-Mart's customers made bigger spending increases in these channels compared to their increases at Wal-Mart. Grocery stores also saw a small gain in share.

Opinions about Wal-Mart's price competitiveness weakened in this wave compared to the last. Fewer grocery shoppers call the store the "low price leader" or say Wal-Mart offers "good value for money," compared to the 2010 wave of the study. Additionally, nearly a quarter of those who made grocery department spending cuts said that other retailers' pricing and promotions are attracting them to their stores more often. A third of these shoppers say competitors are more affordable, up nearly 10 percent.

Maintaining grocery customers' loyalty and responding quickly to attempts to undercut prices will be critical to Wal-Mart's future success. While customers expect their spending at dollar and limited assortment stores to moderate in the next six months, prolonged economic difficulties provide opportunities for



these channels to gain share.

Customers Don't See Improvements To Wal-Mart Shopping Experience

In the fall of 2010, Wal-Mart began reversing its Project Impact program. Since then, the company has reintroduced items taken off the shelves, refocused signage on price rollbacks, and runs TV ads touting their commitment to employee satisfaction and opportunity. Despite these efforts, customers' impressions of the Wal-Mart shopping experience haven't improved. Ratings for Wal-Mart's variety, organization and customer service remain low. Only about one in three think Wal-Mart is better organized or more fun to shop than other retailers. Less than half think Wal-Mart has a better variety of brands in stock.

Wal-Mart's Future Performance

Wal-Mart's ability to continue to capture market growth in the grocery sector is dependent on its ability to quickly respond to aggressive pricing at other local stores, including dollar, limited assortment and grocery outlets. If the economy continues to falter and personal finances remain tight, Wal-Mart will have difficulty reversing negative sales trends. Building brand loyalty and showcasing the advantages of buying groceries and other goods at Wal-Mart, versus other stores, is critical as Wal-Mart's price leadership continues to be challenged.



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Wal-Mart's Era of Great Confusion

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

The BlueOcean Market Intelligence Report on Wal-Mart is insightful, but, as with all studies that focus on interviewing consumers, it can only give us insight into the class of consumers that are actually interviewed. This is a shame because it is, of course, not surprising that Wal-Mart should find its customers affected by the national economy. When Ms. Frederick explains that "...the overall state of the economy continued to negatively affect customers' willingness to shop and spend," it sounds perfectly reasonable.

What it doesn't do, though, is translate into an explanation for why Wal-Mart's same-store sales have been declining for two years. After all, times are tough not just for Wal-Mart's customers but for many, indeed most, Americans.

So what one would expect is that as Wal-Mart's customers — typically the consumers living paycheck-to-paycheck — suffer, one would think that the next socio-economic class up, also hurt by the recession, would abandon more pricy venues and migrate their shopping to Wal-Mart. Yet that doesn't seem to have happened, or at least not enough to compensate for the pocketbook contraction among Wal-Mart's core customers. The intriguing question, of course, is why? Why haven't consumers traded down to shop at Wal-Mart?

BlueOcean surveyed only those who shop at Wal-Mart, so we can't say for sure, but there are hints in its two studies of why things are not happening for Wal-Mart as the company once expected they would.

For example, the study points out that high gas prices are inducing consumers to reduce their shopping trips to Wal-Mart. This is a shocking development. Since the development of the Wal-Mart Supercenter, high gas prices have been a plus for Wal-Mart and a disaster for everyone else. Why? Simple... the giant Wal-Mart Supercenter, with its promise of one-stop-shopping, encouraged consumers to consolidate shopping trips to save on gas and save on the purchase price of their shopping items.

If high gas prices no longer work in Wal-Mart's favor, and both sales statistics and the BlueOcean study say they do not, that is a sea change and the study provides an inkling as to what, precisely, has changed.

Ms. Frederick writes: "...many shoppers, including Wal-Mart's top customers, are reducing their Wal-Mart shopping trips, in part due to high gas prices and an ability to find bargains closer to home."

High gas prices wouldn't necessarily reduce shopping trips or spending at Wal-Mart; it is high gas prices COMBINED with the "ability to find bargains closer to home" that does the trick. Anyone know how to spell Aldi, Save-a-Lot, dollar stores, etc.?

Many of Wal-Mart's problems are unforced errors. The decision to impose Project Impact — basically a rationalization of SKU count without extensive testing — simply boggles the mind.

It is clear that the executives high up in the ranks at Wal-Mart were confused about the core appeal of the supercenter concept. They must have been blind to the fact that the big advantage a supercenter had over an Aldi was the supercenter's grand scale, and thus, its ability to handle an extensive variety.

Perhaps the most disturbing finding for Wal-Mart in the BlueOcean study is that in the second wave of the study, consumer assessments of Wal-Mart's price competitiveness continued to decline. As Ms. Frederick puts it: "Opinions about Wal-Mart's price competitiveness weakened in this wave compared to the last. Fewer grocery shoppers call the store the 'low price leader' or say Wal-Mart offers 'good value for the money,' compared to the 2010 wave of the study. Additionally, nearly a quarter of those who made grocery department spending cuts said that other retailers' pricing and promotions are attracting them to their stores more often. A third of these shoppers say competitors are more affordable, up nearly 10 percent."

So there you have it. The issue is not whether Wal-Mart can rearrange the fixtures to be more appealing or whether Wal-Mart can tweak its assortment to better satisfy customer needs. The issue is whether Wal-Mart is prepared to lose its crown as America's value leader.

There are many signs that this is the case. While Wal-Mart's same-store sales have been declining for two years, its profits have been rising. This indicates that Sam Walton's old notion that Wal-Mart should be a buying agent for the

consumer and that efficiencies should be passed along to the shopper has been cast aside.

Store managers, who in days gone by would send their employees into a competitor to buy up a sale item if Wal-Mart couldn't match it, have been reigned in. They no longer have marching orders to make sure Wal-Mart is never beaten on price for key items.

Wal-Mart has lost a lot. On items such as produce, it used to have vendors who bled Wal-Mart blue; then Wal-Mart abandoned its old relationships so vendors care less. It used to have employees who loved the place; then Wal-Mart abandoned its profit share plan that made everyone a stockholder. Now its employees care less. Consumers used to know that

Many of Wal-Mart's problems are unforced errors. The decision to impose Project Impact — basically a rationalization of SKU count without extensive testing — simply boggles the mind.

Wal-Mart offered the best value; now the old banners about Satisfaction Guaranteed and Always Low Prices have disappeared. So consumers are not as committed.

To lose the loyalty of even one of these three groups — vendors, employees or consumers — can be catastrophic to any retailer. To lose the loyalty and enthusiasm of all three is quite a blow.

Wal-Mart still has many advantages, but this BlueOcean Report shows it has far fewer than it once did.



Industry Education Efforts Moderate The Damage, But The Media Can't Resist EWG's Annual "Dirty Dozen" Stunt

FROM JIM PREVOR'S PERISHABLE PUNDIT 07.06.2011,

We've written in the past about the Environmental Working Group's annual publicity stunt of releasing a so-called "Dirty Dozen" report that purports to identify the produce items that have the most pesticide residues on them.

The annual stunt is self-evidently silly as it does not purport to actually measure risk of any kind. That is to say that if the whole conventional produce industry magically reduced each pesticide residue by 99 percent next year, there would still be 12 items that by this methodology would constitute a "Dirty Dozen" — and in light of the publicity this annual show garners the EWG, we could probably count on this group continuing its annual publication.

"The sadness here is that plenty of consumers, unable or unwilling to get into the gritty details, are likely to read the headline, say a Pox on both conventional and organic, and buy their kids cookies or candy bars instead of apples for their lunch box."

We would say that the actions of the produce industry, especially The Alliance For Food and Farming, whose efforts have been partially underwritten by the Produce Marketing Association, as well as Western Growers Association and United Fresh have, in fact, both made EWG a little more temperate in its claims and made the media a tad more skeptical — even if the headline is close to irresistible and so the industry has a long way to go.

Still, if you read the blog of Marion Nestle's, famed professor of nutrition and food author whose comments we have featured many times, she recounts much that is favorable for the produce trade — using material the EWG included in its release:

EWG explains that its Shopper's

Guide is not built on a complex assessment of pesticide risks, but instead reflects the overall pesticide loads of common fruits and vegetables....

Most available research supports the health benefits of eating fruits and vegetables regardless of their pesticide loads. Ken Cook, the president of EWG says:

"We recommend that people eat healthy by eating more fruits and vegetables, whether conventional or organic," says Ken Cook, president and founder of Environmental Working Group. "But people don't want to eat pesticides with their produce if they don't have to. And with EWG's guide, they don't."

Nestle also is quoted in an *LA Times* piece

professor Nestle — and the EWG — is the endorsement of organically grown produce as necessarily more healthy.

It is one thing if Ken Cook wants to man the ramparts over people's rights to make an aesthetic choice to avoid synthetics.

Yet in the *LA Times* piece, Professor Nestle makes a substantive claim:

...for those trying to limit their exposure to pesticides, the Environmental Working Group recommends choosing organic produce whenever possible.

But Herrington (a registered dietitian at Northwestern University) points out that organic does not necessarily mean pesticide-free. The USDA allows pesticide use on organic crops, though "the pesticides in organic agriculture are mostly natural, meaning they are found in nature and less toxic," Nestle said.

We don't think the science exists to back up the good professor on this point. Pesticides exist to kill pests. Natural substances can kill as surely as synthetic ones. If natural substances were "less toxic," then organic farmers would have to use more of them to achieve the same lethality against insects that conventional farmers have with synthetic pesticides. That residues would be "less toxic" is not at all clear.

We have seen no research at all to indicate that residues of say, copper sulfate, on organic produce is somehow healthier than a residue of a synthetic pesticide on conventional produce.

Of course, whatever the EWG writes in its release and whatever experts such as professor Nestle contribute to op-eds, the sadness here is that plenty of consumers, unable or unwilling to get into the gritty details, are likely to read the headline, say a Pox on both conventional and organic, and buy their kids cookies or candy bars instead of apples for their lunch box.

The EWG should be ashamed of itself for pushing such non-science in order to boost its fundraising, and the media should be ashamed of itself for falling for it — year after year.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CULINARY INSTITUTE OF AMERICA

Culinary Schools: TRAINING GROUNDS FOR PRODUCE PROCUREMENT

As the world places a new focus on the importance of produce, culinary schools take the lead in training tomorrow's chefs.

BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD

Leave it to Pixar Animation Studios to make an award-winning, top-grossing film about a talented chef who elevates a simple vegetable dish to the sublime. In fact, *Ratatouille* was required watching for culinary students enrolled in the Academy of Culinary Arts program at Atlantic Cape Community College in May's Landing, NJ. "The movie really opened the student's eyes to vegeta-

bles and what a wonderful gift it is to make a rustic dish to perfection," says Dean Patricia 'Kelly' McClay.

Today, student chefs are not only learning how to properly prepare produce, but how to procure it as well. In fact, every freshman culinary arts student at Johnson & Wales University, with locations in Providence, RI, North Miami, FL, Denver, CO, and Charlotte, NC, is required to take the Purchasing and Product Identification

course. "We go through a soup-to-nuts of ingredients," says Evan Nash, director of purchasing at the Charlotte, NC, campus. "From the produce standpoint, we talk about what it is, where it comes from and what to do with it. It's a very hands-on approach. You can't just walk in and start cooking. You have to know your ingredients first."

Steve Zagor, director of culinary management programs at the Institute of



PHOTO COURTESY OF ATLANTIC CAPE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Students at the Academy of Culinary Arts at Atlantic Cape Community College grow much of the herbs and lettuce used in the student-run restaurant.

“From the produce standpoint, we talk about what it is, where it comes from and what to do with it. It’s a very hands-on approach. You can’t just walk in and start cooking. You have to know your ingredients first.”

— Evan Nash, Johnson & Wales University

Culinary Education (ICE), in New York, NY, agrees. “Every one of our students is given a project to pick one or two products and become an expert on them. In the case of produce, they call local farmers and walk the farmer’s markets, call distributors and request information and samples, or in other words, thoroughly research the product. We’ve had students study everything from highly seasonal ramps to the everyday zucchini.”

Such in-depth information is critically necessary in culinary schools, asserts Marshall Shafkowitz, director of academic services at Le Cordon Bleu in Chicago, IL. “This is because we have students from all over and with broad aspirations. Some choose to work at a 5-star hotel where they need to buy ingredients such as popcorn shoots from a specialty purveyor like The Chef’s Garden [based in Huron, OH]. Others work in large high volume chains where they need to purchase 500 bunches of chives at a time from the Syscos of the world.”

How-To, Not What-To

One of the central tenets of culinary school instructors is to teach students how to buy, not what to buy or who to buy it

from. Tim Shaw, special curriculum instructor at the French Culinary Institute (FCI), located at the International Culinary Center of New York, in New York City, says, “We don’t teach a specific philosophy so that students can form their own. When it comes to common catchphrases like ‘local’ and ‘organic,’ we teach students what these terms mean and how to determine the importance of these in the culinary setting in which they are working. It all comes down to examining the issues, not making black-and-white decisions.”

A good example of this is a story that Zagor shares with his students. “As a chef, I did some work for Paul Newman when he was planning to open his restaurant in Westport, CT. He wanted us to only buy organic, local and natural foods. He also wanted the restaurant to be a money-maker for his Hole in the Wall Gang charity. I told him he could do one or the other, but not both. So, we settled on organic, local and natural — where and when possible, instead.”

Brad Barnes, senior director of culinary education for the Culinary Institute of America (CIA), in Hyde Park, NY, agrees with the moral of this story and

adds, “We try to support our local farmers whenever we can. However, we need about 1,000 pounds of carrots a week and we can’t get that amount locally. There are practical constraints that impact purchasing decisions.”

“Indeed, there’s isn’t a one-size-fits-all purchasing philosophy,” says Le Cordon Bleu’s Shafkowitz. “Therefore, we teach our students how to think through pros and cons when making purchasing decisions. For example, the pros of local are the ability to get the best tasting ingredients. If it is strawberry season, you’ll get amazing strawberries. The con is that if you buy local, you need to change your menu often to reflect changes in ingredient availability. On the other hand, sourcing outside your local area

FOOD SAFETY AS AN ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT

The National Restaurant Association’s ServSafe program is a part of many, if not all, culinary student’s education. “In addition,” says Patricia ‘Kelly’ McClay, dean of the Academy of Culinary Arts program at Atlantic Cape Community College, “Food safety is also a part of every class our students take. It’s a huge issue and it’s global because procurement is global. In terms of produce, we teach students that it is crucial for them to know where their products come from and think about the source. While purchasing was once more of a knee-jerk ‘if you have it I’ll buy it,’ it is now, ‘I can get it, but do I want it?’ We’re a lot slower in that decision-making, and food safety is a big factor.”

Fewer steps in the supply chain can potentially lead to fewer food safety problems, teaches the French Culinary Institute’s Tim Shaw, special curriculum instructor. “You go from farmer to chef. Two steps. When there are more steps, it can increase the potential for food safety problems.”

“On the other hand,” says Evan Nash, director of purchasing for the Charlotte, NC, campus of Johnson & Wales’ University, “we prefer to use a distributor for all of our produce. That way we know it’s safe when it arrives at the back door. Just because we use a distributor doesn’t mean that the produce we source can’t be local. Our distributor will work with local farmers to make sure they have all of their safety certifications.

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Learning how and where to procure their produce is just as important as learning the intricacies of prep work.

“We teach our students how to think through pros and cons when making purchasing decisions. For example, the pros of local are the ability to get the best tasting ingredients... The con is that if you buy local, you need to change your menu often to reflect changes in ingredient availability.”

— Marshall Shafkowitz, Le Cordon Bleu

means you can get pretty much anything you want any time of year. The con is that by doing so you aren’t supporting your local market.”

FCI’s Shaw comments, “We teach students to realize that if they want bananas, then they are going to be imported, and that’s fine. And, that it may be better on a cost or sustainability basis to buy local conventionally grown blueberries than organic berries shipped in from Guatemala.”

Cost is a consideration in all aspects of purchasing and especially when choosing between value-added versus whole produce. ICE of Zagor says, “It’s calculating the return on aggravation. Students often find that when they work it out that

the cost of buying, for example, peeled cloves of garlic may be less than the labor, food waste and yields of buying whole heads of garlic.”

Johnson & Wales’ Nash agrees. “You’re certainly not going to clip your own green beans when you’re working in a banquet facility that seats 5,000. You buy them already snapped.”

On the other hand, says FCI’s Shaw, “We generally teach that it is better to buy the whole product and find a use for all of the parts. For example, cut the cheeks off a mango for salads and scoop the rest of the flesh to use in a puree. Or, use the trimmings from onions and celery for making stock. It’s the French way of

cooking to economize.”

Again, it all comes down to the type of foodservice setting, says McClay of the Academy of Culinary Art’s. “If you have downtime in the kitchen, it might be more cost effective to put someone to work peeling potatoes rather than buying them already peeled. We also have students consider if future customers would be willing to pay a high price for something made from ready-made ingredients in a high-end restaurant.”

Cost also comes into play when students learn what form of an item is best for a specific application. The CIA’s Barnes explains, “We not only teach students how to identify the best product, but also how a level of quality relates to their business model. For example, there isn’t a need to buy a really premium tomato to use for a slice on a sandwich where it isn’t visible when a good quality 5x6 tomato will do.”

The take-home message we emphasize in purchasing classes “is for our students to ultimately strive to get the highest quality ingredients for the money they have available to spend,” says Le Cordon Bleu’s Shafkowitz. “It’s simply good business.”



He's not just an employee; he's a logistics engineer.

When Manuel Villafana first started at Boskovich Farms—over 37 years ago—he worked side-by-side with his father picking green onions in the field. Today, as Product Logistics Manager, Manuel oversees the complicated coordination of moving up to 100,000 packages of Boskovich products each and every day (and not just green onions but spinach, radishes, cilantro, parsley, lettuces and more) from seven packing locations and

shipping districts in Yuma, AZ, Monterey, CA, and Ventura, CA. Add to that the fact that Manuel was part of the team that implemented the first pallet tag systems at Boskovich Farms—to identify product and provide traceback information—saving time, money and eliminating

shipping errors—and you can see why we feel so strongly at Boskovich Farms that our employees are the real core of our business.



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Seasonality Moves To The Head Of The Class

“Over a decade ago, a large part of purchasing education focused on dollars and cents,” notes the Academy of Culinary Art’s McClay. “Today, we talk more about food mapping. That is, determining what produce is available in our tri-state area and when. We really emphasize seasonality.”

Shaw comments, “Gone are the days when a chef would call up a purveyor with a shopping list. You just can’t cook that way anymore. Instead, you need to determine what is available, its flavor and its quality and then decide what to buy. As a result, chefs are not just faxing a static order, but instead, getting a lot more active with their purveyors.”

The emphasis on seasonality is making students more aware of flavor, Shaw adds. “A lot of students assume tomatoes are available year-round and that they are supposed to be hard, pale red on the outside and white on the inside. It’s fun as a teacher to see their reaction to a tomato that has been freshly picked in August and dressed with a little olive oil, salt and pepper. Flavor is everything. It’s



PHOTO COURTESY OF INSTITUTE FOR CULINARY EDUCATION

Students from the Institute for Culinary Education tour Baldor Specialty Foods, where they learn about produce distribution.

the main tool of a chef’s trade. And, knowing how to choose produce at its flavor peak is why chefs like Thomas Keller at Per Se can offer customers a 9-course vegetable tasting menu and charge a fixed price of \$295.”

The Academy of Culinary Art’s McClay adds, “We’re seeing a substantial increase in the number of vegetarian students and

clients. There was a time in foodservice when the vegetarian customer got a baked potato and steamed vegetables. Now, we understand that if a group of six is looking for where to dine out, it’s the vegetarian that is driving the location. The chef who can create meatless meals with a variety of textures and flavor combinations will get the customers.”

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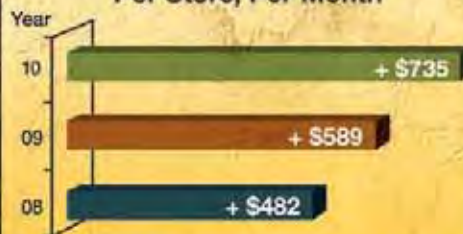
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Continued Produce Education Through CIA's Strategic Initiatives

An Interview With The Culinary Institute Of America's Greg Drescher

MOVE OVER MEAT. It's time fruits and vegetables filled half the plate. Officials at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, along with the First Lady Michelle Obama and Surgeon General Regina Benjamin, delivered this recommendation at the unveiling of the USDA's new MyPlate logo on June 2. While the logo is new, the concept of giving fresh produce a prominent place on the plate is something that Greg Drescher, the St. Helena, CA-based executive director of Strategic Initiatives Group at the Culinary Institute of America (CIA), and his colleagues have been working on for a long time. Herein, Drescher tells how this can be accomplished.

PRODUCE BUSINESS: What is the impetus behind the CIA at Greystone's Leadership Programs?

Greg Drescher: Since 1946, the CIA's main goal has been to train young people to be the very best chefs and culinary professionals. Over the past 15 years, several emerging mega-trends in the foodservice industry have spurred us to expand our approach to continuing education. This led to the creation of the Strategic Initiatives Group and subsequently eight Leadership Programs that we conduct on an annual basis for corporate chefs, food and beverage directors and other senior menu decision-makers in our industry. Two of the most important of these trends are health and wellness and a focus on world flavors.

Produce plays a big part in both of these trends. For example, there has been a push for dishes that are lower in salt, calories and saturated fat as well as moderate in portion size. When you look at each of these challenges facing the chef, produce appears as one of the major solutions. On the world flavors side, there are a lot of cuisines defined by produce. Think Mediterranean, Asian and many Latin American flavors. When you talk with people who love Italian food, for example, it's because it tastes good and this generally means — beyond pizza and pasta — learning how to make produce flavorful.

This focus on world cuisines has led many of us in the culinary world to rethink the typical American plate, from where it was protein first and then starch and vegetables to now a de-emphasis on animal protein. An example of this is a stir-fry where meat serves as a condiment of sorts — a secondary, supporting ingredient."

PB: When did the CIA get especially involved in promoting the healthfulness of produce?

GD: You can't really draw a line in the sand as to when we started focusing on health and wellness. It has just been an accelerating evolution. More than 10 years ago when we launched our first health- and wellness-focused Leadership Program, *Worlds of Healthy Flavors*, we already had a textbook, *Techniques of Healthy Cooking*, and St. Andrews Café at our New York campus offered health-conscious choices. However, it has been within the past 10 to 15 years that the CIA has been singling out produce as a special area of focus and emphasis. Part of this is due to our location here at the Greystone campus in the Napa Valley where we are close to Western agriculture. This has enabled us to work with a number of commodity boards and produce companies, and as a result, we have been able to form great partnerships that have supported our ability to develop produce-centric leadership programs.

PB: Has the Harvard School of Public Health always been a part of the CIA's *Worlds of Healthy Flavors* program?

GD: We made the Harvard connection right from the start of the *Worlds of Healthy Flavors* program series. This event focuses on emerging trends in nutrition science and the application of Best Practice menu solutions for volume foodservice operations. The invited attendees include top scientists, 35-40 "A-list" volume menu developers, and world cuisine experts. A good example of one of the outcomes of this program is the change in focus on fat we've seen in the past several years. All fat used to be lumped together as bad, and consumers demanded chefs make their dishes fat-free. Then, work with Harvard provided the research basis for distinguishing and including healthful fats and minimizing the use of unhealthy fats. Other healthful fats — in the



GREG DRESCHER

form of avocados, nuts and various seed oils — have greatly enhanced our ability to make produce-based menu items delicious and craveable.

We as chefs and culinary professionals have had many false starts in the area of health and wellness. For example, an icon on the menu that denoted a dish was healthful — a standard practice for many years — was viewed by many diners as uninteresting and unappetizing. Now, it's all about stealth-health. Chefs are typically no longer calling attention to dishes that offer plenty of produce, but these are indeed healthful. This practice is gaining a lot of traction.

PB: Tell us about the ways produce is featured as a topic in some of your programs.

GD: Produce is a key feature in all of our Leadership Programs. For example, chefs are now being called on to reduce the sodium content in dishes. In a recent CIA gathering of top corporate chefs this past year, the chefs that attended worked on ways to reduce the sodium in items such as a bacon cheeseburger where there's an excess of sodium in ingredients such as the bacon, cheese and dressing. Instead of just adding a sliver of lettuce and tomato, one solution was a topping of roasted vegetables. We are all familiar with the portabella mushroom burger, but another solution we developed was making tacos with a 50-50 blend of meat and mushrooms. It's the difference between the stark choice of a "regular" and "unleaded" menu — with either a lot of meat or meatless, for example. We need to have more menu development in this area between the two. Some people have described this as an "almost" vegetarian, flexitarian, or "meat as a condiment" approach.

Another example is one of our new initiatives called *Healthy Flavors, Healthy Kids*. We know that if something doesn't taste good, kids won't eat it. We're at a unique moment in time where trained chefs are working in school foodservice to make produce interesting and appealing. For example, beyond having salad bars in schools, the question is what is on these bars. We hosted a retreat with Sodexo, which serves many K-12 school lunch programs, and they advised us, surprisingly, that we should include a focus on world flavors for this age group. What this means is perhaps offering a Mediterranean-style legume salad on the salad bar, made with beans or chick peas, chopped produce such as peppers, a small amount of cheese or meat and a high-flavor dressing.

One more example is our *Flavor, Quality & American Menus* program. We take the invited menu decision makers from top chains, universities, supermarkets and other high volume operators on a tour of the Wolfskill Experimental Orchard near the University of California, Davis, our partners in the event. Here, they can taste ripe nuts right off the trees and sample over 50 varieties of figs and over 250 varieties of table grapes. Then, we take the chefs on tours of nearby farms where we'll sample amazing melons and tomatoes. This gets corporate chefs into the field and reminds them of the highest flavor standard so that they can work back through the supply chain and encourage innovation around flavor.

PB: How do produce companies themselves get involved in the programs? Do they have the opportunity to "pitch" their products to chefs, for example?

GD: In September, at the *Flavor Quality & American Menus* leadership program, which is a four-day retreat held here at Greystone, silver status sponsors and above can make presentations directly to the group about their products and innovation in

their company and sector. The idea of this program is to bring together leaders in agriculture, food and drink production, and foodservice to share ideas and educate each other on opportunities and challenges facing their respective sectors."

Each January, we host the one-day *Produce First!* program here at Greystone, where decision makers from top foodservice operations such as chains, universities and hotels get together to come up with ways to put more produce on the menu. After the morning presentations, we go into the kitchen and our produce partners can contribute to the Market Basket Exercise. This provides a unique opportunity for our sponsors to work side-by-side with chefs as they develop new menu items."

PB: As someone who travels the world looking for new flavors, are there any produce items that come to mind as promising future stars of restaurant menus?

GD: The growth of the Latin and Asian demographic in the U.S. means a growing popularity for tropical fruits such as mango, Asian vegetables, herbs and other aromatics. We're seeing an interest in new flavors of common fruits such as melons. As produce becomes more center-of-the-plate, there will be more of a drive for flavor in the industry. You can see that happening now in varietal development in items like melons, tomatoes and citrus.

PB: Can you give us a glimpse of any future worldwide food trends that will eventually trickle down to American menus? Will produce be a big part of this trend?

GD: I think we'll see a trend toward the casualization of world menus. This is good news for the produce industry. In fine dining, chefs typically highlight expensive and luxury ingredients, from steaks and lobster to caviar. As culinary casual expands, I think we'll see a tremendous amount of innovation in the foodservice industry driven by chefs reaching out to street food, market food and home cooking traditions from around the world, such as from Turkey, North Africa and Southern Mexico to Thailand, India and Peru.

So many of these delicious culinary traditions are produce-based. One example where we are still just scratching the surface is the traditions of Mediterranean tapas and Middle Eastern *meze*. Big flavors, a fun way to eat, a sense of culinary adventure — and, as a nice dividend, rich with the fresh flavors of produce. **pb**



PHOTO COURTESY OF SCOTT MILLER

Celebrity chef Rick Bayless presents a healthful recipe at the CIA's Healthy Flavors, Healthy Kids conference.

Sources Of Supply

Culinary students today learn everything from growing their own products to writing specs to sourcing produce from around the globe. McClay recounts, "Several years ago we took over a greenhouse once used by the science department. Today, we grow 75 percent of the fresh herbs and 100 percent of the lettuce we use in the student-run restaurant. We also have an organic kitchen garden outside the restaurant. The message that we communicate by doing this is that you don't really know what's ideal to buy unless you do it yourself. This is an especially important message for organically grown produce. For example, students learn that an organic tomato might not be perfectly round and a great bean might not be straight. But, it's the flavor that is important."

"As a chef," adds Shaw of FCI, "I want seasonal organic produce grown without pesticides and I like to shop at the local farmer's market. In class, we provide a framework for students and guide them in the questions they should ask when sourcing produce, but we don't give them actual purveyor's names, as that might seem like an endorsement. We let them form their own opinions and develop their own sources."

Field trips are a common and popular part of culinary education. Students at the Institute of Culinary Education will tour the Union Square Farmer's Market on 14th Street in New York as well as the Hunts Point Market in the Bronx. "The vendors

CIA LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

In an effort to go beyond the school's traditional classroom walls, the Culinary Institute of America reaches out to specific professionals in the culinary and health/medical arena to offer educational events that further their interests and careers. Some events are invitation-only, while others offer continuing education credits, and some events require certain professional criteria, but all have an element of produce education:

- 1) Worlds of Healthy Flavors:** The Culinary Institute of America and Harvard School of Public Health, Department of Nutrition developed Worlds of Healthy Flavors as a major, long-term initiative to increase the scope and range of healthy menu choices available to consumers through American foodservice. www.ciaprochef.com/wohf/
- 2) Produce First! American Menus Initiative:** This annual event seeks to spark the imagination of chefs and foodservice operators in bringing produce front and center in new menu development. www.ciaprochef.com/producefirst/
- 3) Healthy Kitchens, Healthy Lives:** A CIA/Harvard continuing medical education conference that shows healthcare professionals how to become role models for healthy eating, shopping, and cooking. www.healthykitchens.org
- 4) Greystone Flavor Summit:** Brings together each year a select group of top food and beverage directors, corporate and executive chefs, and other experts in American foodservice to explore, discuss and taste their way through a stimulating, critical set of flavor and related kitchen, dining, and hospitality management issues. www.ciaprochef.com/FlavorSummit2010/
- 5) Healthy Flavors, Healthy Kids:** The core of this initiative focuses on culinary insights and actions around K-12 school foodservice, but it also includes chain and other restaurant kids' menus, campus dining, and the family food environment. www.ciaprochef.com/healthykids/
- 6) Flavor, Quality, & American Menus:** Co-presented by the CIA and UC Davis, this annual event connects volume foodservice operators with leaders in American agriculture with the goal of advancing the flavor and quality on American menus. www.ciaprochef.com/FQAM/
- 7) Latin Flavor, American Kitchens (held at the CIA San Antonio campus):** An annual series of international, invitational leadership symposia highlighting Latin American cuisines, their connections to regional cultures, and the role of Latin flavors in the future of American menu development. www.ciaprochef.com/lfak2010/
- 8) Worlds of Flavor:** This annual event brings together an audience of 750 leaders in the culinary world and reaches deep into more than 20 regional food cultures and ethnic traditions — looking internationally as well as here at home in the U.S. — to create a memorable immersion into the world cuisines matrix that is driving contemporary menu innovation. www.worldsofflavor.com/

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“Gone are the days when a chef would call up a purveyor with a shopping list. You just can’t cook that way anymore. Instead, you need to determine what is available, its flavor and its quality and then decide what to buy.”

– Tim Shaw, French Culinary Institute

talk with the students,” says ICE’s Zagor. “They tell them what to look for, what is good, and what is not.”

Specification writing and proper delivery are among topics covered in the curriculum at Le Cordon Bleu. “Students are taught that they can’t just order oranges,” says the academy’s Shafkowitz. “Instead, for example, they need to order 88-count Navels from Sunkist in order to get a certain consistency. We also talk about perishable and non-perishable products and where they fall into the purchasing cycle and delivery schedule. For example, fresh herbs should be delivered at least two to three times per week, and if a restaurant is busiest Thursday through Sunday, then the delivery shouldn’t be on Monday. We also cover receiving, storing and inventory control. Ingredients should be issued on a daily basis. There shouldn’t be a free-for-all with the staff walking in the cooler anytime.”

Purveyors As Educators

Produce suppliers are welcome guests in the culinary classroom, says Zagor. “Since we’re located in New York, we have the good fortune of many people passing through town. Suppliers who have come to speak with students include Farmer Lee Jones from The Chef’s Garden who brought some of his microgreens for students to try. We also had a speaker who was a world authority on Yukon Gold potatoes.”

Shafkowitz adds, “It’s always great for a purveyor to partner with a culinary school, to come in and explain to students just what they do. Students love this. It opens up the creative process, and it helps establish relationships that could be helpful in the student’s future careers.”

pb



The Hunts Point Produce Market with Star Boxing's FIRST ANNUAL AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY'S KNOCK OUT CANCER: JULY 23, 2011



If you are like most Americans, cancer has touched your life or the life of someone you not only know, but love. The statistics are sobering. Cancer remains the second largest leading cause of death in our country, claiming more than half a million lives each year. That is one life lost to cancer every minute! The lifetime risk of developing cancer is as high as one in two for men, and one in three for women.

That is why on **Saturday July 23, 2011, Hunts Point Terminal Produce Cooperative Association** is proudly partnering with the American Cancer Society to host the 1st Annual **KNOCK OUT CANCER** boxing fundraising event. Net proceeds from **KNOCK OUT CANCER** will support the American Cancer Society's efforts in research, advocacy, education and services.

KNOCK OUT CANCER is the first event of its kind; Joe DeGuardia, Founder & CEO of Star Boxing is a veteran in the boxing world, and a Bronx native. Star Boxing produces exciting, innovative, and professional boxing events. Star Boxing has consistently brought credibility, integrity, and exciting fights world wide. This event is taking place at the Market and promises to be a memorable experience for all of us.

The **KNOCK OUT CANCER** sponsorship opportunities outlining a variety of levels of participation and amenities can be viewed online by visiting www.huntspointproducemkt.com. If you have any questions about **KNOCK OUT CANCER**, do not hesitate to contact *Myra Gordon*, Executive Administrative Director of Hunts Point Terminal Produce Cooperative Association via email at maggehuntspoint@aol.com or *Yilda V. Guerrero*, Director of Special Events, American Cancer Society at 718-547-5064 x 2101 or via email at yilda.guerrero@cancer.org.

Please join us by supporting the American Cancer Society in the fight against cancer. For Ticket Information contact Yilda Guerrero at: 718-547-5064 ext. 2101, cell: 917-843-7433 or via email at yilda.guerrero@cancer.org

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Budding from just around 1482 acres in 1999, the Mexican Protected Horticulture (greenhouse) industry has made great strides now boasting over 24,000 acres of protected production and becoming a significant supplier of high quality produce items 365 days a year. Growers of protected horticulture employ some of the most advanced technologies and production practices available to provide safe, high quality and sustainable products to the marketplace.

The Protected Horticulture industry in Mexico is made up of growers using covered crop technologies that vary from passive to semi-active and active greenhouse technologies. These technologies are used to control weather variables like temperature, air humidity, radiation, and CO2 levels, as well as protect from pests, cold fronts, precipitation (rain, hail etc), plant disease, and high winds.

The advantages of using protected technologies results in better yields, higher percentages of export quality crops, extended production windows, sustainable practices and a cleaner and safer product. These production technologies have much higher controls and promote a contamination-free environment during the production cycle, allowing for higher food safety and security standards. Additionally, all resources are used in a more efficient manner so a

great quantity of high quality items can be produced with the use of less land and water, making it an environmental friendly industry.

Presently, Mexico is divided into five production regions encompassing 25 states. By combining the production timeframes, these states provide year-round supply to the U.S. The Northeastern part of Mexico supplies produce from late October to early June. Areas in the Central Pacific Coast have a similar supply time frame but some states can run a year round program.

The Mexican protected industry's active and successful association AMHPAC (Mexican Association of Protected Horticulture) represents more than 200 growers. Members are involved in the production, packaging, distribution and marketing of fresh produce grown under greenhouses and other covered structures from 25 of the 32 states in Mexico.

The best and most responsible growers are well integrated in the organization and are responsible for 70% of Mexico's horticulture exports to the U.S. and Canada. The association's members represent a combined production area of 11,600 acres with an annual output of 1,000,000 tons (35% of the total indoor production). Greenhouses account for 68% of the production while net or shadehouses 32%.

MEXICO'S PROTECTED HORTICULTURE QUICK FACTS

- 24,600 acres are under Protected Horticulture in Mexico.
- Greenhouses accounts for 44% of acreage in Mexico. 51% is shadehouse.
- 79% of greenhouses are semi or active GH's. Yield ranges from 65 tons/acre for passive GH up to 243 tons/acre for active GH.
- Protected Horticulture sustains 100,000 direct jobs and 250,000 indirect jobs in Mexico.
- Mexico's protected horticulture exports 90% of its production to the U.S., 8% to Canada and the rest to Europe and Japan.
- In 2008-2009 Mexico exported 515.7 thousand tons of tomatoes to the U.S.



INSIGHT FROM MEXICO

An interview with Eric Viramontes, Chief Executive Officer of the Mexican Association of Protected Horticulture (AMHPAC)

Q: What steps is your industry taking to prepare for the future?

A: By being part of the greenhouse industry today, we must recognize that we are not alone, and that we are part of a complex chain within a global market. Since our individual actions can affect this entire industry in a positive or negative way, the added value that we seek must be in working together as an organization.

AMHPAC takes a leadership and proactive role in order to reach a common goal for our produce distribution chain: To minimize food safety risk for consumers while enhancing sustainability for our industry. Today our growers are working on a plan that could result in a universal, harmonized food safety, security and quality standard for the greenhouse industry, pursuing the goal of increasing food safety practices throughout the entire distribution chain.

Also we want to support consumer education programs that will distribute helpful information on practices that can be carried out to keep the produce clean and families healthy.

Q: What are the most unique or innovative products coming out of your industry currently?

A: The main products from Mexican Protected Horticulture are tomatoes, bell peppers, hot peppers, lettuce and cucumbers. Other products include eggplants, melons, and some specialties. But the fact remains that using protected agriculture practices and with the great diversity of climates Mexico has, there is no product that can't be grown. So, our growers are open to exploring any niche, Asian, or exotic product that our customers may require. Many of our grower members already have programs on such items.

Q: What advances are you implementing in the areas of food safety or sustainability?

A: Mexico's protected horticulture is a key supplier of produce to the U.S. (\$600 million). Our organization is aware of the significant contribution needed to address

numerous safety, quality and sustainability issues. Food safety, security and quality are no longer an individual effort -- The entire supply chain is accountable!

AMHPAC has taken the initiative to implement a strategy for the development of our industry by raising the performance bar for all our members in several areas, including technological resources, marketing, food safety, security and quality.

On February 6, 2009, we formally launched an initiative called "Quality and Food Safety Program for Mexico's Protected Horticulture". The program is built on the commitment of the Mexican protected horticulture industry affiliated to AMHPAC to:

- Provide the highest assurance of product quality and safety,
- Meet or exceed all federal mandated food safety, security and quality standards in both export and domestic markets,
- Promote social and environmental practices within our membership,
- Adopt food defense policies, and
- Be certified by a recognized, third-party, independent certification body.

Q: What makes AMHPAC different from other greenhouse growing association in North America?

A: Our association is built with the support of more than 200 forward-thinking, second and third generation grower-shippers who have the knowledge, capability and passion for growing under the most advanced agricultural practices, resulting in a highly competitive organization that keeps growing and is driven by the market expectations.

Q: What can buyers do to better source products from your exporters?

A: AMHPAC is an organization made up of the best grower/shippers in Mexico. If you need a supplier, we would highly recommend you to talk to any of our members. Also, AMHPAC is the perfect vehicle to check out any supplier a buyer intends to work with. You can become an associate member of our organization; we will be glad and honored to help you achieve successful business operations in our industry. Please allow us to help you.

FOR MORE INFORMATION on the Mexican Protected Agriculture industry:

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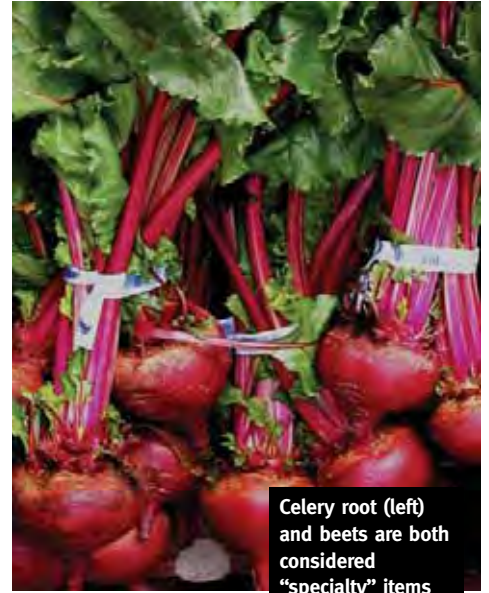
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Celery root (left) and beets are both considered “specialty” items that are growing in popularity.

Specialty Produce: What Makes It So Special?

Ethnic, organic, tropical or low-volume, specialty produce is becoming an important part of the produce department. **COMPILED BY JENNIFER LESLIE KRAMER**

With produce spilling off the grocery store shelves and seemingly multiplying over night, it's not uncommon to wonder where it all came from. But what is considered a specialty item these days? Ethnic, organic, tropical and low-volume categories are exploding, some even becoming commonplace. So how does a produce department determine what receives the “specialty” treatment, thus providing alternative merchandising and selling techniques to these less common products? *PRODUCE BUSINESS* reached out with five broadline specialty distribution houses to figure out the nitty gritty, including Karen Caplan, CEO of Frieda's Inc., Los Alamitos, CA; Mary Ostlund, marketing director, Brooks Tropical LLC, Homestead, FL; Frank Ratto, vice president of marketing, Ratto Bros. Inc., Modesto, CA; Robert Schueller, director of public relations, Melissa's World Variety Produce Inc., Los Angeles, CA; and Charlie Eagle, vice president of business development, Southern Specialties, Pompano Beach, FL.

PRODUCE BUSINESS: Since the average

supermarket carries well over 600 produce SKUs, there must be a lot more “specialty” produce items filling the shelves. And yet, there has been an explosion of varieties in the traditional fruits and vegetables being offered, from on-the-vine and Heirloom tomatoes to the latest Mandarin seedless citrus item carried. Is it getting harder to define what exactly is “specialty” produce? Is it low-volume fruit and vegetables? Is it ethnic produce?

Karen Caplan: “Specialty” is really a trade term, so it is really in the eyes of the produce buyer. In addition, what one consumer considers specialty or exotic, another might consider a staple item. Meyer lemons are a perfect example. The demand for this lemon variety has grown over the past several years, and many consumers are very familiar with them. However, there are still plenty of shoppers who don't know about Meyer lemons, so it is an educational opportunity for the retailer.

Traditionally, specialty items comprise less than 1 percent of the overall produce department. While this may vary by retailer, specialty still doesn't have the real estate of the main

produce commodities. But just because an item is “exotic” or “specialty” doesn't mean it should be relegated to its own isolated section. We find many retailers have greater success when they merchandise specialty items alongside familiar produce, via tie-ins or cross-merchandising, in a suggestive selling type of approach. For example, include a basket of Quince fruit along with the apple display, and include a sign that educates the consumer about Quince and how to prepare it. Another example would be to include Fingerling potatoes alongside the standard potato varieties. A consumer might have been shopping for red potatoes but picked up the Fingerlings instead when she saw them beautifully merchandised. So specialties, when merchandised correctly, can actually increase produce sales overall.

Charlie Eagle: Often, the definition of “specialty” can vary from store to store and buyer by buyer. Taken as a whole, when compared to potatoes, bananas or head lettuces, many produce items can be considered a “specialty” product, based on relative sales volume and availability.

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Southern Specialties grows and markets a wide range of products. Many of these have grown in popularity over the years but are still considered specialty products. This includes French beans, baby squash, peeled baby carrots, white asparagus and more.

Mary Ostlund: Produce should be considered in the specialty category if your customers aren't familiar with it, or aren't buying it on a weekly basis. So sales play a defining role in determining the category, and what's considered specialty will change store-to-store based on store demographics. Low-volumes and what's 'ethnic' to your customer plays an intertwining role in building specialty category sales as well.

That said, specialty produce has a tremendous growth opportunity, particularly now with the new government nutritional guidelines out. One look at most North Americans' plates will show a need for more fruits and vegetables. Your consumers are looking for ways to include more fruits and vegetables on that plate. Expanding produce's claim on the American plate will most likely expand what consumers will buy to fill the newly claimed territory.

Frank Ratto: Ratto Bros. grows 40 different varieties of "specialty" vegetables from herbs, Southern Greens, leaf lettuces and many other cold crops in Modesto, CA. When I joined the family business 15 years ago I asked my cousins that very same question: "Are we growing specialty vegetables?" The response they offered was this: "We grow traditional vegetables."

The mix of vegetables we grow are the same my grandfather planted back in 1905. They were grown for his turn-of-the-century clientele including the Asian, Italian, Greek, Portuguese, and Eastern European populations. These new Americans were proud to be Americans but they still enjoyed their traditional country vegetables. These vegetables have been carried down from generation to generation and have maintained their ethnic traditions. Is it low-volume fruit and vegetables? Typically, yes. Is it ethnic produce? Yes, but being recognized for their great nutritional values and unique tastes.

Robert Schueller: "Specialty" is typically referred to as "harder to find" produce items, that are not typically found in every supermarket. Most of the time they are ethnic items; they are typically seasonal items; they are also an item the average American does not know about. It can also be a general term used for ethnic produce, a variety of produce that caters to one or few cultures. It is a staple in that country, but not in the United States. Ethnic produce can also be called "specialty" produce.



PB: Are most supermarkets on the same page as to what specialty produce is? Are there any supermarkets that still consider kiwifruit a specialty item?

Karen Caplan: “Specialty” is really a catch-all term used by retailers when they refer to “not high volume” items. Most people in the produce industry do not consider kiwifruit a specialty, but it is fondly known as the “first specialty” fruit that went mainstream, thanks to my mom, Frieda Caplan, who introduced it to American consumers back in 1962!

Charlie Eagle: I don’t believe many consider kiwifruit a specialty. I’m not sure whether supermarkets are on the same page or not; I don’t really think they need to be. At the end of the day the questions are: “Will we provide value for our customers and our business by stocking this item? Will they buy it? Will they come back for it?”

Mary Ostlund: North Americans are an extremely diverse population. It makes sense that an item like kiwifruit that is considered mainstream in most supermarkets should be considered specialty in others. Specialty produce’s story can’t be written on just one page.

Frank Ratto: Yes, but they are recognizing the sales opportunities with the acknowledgment of specialty produce’s health benefits. There are still some supermarkets that still consider kiwifruit a specialty item, but they are changing their tune as the item grows in momentum in popularity and their uses.

Robert Schueller: Yes... they are non-commodity items, seasonal items and/or ethnic items. Kiwifruit is not considered a specialty item as it is found in most supermarkets or stores that carry produce. However, it

was a specialty fruit up until the 80s.

PB: Category management has created many positions in the retail buying offices. Are there many category managers specifically responsible for specialty produce or do most specialties fit within other categories, such as tropical or ethnic items?

Karen Caplan: Our experience is that most retailers assign their “specialty category” to either the fruit or vegetable category manager. However, some retailers that have a large category management program and a large staff may actually divide the specialty categories into smaller sub-categories and divide their managers accordingly, such as tropical fruits having their own category manager.

Charlie Eagle: We have seen buyers for other produce categories include specialties as part of their buying responsibilities.

Frank Ratto: They are typically incorporated with mainstream commodities.

Robert Schueller: Usually we see category managers focus on a grouping of specialty. Typically there is Latin, Asian, tropical fruits and vegetable category buyers or managers.

PB: Studies have shown that consumers who purchase specialty produce typically spend more in their market basket than consumers who do not buy specialty produce. Can you elaborate on why you think this is so?

Karen Caplan: Consumers who seek out top-notch ingredients are going to be willing to spend a little more in the produce department. They are those who like to cook at home, follow food bloggers and are experimental in nature. They naturally purchase a wider selection of fresh foods and flavorings, which expands their “market basket.” In addition, some specialty sales (remember, “specialty” is a trade term) may be driven by the shoppers’ ethnicity, such as Latin produce (fresh Chile peppers, tomatillos, jicama, etc.) or Asian fruits (lychee, rambutan and starfruit).

Charlie Eagle: Many consumers who purchase specialty products fall into a demographic “sweet spot.” They are high-income families that are typically well educated. Many have experienced the products they purchase while dining out in white tablecloth restaurants.

Mary Ostlund: A consumer who has expanded what fresh produce he or she will eat will likely be eating more produce. Variety, in this case, enhances eating enjoyment. Eating enjoyment motivates additional produce purchases. Specialty produce can act as a catalyst to build additional sales.

Frank Ratto: The health benefits and



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cutting edge recipes are drivers for the middle-to upper-class shoppers, but the traditional lovers of these ethnic staples also drive significant store sales.

Robert Schueller: You are talking about shoppers who have taken an interest in trying new and different types of produce into their family's meal. They are somehow educated (cookbooks, internet recipes, cooking shows), which allows for them to be interested in trying something new. The most effective way shoppers are educated is through their experience at an ethnic restaurant where they tried a produce item for the first time and then want to duplicate that restaurant experience.

PB: *Is it a useful marketing tool to discount specialty items — or are retailers better off promoting mainstream items and gaining margin with specialty items?*

Karen Caplan: The most successful retailers, in terms of image and specialty sales, do not mark their specialty items up as much as their high volume conventional produce. They realize that the real attraction is taste and variety. Consumers have come to expect a wide variety of fruits and vegetables in their produce departments, and this can only be accomplished by offering a selection of specialties. A well-stocked and well-cared for produce department can speak volumes about the consumer experience at the store overall. In other words, consumers judge their supermarkets by the freshness and quality in the produce department first. Offering specialties at reasonable prices provides an even more enriching experience for the consumers and will keep them coming back to produce for inspiration. Realistically, the margin a retailer makes on specialties (due to their naturally low volume) will not make any difference in the shrink or profit of the department. It is the “halo” or market basket effect that is truly beneficial to a retailer.

Charlie Eagle: That is a call for the retailer to make. We provide promotional opportunities to those customers with whom we have programs.

Frank Ratto: I believe we must teach consumers how to enjoy these tasty and healthy produce items and the best way is to promote them within the store.

Robert Schueller: Retailers may discount for awareness and promotion of the item(s) to let shoppers know that the store now carries that item. However, most retailers do not discount specialty items because of the margins they would like to make on them.

Mary Ostlund: Promoting specialty items will always increase sales. **pb**



PHOTO ABOVE COURTESY OF UNCLE MATT'S ORGANIC INC.



The produce department is the natural location to merchandise super-premium juices.

Six Ways To Juice-Up Fruit-Based Beverage Sales

Fruit-based beverages are a natural in the produce department. **BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD**

The fruit juice category is “exploding,” according to Jim Weber, produce supervisor at Econo Foods, a 6-store chain based in Brillion, WI. “We haven’t been able to get everything we want and in the sizes we want, due to a limited amount of raw materials with some of the more exotic fruits.”

Beverages, a category that includes fruit juice, smoothies, cider, tea, coffee and other drinks, contributed only 1.6 percent of produce department dollar sales for the 52 weeks ending March 26, 2011, according to the Perishables Group, a West Dundee-based market research firm. However, dollar growth of all beverages sold in the produce department increased 8.4 percent over the same time period and points to a significant sales opportunity. This is especially so for those retailers who know what to stock and how to merchandise these premium products to health-conscious consumers.

1. Follow The Trends

“Consumers are looking for different taste profiles for a variety of usage occasions, from meal replacement, to workout recovery, to low-

calorie refreshments and seasonal offerings,” explains Irma Shrivastava, vice president of marketing for Odwalla Inc., based in Dinuba, CA. As a result, “Original Green Superfood, Mango Tango, Strawberry C Monster, Chocolate Protein Monster, Orange Juice and Carrot Juice are some of our top-selling flavors.”

According to Mark Luchak, director of produce and floral for Rice Epicurean Markets, a 5-store chain based in Houston, TX, “Fanciful and functional flavors are hot. We carry everything from pomegranate and açai to banana and strawberry.”

“The beverage industry overall has been inundated with the introduction of new flavors in recent years, such as lychee, açai berry and pomegranate,” reports Chris Malnar, senior brand manager for the Naked Juice Co., headquartered in Monrovia, CA.

The latest twist on this theme is new lines that deliver fewer calories. For example, toward the end of the summer, Naked Juice will launch two new flavors that boast 35 percent fewer calories — Reduced Calorie Lychee and Reduced Calorie Citrus Lemongrass.

“Lighter beverages can help to bolster sales in the summer,” acknowledges Kurt Vetter,

senior vice president and general manager for POM Wonderful LLC, located in Los Angeles, CA. “While dollar sales in the super-premium juice category are up more than six percent, there has historically been an average 10 percent dip in sales in the summer. This has created an opportunity for us to develop a more refreshing line of all-natural pomegranate-based beverages.” The company’s four-item Lite POM line features a blend of 50 percent pomegranate juice with water and other juices such as blackberry, black current and dragonfruit.

Hydration is a functional benefit that is hyping demand for coconut water. Bryan Reese, chief marketing and innovation officer for Bakersfield, CA-based Bolthouse Farms Inc., remarks, “Coconut Water is a good example of a recent trend that has captured consumer interest because it delivers a natural solution to refreshment and hydration better than the artificial isotonic, such as Gatorade, which dominates the market.” Another example is Bolthouse’s Aura Botanical Water, which provides “hydration plus,” adds Reese. “These botanical waters with spa-like flavors, such as Grapefruit Sage or Cucumber Lemon

Rosemary, provide essential vitamins and a whole serving of fruit in every bottle.”

Protein-pumped drinks are also popular. As such, one of the latest additions to the shelves at Econo Foods is Bolthouse’s new Protein Plus Strawberry Parfait. Weber reveals, “Two of our stores are in college towns, and we can’t keep the product on the shelf. The students seem to like it as a meal replacement.”

Sambazon, the San Clemente, CA-based company that popularized Brazilian super fruit açai, has also jumped in the protein-fortified market with its Organic Protein Superfood Smoothies in Açai Berry and Chocolate and Açai Berry and Vanilla, which hit shelves in May. The protein is added in the form of vegan hemp and soy. Brand manager Chris Hou explains, “Protein provides a satiety factor that makes these beverages a perfect sub when there’s no time for a full meal.”

What’s next? Greg Holzman, founder, owner and CEO of Pacific Organic Produce, in San Francisco, CA, says, “Everybody is looking for the next açai — the next big fruit. In the meantime, there’s been experimentation with combining fruits with other vegetables.”

2. Sell The Tried & True — With A Twist

Citrus and apples are two produce department staples and so are their juices. Lou Rotell,

national sales director for Noble Juice, in Winter Haven, FL, says, “Foodie, adventurous, gourmet/trendy customers are always looking for new and interesting flavors. We’ve benefited from this trend with varieties like Sicilian Blood Orange Juice, Tangerine Clementine Juice and Tangerine Guava Mango Juice. In a consumer intercept we recently conducted, we discovered that 53 percent of Noble Juice consumers find the flavor of tangerines more interesting than oranges.”

As the recession comes to an end and customers become more accepting of the progressive retailers associated with the super-premium juice category, Rotell adds, “We are also noticing that 10 percent more of customers are switching their purchases from conventional to organic.”

Matt McLean, founder, CEO and president of Clermont, FL-based Uncle Matt’s Organic Inc., agrees. “Organic orange juice is our flagship product, however we’ve recently added an organic grapefruit juice and lemonade and will introduce a cold-pressed, flash-pasteurized, not-from-concentrate, unfiltered organic apple juice this September. It will be available year-round and made from a blend of five apples.”

On a conventional front, Red Jacket Orchards Inc. in Geneva, NY, offers a cold-pressed, flash-pasteurized, unfiltered Fuji

Apple Juice as well as a Strawberry Apple Juice, Raspberry Apple Juice and its newly debuted Black Current Apple Juice. Mark Nicholson, executive vice president, acknowledges, “Innovation has been lagging in the 100-percent juice category and we’ve seen this as an opportunity. Our products differ from traditional cider, which is a more seasonal and regional commodity product, because they appeal to a broader demographic of customer who is looking for freshness and flavor at a premium, rather than super-premium, price, and as an alternative to the high acid content found in orange juice. Drinking our products is like eating the whole fruit. Freshly pressed juices are almost like a new category.”

3. Size Matters

There’s a place for both multi-serve and single-serve beverages in the produce department. Econo Food’s Weber reports, “We’ve seen a trend in demand for larger sizes, especially in our college-town stores. As a result, for example, we’ve been trying to get some of the Naked products in a 64-oz. size.”

“Look at the Top 10-selling beverage brands in the produce department and you’ll see that six have products that are packaged in sizes averaging 52-ounces or larger,” points out POM Wonderful’s Vetter.

Side Note

WHAT BEVERAGES ARE BEST MERCHANDISED IN PRODUCE?

Four key points can help retailers decide which beverages are best marketed in the produce department versus elsewhere in the store such as in dairy or grocery. “First,” says Randy Bohaty, produce director for B&R Stores, a 15-unit chain headquartered in Lincoln, NE, “We look for products that talk about how much real fruit they contain or how many servings of fruit you can get by drinking them.”

Chris Hou, brand manager for Sambazon Inc., in San Clemente, CA, agrees. “The produce department is where customers go to find real fruit in a bottle. They also head here to find something that is new, interesting and flavorful.”

Jim Weber, produce supervisor at Econo Foods, a 6-store chain headquartered in Brillion, WI, looks for “products that contain all natural juices.”

A short list of ingredients is a ‘must,’ describes Mark Nicholson, executive vice president of Red Jacket Orchards Inc., in Geneva, NY, “especially on products that are 100 percent juice.”

Bohaty adds, “We look for fresh refrigerated products that don’t have preservatives. We’ll avoid the shelf-stable offshoots in produce.”

“Consumers come to the beverage set in the produce department for a product that is as close to fresh as they can get without making the beverage themselves,” emphasizes Bryan Reese, chief marketing and innovation officer for Bolthouse Farms, in Bakersfield, CA.

Irma Shrivastava, vice president of marketing for Odwalla Inc., in Dinuba, CA, says, “Our products do not contain artificial colors, flavors, preservatives or genetically modified ingredients so it makes sense for consumers to find our products in the produce section where health-minded consumers are also shopping for other fresh fruits and vegetables.”

Seasonal products also fit perfectly in the produce department. “In the summer,” continues Shrivastava, “we satisfy consumer’s desire for thirst-quenching and low-calorie options with products such as our seasonal Lemonade and Limeade. Likewise, our Pumpkin Super Protein works well alongside other popular fall flavors. Our branded refrigerators provide a flexible merchandising tool that easily can be moved to adapt to retailers’ needs throughout the season.”

“I think consumers are looking for juice beverages that offer health benefits,” contends Bohaty. “This distinguishes these from grocery products.”

Mark Luchak, director of produce and floral for Rice Epicurean Markets, a 5-store chain headquartered in Houston, TX, agrees. “The big deciding points about what we carry in produce are flavor and nutrition.”

“The high quality health-conscious consumer is the customer that most retailers have targeted in their strategic plan,” says Lou Rotell, national sales director for Winter Haven, FL-based Noble Juices.

pb

Sambazon's Hou adds, "Good growth in larger sizes may be due to an economy of scale and the value consumers see from bringing the products home and sharing them with the whole family. That's why we expanded from our original 10.5-oz. to a 32-oz. size."

The 64-oz. is the best-selling size of black current juice for Connecticut Currant LLC, based in Preston, CT. "However," says owner Allyn Brown III, "we are experimenting with a single-serve 10- to 12-oz. size that offers a better price point and can be merchandised in the refrigerated grab-and-go case or in the deli, where we can get good trial."

4. Juice Up Your Displays

According to Bolthouse's Reese, "Two critical aspects to selling the super-premium juice category in produce are providing adequate shelf space to represent the wide array of products required to meet consumer needs, and organizing the products in a way that simplifies the shopping experience for consumers."

"At B&R Stores, all beverages are displayed as a category in a 4- to 8-ft. section of a refrigerated multi-deck case," says Bohaty. "This makes it easier for customers to find the products."

A variety of products can also boost sales. "The more flavors the better," adds Weber. "Some brands offer more than 20 different flavors and we stock them all to offer customers choices."

Red Jacket Orchard's Nicholson recommends "a minimum of four SKUs when introducing a new product. There needs to be critical mass or the product will get lost on the shelf," he explains.

POM Wonderful's Vetter worries, "Many consumers today still don't know to look for premium and super-premium juices in the produce department. Retailers need to increase the visibility of this section. An iron man sign placed in front of the product is a good way to draw traffic. Another technique," he adds, "is to make a connection with the fruit. Some retailers cross-merchandise our POM juice next to the whole fruit or arils."

Uncle Matt's McLean asserts, "It would be great to see our products in an end-cap cooler surrounded by rows of fresh oranges. I think it would lead to impulse sales of both items."

"At Rice Epicurean Markets, we'll display juices in our cut-fruit bar as well as the single-serves up by the front register in a refrigerated case," reveals Luchak.

"Anywhere consumers currently buy other, less nutritious options, such as sodas in the check-out lines or in the deli near meal solution displays, would be good options to

merchandise super-premium juice," suggests Reese. "This will increase retailers' profits as super-premium juices sell for a higher dollar ring than sodas."

5. Sample, Sample, Sample

"Taste sampling is a key way to merchandise beverages in the produce departments," expresses B&R Stores' Bohaty. "Once customers try, they come back and buy."

Bolthouse's Reese agrees. "It is important to continue to expose new consumers to super-premium juice through sampling and demos. This is beneficial for both retailers and manufacturers and is true across all channels, including grocery, mass market or club stores."

"Manned demos can make shopping more fun," contends Vetter. "It also creates an opportunity to communicate with customers and converse with them about the key points of the products they are sampling."

Since demos can be expensive, Pacific Organic's Holtzman recommends a limited-time price discount. "Our suggested retail is \$1.99," he shares. "Selling the products at \$1 or 10-for-\$10 encourages trial, but doesn't just give it away."

6. Include Beverages In Ads

Beverages are promoted in the produce portion of the weekly ad circular on an average of once per month at Econo Foods. "We'll usually offer a \$1-off and make it for any flavor of a particular size and brand," reveals Weber. "This encourages customers to try something new."

Coupons can also be effective promotional tools. Uncle Matt's McLean says, "We offer \$1-off coupons for our juice in bags of our fresh citrus and also as neck-coupons on our products."

"In addition to regular-price promotional programs, one of the most effective ways to promote super-premium citrus juice is to develop a portfolio of 'neckers' with purchase-trigger messages that are applied on each bottle of juice," explain's Noble's Rotell. "The overall goal of this program is to incrementally grow sales by converting impulse purchases into more routine purchases."

Another profitable tactic is to tell the story of a product. John Martinelli, executive vice president of Orchid Island Juice Co., in Fort Pierce, FL, notes, "We try to differentiate ourselves by telling customers that our products are made from all-Florida citrus. Retailers may want to feature our products in locally grown ads."

"In addition," says Sambazon's Hou, "we offer shelf-talkers that let customers know our beverages are all made from fair-trade açai." **pb**

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Sweet corn, onions and squash are just a few of the vegetables grown in New York.

New York State Vegetables

Despite the weather, New York's growers report they might be down, but they are definitely not out. **BY THERESA LYNNE STUHL**

As anyone who has traveled across the state of New York knows, everything about it is diverse, from the people, the landscapes of urban and rural areas, all the way down to the vegetables grown. Early summer through early winter months typically offer favorable conditions to plant, grow and harvest a diverse variety of vegetables across the Empire State.

But "typical" does not accurately describe the 2011 season thus far. In fact, it could shake out to be quite the opposite. "The ground conditions haven't been what we would consider favorable for planting," reports Jason Turek, partner of Turek Farms, based in King Ferry, NY. "Where we typically have around 20 rain-free days in May, this year we had around 20 days with rain. Overall, it has been a very wet spring, and because of that we were planting about three weeks late."

Despite the distances geographically, Turek Farms' location in the Finger Lakes region of upstate New York experienced similar woes to those located in central New York. Farmers in Elba, NY, report historically bad weather conditions with as much as 50 percent less in the ground than normal years.

To make matters worse, following up on the

wet spring and month of May has been a very dry month of June. Mike Riner, vegetable farm manager of Elba, NY's Cy Farms LLC, is hoping that his limited crops will get enough water to survive the season. "We've gone from a very tough, wet spring, which gave us very few days for planting, to a dry June during which we are praying for some rain," says Riner. "Quite the opposite conditions, but obviously different times in the planting cycle have different requirements."

New York Vegetables Run The Gamut

As the fifth leading state in vegetable production as of 2010, New York ranks strong nationally with crops including cabbage, cauliflower, onions, sweet corn, squash, snap beans and pumpkins. The New York Farm Bureau reports there are approximately 35,000 farms in New York State, 99 percent of which are family-owned and have been passed down from generation to generation. Additionally, New York vegetables were valued at \$325 million in 2009, a significant contribution to the state economy.

Due to its climate with abundant rainfall and various productive soil resources, different areas of the state, ranging from the fertile Finger Lakes area to farms on Long Island in

close proximity to New York City, are better suited for growing certain crops than others. Some particularly popular New York produce items, such as its well-known sweet corn, hit the consumer market during two major summer outdoor eating holidays: Fourth of July and Labor Day. Moreover, many New York vegetables are cold storage items, such as potatoes, onions and cabbage, which extends their availability in the market.

"While many farmers were getting into the fields later than they typically would be, they are mindful about many things," says Jessica Ziehm, director of communications for the Albany-based New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM). "The season certainly is not over and the possibility of a glorious fall would extend the season and help them out."

Many New York growers are utilizing modern production techniques like hydro-cooling, and have been doing so for a number of years. These new techniques have certainly helped New York farmers stay on top of trends within the industry but also improve the quality of their products. The improvements in quality have led to increased customers and demand for New York-grown products, all things that those in the industry want to hear.

“We have great success harvesting onions and potatoes in the muckland soil of drained swamplands,” says Maureen Torrey Marshall, vice president of Torrey Farms Inc., based in Elba, NY. The company is busy with its array of vegetables harvesting well into New York’s first frost — usually striking in November. “We have been at this for a long time and know we are dealing with a limited window of time to plant and harvest in order to turn a profit.”

Location, Location, Location: New York is the Land of Opportunity

With more than 19 million inhabitants across the state, New York certainly has enough consumers nearby to supply. It is also close in proximity to many of the nation’s largest market areas including New England and the Mid-Atlantic regions.

“There are nearly 500 farmer’s markets in New York state and maybe double that amount of farm stands, which range from sophisticated storefronts to roadside, honor system money-in-a-basket types of stands,” reports Ziehm. “There is a tremendous amount of potential and opportunity for New York agriculture to continue being a vigorous and thriving industry.”

Ziehm also reports that New York brings in approximately \$28 million from the federally funded USDA Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program with a modest \$13,000 captured through farmer’s markets. This, she says, can be an opportunity for farmers market’s to attract more WIC customers and local growers to directly increase their share of WIC federally funded income.

With a steady stream of “buy local” buzz reaching consumers from multiple media channels for many years now, New York takes advantage of its Pride of New York program. The program was developed to promote and support the sale of agricultural products grown and food products processed within New York State. As a result, participants hope to see an increase in consumer awareness and demand for local New York grown agricultural products. Its members include farmers and processors, retailers, distributors, restaurants and related culinary and support associations.

While the resources for the program are limited, its continued success each year keeps it going. New York faces shrinking budgets for programs like these, like most other states in the nation. Components of the program range from branded Pride of New

York logos for grower members to POS materials to other opportunities to build relationships between growers and retailers or foodservice establishments.

Many retailers throughout the nation find success featuring a “buy local” campaign as consumers are becoming more aware of their area’s locally grown vegetables. New York area retailers are able to use the resources provided through the Pride of New York program, or many create their own store-specific programs, often making the locally grown section a destination display area within the existing produce department.

One such retailer experiencing that success is PriceRite, with retail locations in New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Rhode Island. “We have a strong commitment to local farmers to ensure that we bring locally grown, fresh produce to all of our PriceRite stores,” says Karen Meleta, spokeswoman for PriceRite, the 45-unit chain based in Wethersfield, CT. “Our customers expect high quality produce at the best value and our locally grown program allows us to deliver that.”


Due to the growing popularity of locally grown produce items, shoppers in New York may prefer New York-grown produce items



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when offered. Or consumers may seek locally grown items from farmer's markets or farm stands for smaller volume crops that may not be grown in large volumes, like locally grown New York cucumbers, tomatoes and peppers as examples.

One company that knows a thing or two about bridging the local New York grower and the retailer or foodservice outlet is wholesale fruit and produce company, James Desiderio Inc., based in Buffalo, NY. With more than 50 years and three generations of

experience, the company is currently working with 75 local New York growers to offer a diverse mix of vegetables and more than 100 customers buying local produce including wholesalers, foodservice establishments and retailers. "There is a big push for locally grown products from our customers, and foodservice customers will build their menu offerings around what we have available," says Chris Desiderio, vice president of retail sales and marketing. "On average, 90 percent of the local New York vegetable items

"On average, 90 percent of the local New York vegetable items we offer are sold to customers in-state, with the remaining percentage sold to other areas to accommodate their needs due to their local weather challenges."

— Chris Desiderio, James Desiderio Inc.

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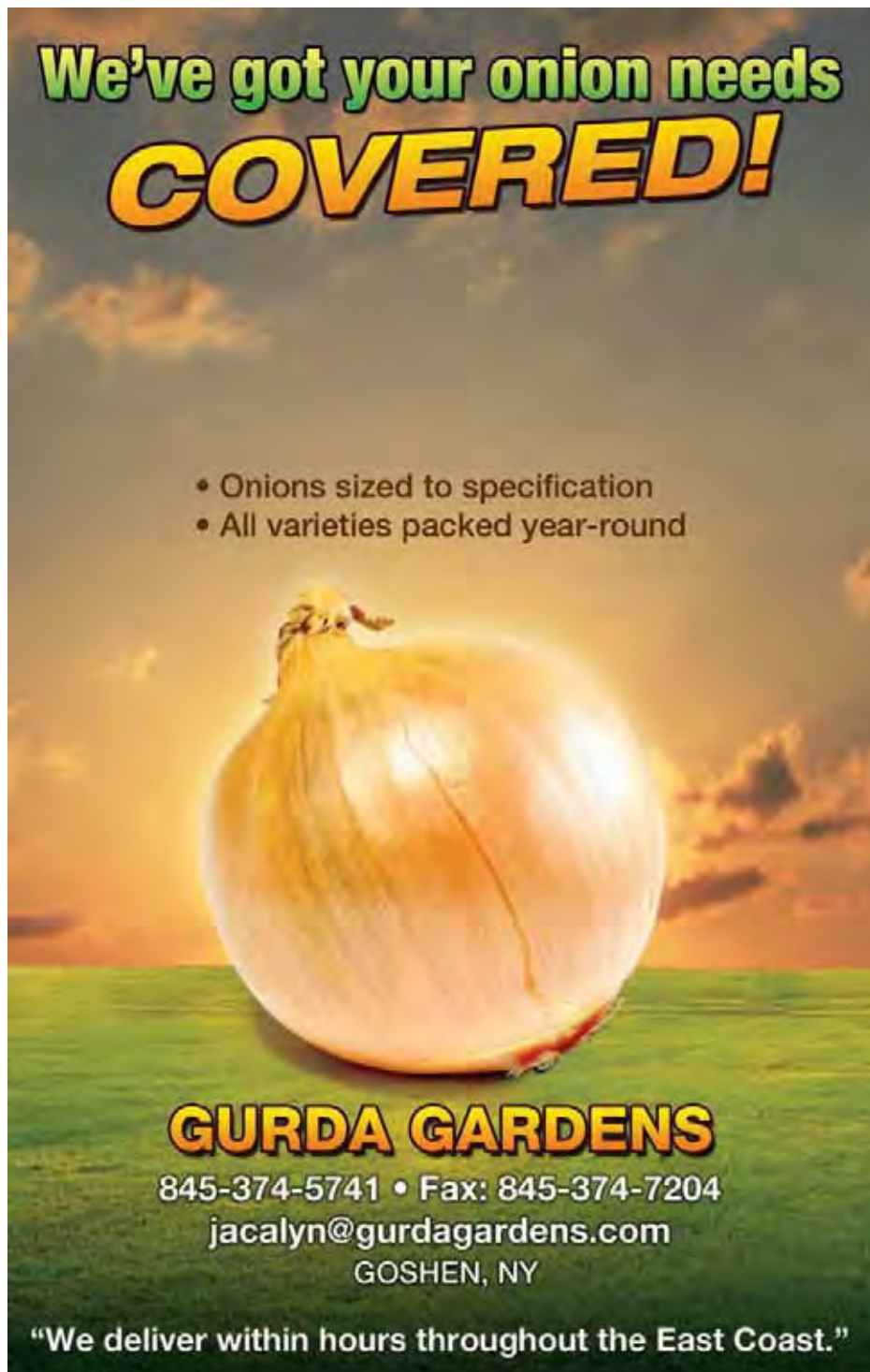
Optimism: The New New York State Of Mind?

Despite what he reports may be the toughest season in quite a long time, Riner of CY Farms still maintains an upbeat and positive manner. After the cold and wet spring, CY Farms faces the same hardships as most New York farmers: limited planting days, changing seed variety in hopes of salvaging profits, and hoping the limited crops planted survive the season and can be harvested.

Perhaps it is his 25-plus years of experience that affords him this positive outlook. "I realize I have no impact on this season's weather patterns; that's all Mother Nature. What I can control is how we are adapting to it," he says. "I don't want to project a doom-and-gloom attitude to my employees. I want them to be upbeat about our work and crops and work hard to harvest and sell what we have this year."

Whatever the outcome of the wet spring, Riner is hoping for the best, and like Torrey Marshall and Turek, all will be at it again next time. "We will see how things turn out — it's still early," says Turek of Turek Farms. "Sometimes less is more, creating more demand for our products and higher profits. Perfect weather does not always equal perfect profits for growers."

Consumers throughout New York's market need not worry; the state's contributions to the popular "buy local" programs at area retailers will be available for consumers to savor and enjoy in 2011 and for many years to come. **pb**



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13th Annual PRODUCE BUSINESS



FOR FOODSERVICE 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 Thirteenth Annual PRODUCE BUSINESS 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 your bottom line.



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DEL MONTE FRESH
Pineapple Chicken Kabobs

DUDA FARM FRESH FOODS
Cucumber and Radish Raita

GRIMMWAY FARMS
Grimmway Farms Cut and Peeled Baby Carrots - California Nicoise Salad

HOLLANDIA PRODUCE LLC / LIVE GOURMET
Frey's Salad from Sly's Restaurant in Carpinteria with Sly's Sherry Vinegar Dressing

IDAHO-EASTERN OREGON ONION COMMITTEE
Caramelized Onion and Goat Cheese Pizza

MANN PACKING CO., INC.
Mann's Mexican Summer Salad with Lime Dressing

ZESPRI NORTH AMERICA
Kiwi Dessert Pizza



Pineapple Chicken Kabobs



SERVES: 6

- 3 tablespoons honey
- 3 tablespoons lime juice, divided
- 3 tablespoons lite soy sauce, divided
- 2 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves, cut into (24) 1-inch pieces
- Ground pepper to taste
- 2 cups DEL MONTE GOLD® EXTRA SWEET PINEAPPLE Chunks
- 1 medium Del Monte® red bell pepper, cut into (24) 1-inch squares
- ½ large Del Monte® sweet onion, cut into (24) 1-inch pieces
- Peanut oil

Directions:

- To make basting sauce, in a small bowl whisk together honey, 2 tbsp. lime juice, and 2 tbsp. soy sauce until smooth.
- Sprinkle chicken pieces with remaining 1 tbsp. of lime juice and soy sauce. Sprinkle with pepper to taste.
- Marinate 15 to 30 minutes.
- Preheat grill to medium-high.
- Thread chicken, pineapple, red pepper and onion alternately on 12 (six- to seven-inch) skewers. Discard any leftover marinade. Brush lightly with peanut oil.
- Grill for 10 to 15 minutes, turning to cook all sides. Brush with basting sauce the last five to 10 minutes.
- Serve any remaining sauce over kabobs.

Note:

For a spicy variation, omit ground pepper and sprinkle chicken with Jamaican Jerk seasoning to taste.



Del Monte Fresh Produce, N.A., Inc.
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 Tel: 1.800.950.3683
 Web: www.freshdelmonte.com

UNIQUE ATTRIBUTES

Del Monte Fresh Cut Fruit brings to the table an array of benefits for just about anyone! We found the key to innovation and ease by eliminating many of the unwanted hassles that come with the joys of cooking. Our Fresh Cut selections make prepping and washing fruit a thing of the past, providing more room for creativity in the kitchen. Del Monte Gold® Extra Sweet Pineapple Chunks require no labor and are ready for use, allowing for more kitchen safety and convenience. The Del Monte Gold® Extra Sweet Pineapple Chunks are 100 percent guaranteed Del Monte Gold® Extra Sweet Pineapple, assuring that whether it is whole or fresh cut, we consistently provide only our best. We also utilize lot coding on all of our Fresh Cut products to ensure traceability and reduce liability.

TIPS & TECHNIQUES

- To maximize shelf life, refrigerate at 33°F to 39°F until ready for use.
- Never use ice beds instead of refrigeration; they do not hold temperatures properly and can spoil the product.
- Check out our Fresh Cut Kabob Kit for fresh cut peppers and onions.

PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

Del Monte Fresh Produce consistently updates retailers and foodservice operators with innovative and successful promotional and merchandising activities to attract consumers. We offer creative promotions, develop eye catching POS material, increase traffic with interactive in-store demos and create innovative packaging by identifying the target consumer.

Other Promotional ideas include:

- Promote a conveniently healthier lifestyle by showcasing nutrition information and tips on menus.
- Cross-merchandise deli recipes featuring fresh cut by the bagged salad and fresh-cut displays.
- Use fresh-cut items on salad bars to cut down on labor prep costs.
- Don't forget to feature fresh fruit in drink creations!





(the mark of a really healthy produce department)

As the world leader of whole and fresh-cut fruits and vegetables, Del Monte Fresh adds value that really makes a difference to your bottom line

- Vertical integration for complete supply-chain control
- Faster delivery from DC's and fresh-cut facilities around the country
- Innovative category management and marketing support
- Trace-back system plus ISO and EuroGap certifications for food safety



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Cucumber and Radish Raita



Using Greek yogurt lets you skip squeezing out the cucumber in this refreshing side dish. Serve it with grilled salmon as well as accompanying Indian dishes. Add cooked shrimp or diced chicken for a colorful salad.

- 1/4 -inch piece seedless cucumber, peeled
- 1 cup Dandy® Radish MiniSticks
- 1 green chili pepper, seeded and thinly sliced, optional
- 6 ounce container Greek yogurt, regular or reduced-fat
- 1/2 Dandy® lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 Ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons chopped Dandy® cilantro leaves
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh mint leaves

Directions:

1. Halve the cucumber lengthwise and cut each half crosswise into 1-inch pieces.
2. Thinly slice each piece lengthwise.
3. Place the cucumber in a mixing bowl. Add the radishes, chile pepper, if using, the yogurt, lemon juice, cumin, salt, and several grinds pepper. Mix with a fork to combine.
4. Mix in the cilantro and mint.
5. Cover and refrigerate Raita at least 30 minutes, up to 4 hours before serving.

PRODUCT AVAILABILITY

Available year-round, Dandy® Radish MiniSticks™ are perfect for salads, sandwiches, side dishes and garnishes. Once packed, Dandy® Radish MiniSticks™ stay fresh for 15 days, giving you the opportunity to maximize this ingredient by incorporating it into your culinary creations.

With an extended shelf life, Dandy® fresh-cut vegetables are sliced, diced and chopped to perfection, helping you save time and money in your kitchen. Our fresh-cut products include:

- Celery branches
- Celery straws
- Celery sticks
- Sliced and diced celery
- Radish MiniSticks™

TIPS & TECHNIQUES

- Dandy® products are 100 percent usable.
- Dandy® Radish MiniSticks™ and celery products are available year-round.
- Eliminates waste.
- Reduces labor costs.
- Lowers freight and storage costs.
- Always keep product refrigerated until ready to use. Ideal storage temperatures are 32 to 36°F and 90-98 percent relative humidity.
- Select celery with straight, green stalks that are crisp, firm and unblemished.
- Keep celery away from ethylene-producing fruits. Celery absorbs odors from other commodities, such as apples and onions, and should not be stored near them.
- Do not store celery uncovered as it will deteriorate quickly.

BENEFITS

Increase Shelf-Life

Increase your shelf-life with Dandy® fresh-cut products. Sliced, diced and packed to maximize longevity, our products stay fresher longer, helping you to reduce waste and utilize what you buy efficiently.

Lower Costs

Save money and increase your bottom line by eliminating the need for labor to slice, dice and chop celery and radishes. Our fresh-cut products give you the opportunity to buy what you need, when you need it due to our consistent availability and year-round supply.

Reliable Partner

Duda Farm Fresh Foods has been growing fresh products since 1909, when our founder, Andrew Duda, moved to the United States in search of the American dream. Today, after 85 years, our vision to provide freshness, flavor and quality products at an affordable price is still our primary goal. Andrew Duda's vision has been passed down to five generations of family members who strive for excellence and keep the family's farming business running strong.

Duda
farm fresh foods

Duda Farm Fresh Foods Inc.
Oviedo, FL

P: 407-365-2111 F: 407-365-2010

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THE IDEA IS TO GROW, BUT LEAVE A SMALLER FOOTPRINT.



As one of the world's leading growers, Duda Farm Fresh Foods believes that protecting the Earth's renewable resources is as important as our delivery of quality produce and reliable service. Our focus on being responsible stewards of the land includes company-wide initiatives that are implemented on a daily basis, including conscientious farming practices, reducing carbon emissions, conserving energy, smart packaging, waste management and recycling and sustaining our human capital. For example, as part of our conscientious farming practices, we use laser and GPS technologies to precisely measure and contour our fields. This allows us to reduce the amount of water used for irrigation, to limit the amounts of nutrients introduced into the soil and to restrict run-off. Responsible growth with less impact on Mother Earth is our goal. For more information, call 866-792-DUDA or visit dudafresh.com.

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and Vegetables



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Grimmway Farms Cut and Peeled Baby Carrots - California Nicoise Salad



SERVES 4-6

- 2 pounds Grimmway Cut and Peeled Baby Carrots, blanched or seven minutes, then plunged into an ice bath to stop cooking and drained thoroughly
- 4 6-ounce salmon filets, poached (recipe follows)
- 2 pounds baby spinach, washed and completely dried
- 1 small head butter lettuce
- 1 pound French string beans, blanched or three minutes, then plunged into ice bath to stop cooking and drained thoroughly
- 6 hard cooked eggs, cut in halves
- 6 cocktail tomatoes, cut in halves
- 12 caper berries with stems
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup Nicoise olives
- 2 tablespoons finely snipped chives
- 1 tablespoon thyme leaves
- 1 lemon
- salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
- 1 cup mustard Vinaigrette (recipe follows)

To Poach Salmon:

Place salmon in shallow pan. Fill pan with water, completely submerging the fish, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of dry white wine, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup white vinegar, the juice of one lemon, four sprigs of thyme and eight pepper corns.

Bring to a simmer. Cook until salmon turns light pink. Turn off heat. Drain Salmon.

Place in ice bath until cool. Drain again thoroughly and refrigerate.

STORAGE & HANDLING

- Always refrigerate immediately — never break the 'cold chain'
- Ideal storage temperature/atmosphere: 32 to 36°F, 98 to 100 percent relative humidity
- Store away from ethylene-producing fruits (apples, avocados & bananas).
- Whitening of peeled baby carrots is due to natural dryness; a quick ice water bath will freshen and restore color.

VINAIGRETTE:

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup extra virgin olive oil
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup lemon juice
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon dijon mustard
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon honey
- 1 tablespoon thyme leaves
- salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

Pour all ingredients into jar (reserving thyme, salt and pepper) with close-fitted lid. Shake well to emulsify. Add thyme leaves. Shake gently. Add salt and pepper to taste.

To Assemble The Salad:

Place a bed of spinach on serving platter and arrange salmon filets across spinach in the middle of the platter.

Arrange Grimmway Farms Cut And Peeled Baby Carrots all the way around platter.

Arrange inner leaves of boston or butter lettuce around salmon.

Arrange hard cooked egg halves, cocktail tomato halves and olives around platter.

Arrange two caper berries on each salmon filet and squeeze lemon juice over salmon.

Sprinkle thyme leaves and salt and pepper over salmon.

Sprinkle chives over composed salad.

Drizzle some of the vinaigrette over composed salad, reserving some of the vinaigrette to serve alongside.



Carrot Chips

PORTION SIZE

5 lb. bag yields twenty 4 oz. portions

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Crinkle Cut Sliced Carrots

PORTION SIZE

5 lb. bag yields twenty 4 oz. portions

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24 Days



2" Chunk Peeled & Unpeeled

BAG SIZE

25 - 50 lb. Poly

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24 Days



4" Chunk Peeled & Unpeeled - medium & large

BAG SIZE

25 - 50 lb. Poly

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24 Days

Packing ~ ALL FOODSERVICE PRODUCTS

BAG SIZE	BAGS PER CASE	CARTONS PER PALLET	CASE CUBE	CARTON DIM.
5 lb.	4	63	.80 cu ft.	1 x 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 8
5 lb.	2	120	.44 cu ft.	147/8 x 10 x 5 1/8



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Fredy's Salad from Sly's Restaurant in Carpinteria with Sly's Sherry Vinegar Dressing



SERVES: 4

- 2 heads Live Gourmet Living Butter Lettuce
- large cooked shrimp
- 2 roasted red peppers
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooked green beans
- 2 medium ripe tomatoes
- 4 ounces Roquefort cheese
- 2 ripe Haas avocados
- strips cooked bacon
- Optional: chopped Italian Parsley to garnish

Directions:

Trim the roots off of each Hollandia Living Butter Lettuce. Rinse and shake dry. Cut in half and place each half on a serving plate.

Sly's uses very large shrimp — small bay shrimp would also work well. Cut the shrimp in 1 inch chunks.

Trim the ribs and stem from the roasted red peppers, and cut into large strips.

Cut the cooked green beans into 1-inch pieces. (In a pinch frozen green beans can substitute). Cut the ripe tomatoes into 1 inch chunks.

Toss the shrimp, roasted red peppers, green beans and ripe tomatoes in Sly's sherry vinaigrette dressing. Pour

equal portions of the vinaigrette over your four salads.

Crumble the Roquefort cheese in large chunks.

Cut the ripe Haas avocados in 1-inch chunks Warm cooked strips of bacon, and then cut into 1-inch pieces.

Divide equally on top of the four salads.

Toss with the chopped parsley to taste.

SLY'S SHERRY VINEGAR DRESSING

SERVES: 4

- 1 medium shallot, finely chopped
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup Extra Virgin Olive oil
- 2 tablespoons aged Sherry vinegar (not sherry wine)
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Directions:

Cook finely chopped shallots in the olive oil until golden brown.

Let cool.

Whisk in remaining ingredients.

Finish with salt and pepper to taste.

PRODUCT AVAILABILITY

At Hollandia Produce, LLC we grow all of our Live Gourmet Living Lettuces and Living Leafy Greens 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

TIPS & TECHNIQUES

- To maximize shelf life, keep refrigerated at 34° to 40°F.
- Rinse thoroughly before use.
- Use the leaves you need from the head of lettuce, setting aside any unused portion with its roots intact and return to its original package and refrigerate.

UNIQUE ATTRIBUTES

Live Gourmet Living Butter Lettuce stays fresher longer than conventionally grown butter lettuce because it's harvested with its roots intact to promote freshness. Additionally our hydroponically grown butter lettuce provides whole head use as every leaf is protected from our farm to your kitchen in our clamshell packaging.

LIVE GOURMET LIVING BUTTER LETTUCE



Live Gourmet Living Butter Lettuce is great for creating your signature salads, wraps, or sandwiches and has received the American Academy of Taste Gold Medal for superior taste. A favorite of white tablecloth establishments, Live Gourmet Living Lettuce and leafy greens are naturally pest-free as we use the same pest control measures organic growers use to limit harmful insects. Best of all, Live Gourmet is sustainably grown in greenhouses where all agricultural elements are reduced, recycled or reused creating high yield with less environmental impacts.



HOLLANDIA PRODUCE, LLC / LIVE GOURMET

PO Box 1327, Carpinteria CA 93014

P: 805-684-4146 F: 805-684-9363

Find out more about Sly's at www.slysonline.com



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12 Count



6 Count

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- Our great new design allows closer nesting in our shipping boxes, so we'll ship 20% more units per GMA pallet. That means reduced transportation and fuel costs per unit and that's good for everyone.
- Thanks to the Squircle design, our new clamshell uses 15% less post-consumer PET (polyethylene terephthalate) than its predecessor!
- And, our new eye-catching, colorful and communicative label not only complements the great new shape, it acts as a tamper-evident seal, supporting our ongoing food safety and quality assurance efforts.

P.O. Box 1327 Carpinteria, CA 93014
(805) 684-4146 www.LiveGourmet.com





Caramelized Onion and Goat Cheese Pizza



- 2 Pi a Dough, or 1 -inch pi a medium Idaho-E Oregon yellow onions, julienned
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- ½ teaspoon sea salt
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 4 ounces chevre goat cheese, plain or cranberry flavor
- 4 ounces cream cheese
- 2 crisp Idaho apples, sliced thin
- ½ cups toasted pecan pieces
- 1 cup roughly chopped fresh basil leaves
- ½ cup balsamic vinegar

Directions

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Balsamic Vinegar Reduction:

In a small saucepan over low heat, warm vinegar for

about 5 minutes. It will begin to simmer and steam. Remove from heat and set aside.

Caramelized Onions:

Heat olive oil in a sauté pan over medium heat. Add onions. Sprinkle sea salt and sauté until translucent. Add sugar and continue cooking until golden brown (about 20-30 minutes). Set aside.

Pizza:

Roll out dough to 10" circle. Transfer to baking sheet. In a small sauce pan over low heat, combine cream cheese and chevre until melted. Spread melted cheese evenly over the pizza crust allowing ½ inch at the edge. Distribute the caramelized onions evenly across the dough. Continue with the apple slices. Press the onions and apples into the dough slightly. Sprinkle pecans. Drizzle balsamic vinegar reduction over the top. Place pizza in preheated oven and bake for 10-15 minutes until crust is golden brown. Remove from oven and top with fresh basil. Serve immediately.

PRODUCT AVAILABILITY

Growers in the sunny, fertile Snake River Valley of Idaho and Eastern Oregon produce more high-quality storage onions than any region in America, planting approximately 21,000 acres every year. This combination of climate and soil creates favorable growing conditions for third- and fourth-generation farmers who harvest more than one billion pounds of onions each season.

Our growers plant yellow, red, and white varieties of sweet Spanish seed. Sometimes these onions are also called "Spanish Onions" or "Spanish Sweets." The crop is planted in March and April, and harvest begins in August and continues into October. Yellow onions account for approximately 90 percent of the acreage. With state-of-the-art storage facilities, premium Idaho-Eastern Oregon onions are available from August to March/April.

Like grapes grown for fine wine, onions also respond to soil qualities, sunlight and the latitude and longitude of their growing area. The rich volcanic soils and dry climate that produce outstanding potatoes also produce some of the finest onions in the world, with a unique combination of mild flavor, large size and tight, dry skins.

TIPS & TECHNIQUES

- Onions should be kept in a cool, dry, well-ventilated area.
- Store onions at 34 to 45°F with 65 to 70 percent relative humidity.
- Keep onions out of direct sunlight.
- When storing large quantities of onions, use high volume fans to keep onions dry and prevent decay.
- Bagged or boxed onions should be stored at least one foot away from walls and other pallets to provide good air movement.
- DO NOT use plastic wrap on onions. The lack of air circulation reduces storage life.

UNIQUE ATTRIBUTES

Idaho-Eastern Oregon onions (sometimes called "Spanish Sweets") have long been known for their wonderfully mild onion flavor and superior cooking characteristics. As an ingredient or topping, they perform beautifully, complementing and enhancing other flavors without overwhelming them. And with their high sugar and solids content, they're ideal for popular techniques like caramelizing, sautéing and grilling.

- Idaho-Eastern Oregon onions actually contain more sugar than sweet onions. While our raw onions are somewhat more pungent, cooking brings out the wonderful sweetness and mellow onion flavor that chefs love.
- Idaho-Eastern Oregon onions contain more solids and less water than sweet onions. When cooked, they retain much of their firm texture.
- Idaho-Eastern Oregon onions store longer—up to nine months under the proper conditions, reducing loss from shrink.

BUYING PRACTICES

A complete list of 36 onion shippers can be found online at www.BIGONIONS.com and also at www.USAONIONS.com. The Idaho-E. Oregon Onion Committee is also a proud member of Brand Points PLUS®, which is an exciting, easy way to earn valuable rewards for your foodservice business, www.BrandPointsPLUS.com



Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onion Committee
P.O. Box 909, 118 N. Second Street, Parma, ID 83660
Tel: 208-722-5111 Fax: 208-722-6582
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Arcadian Harvest™ Mexican Salad With Lime Dressing



FEATURES & BENEFITS

- Fully mature, petite whole leaves that are more robust than baby lettuces.
- Unique European lettuce varieties.
- Single-cut, once at the base, eliminating the pinking, normally seen in "chopped" lettuces.
- Plate ready - washed and ready to eat.
- Minimal preparation time.

YIELD & APPLICATION

- 1-oz. serving of Arcadian Harvest™ rivals 1.5-oz. of Spring Mix in plate coverage.
- Multiple varieties and colors deliver an upscale appearance.
- Provides the flavor profile of European lettuce varieties.
- Versatility of use for salads, wraps or sandwiches.
- Multidimensional nature of leaves provides unmatched lift on plate.
- Stands up to dressings and heat better than other salad blends.

HANDLING INFORMATION

- Keep refrigerated at 34°F.
- Shelf life = 16 days

SERVES: 4

ACTIVE TIME: 3 MINUTES

TOTAL TIME: 3 MINUTES

- 1 ½ cupsicama, matchstick-size strips, peeled
- ¼ cup avocado oil (may substitute extra virgin olive oil)
- 3 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- 1 2-ounces, Mann's Arcadian Harvest Petite Whole Leaves
- 1 large avocado, peeled, pitted, sliced

- 1 2-ounces soft, fresh cheese
- 1 orange, peeled, skinned sliced
- ½ cup Pepitas

Directions:

Toss first four ingredients in large bowl. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Add avocado, orange and goat cheese; toss gently. Divide salad among plates. Sprinkle pepitas evenly over plates.

Great with tequila lime grilled chicken skewers.



Mann Packing Co., Inc.
 PO Box 690, Salinas, CA 93902
 P: 831-422-7405 F: 831-422-5171
 Web: www.veggiesmadeeasy.com

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Arcadian Harvest[™]

PETITE WHOLE LEAVES



Looking for that “next generation” of salad greens with the flavor profile of European lettuce varieties? Something to differentiate your menu from the competition? Look no further.

Mann’s Arcadian Harvest[™] combines the beauty of petite whole lettuce leaves with rustic appeal; providing unmatched lift on the plate with multidimensional leaves cut just once—at the point of harvest.

Versatile and ahead of the trend, Arcadian Harvest[™] is multi-flavored, multi-functional—it’s what your salad lovers are looking for.

Farm fresh from Mann’s - the family who brought you Broccolini.[®]



Mann Packing Company, Inc., Salinas, CA
800.884.6266 | www.veggiesmadeeasy.com



Kiwi Dessert Pizza



SERVES 4-6

PREPARATION TIME: 35 MINUTES

COOKING TIME: 12 MINUTES

- 1 cup self-raising flour
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ cup milk
- 1 tablespoon melted butter or margarine

Topping:

- 3 ZESPRI® GOLD Kiwifruit
- 2 ZESPRI® GREEN Kiwifruit
- 4 tablespoons cream cheese
- 3-4 strawberries or grapes
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped nuts



Zespri North America
2751 Hennepin Ave. South, Suite 303, Minneapolis, MN 55408
P: 650-368-2870 F: 650-745-1419
Web: www.zesprikiwi.com

Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F.
2. To make the base, combine the flour and sugar and add enough milk to make a soft dough.
3. Pat out on a lightly greased oven sheet to form an 7- to 8-inch circle.
4. Flute the edges if desired.
5. Brush with the melted butter or margarine and bake for about 12 minutes, until golden and cooked.
6. Peel and slice the ZESPRI® Kiwifruit.
7. Mash one ZESPRI® GOLD Kiwifruit and combine with the cream cheese.
8. Spread over the cooled pizza base.
9. Top with slices of the remaining fruit, filling the center with strawberries or grapes. Sprinkle with nuts.
10. The pizza can be briefly grilled and served warm if desired.
11. Alternatively, serve it at room temperature. Excellent served with yogurt or ice cream.

TIPS & TRICKS

- Green kiwis have a tangy-sweet, refreshing flavor — a mix of strawberry, citrus and melon.
- Gold kiwifruit look just a bit different on the outside with smooth skin and a hard pointed crown at one end. Gold kiwifruit tastes tropical — sweet and mellow — a mix of mango and melon flavors.
- Ripe kiwifruit should be soft to the touch, like a peach or avocado.
- The easiest way to peel a kiwifruit? Simply cut one in half and scoop out ripe fruit from its skin with a spoon.
- When pureeing green or gold kiwifruit, be sure to stop processing before the seeds are crushed. Crushed seeds can lend a slightly bitter flavor to your dish. Seeds can be removed by passing the pulp through a strainer.
- The enzyme found in green kiwifruit also makes for a natural meat tenderizer. Simply peel and mash a kiwifruit and spread the pulp on a tough cut of meat. Let stand for 10 to 15 minutes; then, lightly scrape the kiwifruit off the meat, discarding the kiwifruit.
- Green kiwifruit should ideally be stored at 32°F, and will last for three to seven days on a countertop, or 24 to 28 days in the refrigerator.
- Gold kiwifruit should ideally be stored at 35° F, and will last for three to seven days on a countertop, or 12 to 14 days in the refrigerator.

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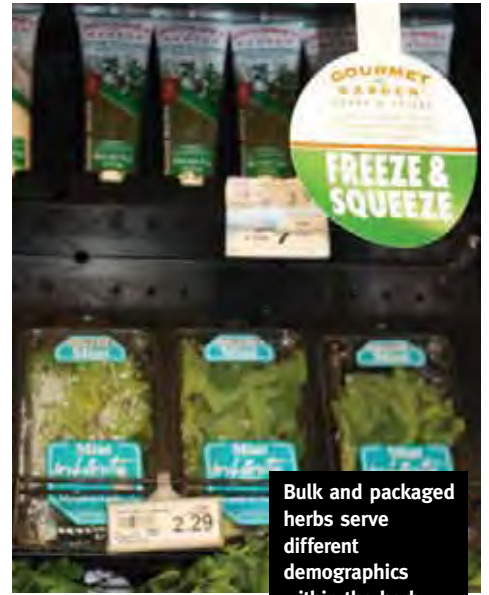
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Bulk and packaged herbs serve different demographics within the herb category.

Freshening The Flavor Of The Herb Section: Eight Commandments To Successful Sales

Herbs are delicate and can have a high shrink rate, but they are a growing category that consumers demand. **BY TRISHA J. WOOLDRIDGE**

While the produce section as a whole has benefited from the surge in at-home cooking, the herb section has gotten one of the biggest promotional pushes from celebrity chefs, television shows and food magazines. Nearly every popular recipe requires at least one fresh herb. What's more, consumers are realizing that herbs offer a healthful alternative to boosting flavor without adding salt or fat to a dish.

With demand continuing to grow, produce departments stand to sell more — or so it might seem. Herbs are one of the most delicate items in the produce department, carry a high shrink rate, and can sour a customer if not maintained for quality or if they prove more frustrating than beneficial. Fortunately, there are some solid steps stores can take to ensure a bountiful herb program that suits the needs of the store.

1) Know Your Demographic

The first and foremost thing any store must

consider in regards to an herb program is its demographic. Retailers must know their customers and how to cater to their needs to ensure the right amount and assortment of herbs is purchased, lowering shrink and maximizing sales.

“Every store is different, and every demographic is different,” says Vern Meyer, director of sales for Perrysburg, OH-based HerbThyme Farms Inc. “One store may successfully carry up to 19 culinary herbs, while another might go for 12 types of herbs and another store might only sell five to nine varieties.”

Michele Henning, vice president of sales and marketing for Harrisonburg, VA-based Shenandoah Growers Inc., acknowledges, “Fresh herbs say a lot about a produce department. While herbs are a very small part and highly perishable, they are very important.”

Retailers' herb category depends on the sales goals of each specific store, notes Jeff Haines, produce supervisor for Fry's Food Stores of Arizona Inc., based in Tolleson, AZ.

“The bigger you go, the more sales you'll get,” he says. “We're in an upscale area where there are a lot of chefs, so we do well.”

Camilo Penalosa, president of business development at Doral, FL-based Infinite Herbs & Specialties, adds, “If people follow a culinary lifestyle, they will be interested in fresh herbs. They'll want more specialty herbs, such as lemongrass, savory, sorrel, chervil and lavender.”

The ethnicity of the neighborhood will also affect the herb program. Steve Williams, produce director of Sweetbay Supermarkets, located in Tampa, FL, has a mostly Hispanic clientele, who generally want herbs such as parsley and cilantro.

2) Manage Your Space

Once a store has studied its demographic, the produce executive can calculate the ideal amount of space for herbs. “The space allocation is truly dependent on the store,” asserts Suzette Overgaag, vice president and chief financial officer for North Shore Greenhouses



Inc., based in Thermal, CA “We partner with retailers to determine optimal space based on the store format and the goals of the store.”

Penalosa specifically suggests a large display — clamshells and bunched — measuring four to 16 linear feet, with tables outside of refrigeration for basil and potted “hydro” herbs. “It’s a good bet to put it all together in one ‘herb section’ where consumers can find everything,” he says.

“A top row of 4-ft. spring-loaded racks or pegs placed at eye-level will keep a display of clamshell packaged herbs looking tidy and will

save on restocking time,” suggests Marina Pace, marketing spokesperson for Pescadero, CA-based Jacob’s Farm/Del Cabo Inc. “Bunched herbs should fill the same space below, for an eye-catching display,” she adds.

“Four linear feet is the minimum we see nationally for herb displays,” specifies Chick Goodman, vice president of sales and marketing at Coosemans Worldwide, based in Miami, FL. “On the other end, we see whole 4-ft. cases dedicated to herbs from top to bottom. The category is about to take off as retailers build around this destination category with extended sizes and items. The new ¼-oz. sizes will be added to the standard sizes and with extended items, we see the trend to a minimum of two 4-ft. linear rows with whole 4-ft. sections top to bottom with 20 linear feet becoming more common.”

3) Organic or Conventional?

Most stores are choosing either organic or conventional for certain herbs, or for the entire department. Organics still have a higher price per product, but because the packaging is smaller, the price difference is not as significant. Robert Schueller, director of public relations for Melissa’s/World Variety Produce

Inc., in Vernon, CA, reports, “Organic is the largest growing segment in herbs.”

Goodman also recognizes, “Organic herbs have been important to the category as many significant corporate brand programs are organic. Plus, organics and herbs are both continually growing categories, so they are a natural fit.” However, he continues, “On the other hand, one of our top volume customers with multi-million dollar sales and some of the highest sales per store and year over year growth, is all conventional herbs. So the consumer seems to be looking for the quality and consistency of the product more so than whether it is organic or not.”

The reason for this “one or the other” mentality is best described by HerbThyme’s Meyer: “There’s no economy to sell two of the same herbs; there’s not enough critical mass,” he explains. “More important than conventional or organic is to know your food and how it’s grown. Biodynamics is more important than the word ‘organic.’”

4) The “Must-Have” Lists

Hands down, basil is the most popular herb in the department. According to Meyer, basil makes up 40 percent of all herb sales. Schueller



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GROWTH OF POTTED AND LIVING HERBS

Outside of organics, potted and living herbs are the fastest growing section of herbs. “I have seen a huge demand for potted herbs,” reports Jeff Haines, produce supervisor for Fry’s Food Stores of Arizona Inc., based in Tolleson, AZ. “Even in the past couple of years, there has been tremendous growth, especially in the 6-inch size.”

Steve Williams, director of produce for Sweetbay Supermarkets, headquartered in Tampa, FL, adds, “Herbs are one of our five signature categories. We devote an end-cap of 4-, 6-, and 10-inch sized potted herbs.”

While potted and living herbs might sound similar, they are two different items that each serve a different purpose and require a different level of care. Michele Henning, vice president of sales and marketing for Harrisonburg, VA-based Shenandoah Growers Inc., explains, “Potted herbs are nursery items meant to be put in the ground. In order to get to a culinary state, the herbs must be grown. Living herbs can be put on the counter or window sill and be used right away.” Living herbs eliminate consumers’ concerns over wasted product. “We want the customer to take it home, harvest it and throw the remains away. It’s not meant to be grown indefinitely; it’s ready to use right away.”

Savvy foodies, especially, want access to herbs all the time and prefer the potted plants they can grow in their kitchen. Sweetbay, for example, used to sell only 4-inch, but last year started with 6-inch, and is now working on 10-inch pots in a variety of herbs.

While the potted and living herb programs are not entirely perfect, they hold promise. Camilo Penalosa, president of business development at Doral, FL-

based Infinite Herbs & Specialties, points out that potted and living herbs can take up a lot of space, and as they are a newer product, produce departments don’t have a plan on how to sell them yet. Many don’t know if they belong in floral or produce. “The floral department knows how to take good care of the potted herbs,” he acknowledges, “but a lot of people don’t go to the flower section looking for herbs.” That many produce associates don’t know how to take care of plants is the flip side of that. Potted herbs need more light, for example, and if they are not watered regularly they can dry out and go bad quickly. “There can be higher shrink in the produce department,” he warns. “There needs to be more education for produce managers on how to better handle the potted and living herbs.”

“Up to a couple of years ago, potted plants were in the floral department,” says Vern Meyer, director of sales for Perrysburg, OH-based HerbThyme Farms Inc. “Then floral merged into produce, so it became more prevalent to merchandise potted herbs on an end-cap in the produce section.” The company will begin a potted herb program with limited distribution in August.

Suzette Overgaag, vice president and chief financial officer for North Shore Greenhouses Inc., based in Thermal, CA, reports, “Potted Living Herbs have been well received in the produce department. Introducing them with large displays during different promotions throughout the year helps educate the consumer and drive long-term sales.”

An added bonus to living herbs, points out Henning, “is that the plants can be merchandised anywhere in the store. **pb**

also lists basil twice on his Top Ten-best-selling herbs list — once for conventional and once for organically grown. Because of this popularity, it’s a smart move to market basil in more than one place around the department and store.

Following basil, the most frequently cited herbs are mint, thyme, rosemary, parsley — both curly and Italian — cilantro, chives and oregano.

While it’s tempting to focus just on the top-selling herbs, “Specialty herbs and edible flowers are playing a larger role in home meal preparation, as consumers become more

comfortable with ethnic cooking trends and begin to experiment,” notes Pace. “Herbs such as lemongrass, Thai basil, bay leaves and chervil can round out a line.”

5) Care and Packaging

The care that herbs need and how they are packaged often go hand-in-hand. Basil, the highest seller, is also the most delicate of herbs. Cold temperatures and humidity destroy it quickly, leaving brown and black spots or drying it out prematurely. Henning points out

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that oregano is just as susceptible to the cold as basil. "Basil has bigger leaves and more oil, so it turns black or dries out when cold and wet," she explains. "Oregano is just as likely to turn brown or black, but it's not as noticeable with the smaller leaves."

For most stores, 80-95 percent of all herbs are sold in clamshell packaging. While this is changing in regards to potted or live herbs and tubes, clamshells are still an important aspect of herb merchandising that help stores reduce shrink. The first benefit of clamshells is that they serve as protection. "Every time herbs are touched or tossed around, they get damaged," asserts Henning. "While it may not be totally environmentally friendly, packaging herbs reduces over-handling and abuse."

"Our clamshell design works as a mini green-

house," adds North Shore's Overgaag, "so no care is required, and the packaging protects the product during transport and merchandising."

Herbs can also be sold in bulk bunches. Fry's Haines prefers bunched herbs because they have a more pleasing and fresher appearance, and also allow for cheaper bulk pricing. During seasonal pushes, bunches can work especially well with the price and visual appeal.

"While herb programs were initially bunches, there has been a 10-year trend leaning toward clamshells for most items with the exception of bulk commodity items like parsleys and cilantro, and to a lesser extent, mint and basil," note Coosemans' Goodman. "We have some customers who still do a great job with a six or seven item bunch program in addition to the clamshells. The hottest new concept is the ¼-

oz. entry level size as a way to add both new items and new customers to the category."

One of the biggest fears of new herb users is after using what's needed for a specific recipe, they will be left with product they don't know what to do with or don't plan on using before it goes bad. Smaller packaging and tubes are combating this. "There are so many recipes with multiple herbs, and recipes call for a small amount," recognizes HerbThyme's Meyer. "Most retailers have ¼-ounce clamshells. Smaller packaging gives retailers an option with an organic single serve clamshell for 99-cents."

6) Calculate Your Risk: Effective Shrink Vs. Reward Planning

The riskiest part about an herb program is the fact that the shrink for herbs is high — in a

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department that already has higher shrink. If herbs don't have a fast enough turnover, they can cost the department substantial profits in the category. Fortunately, there are a lot of ways to hedge the gamble of delicate, shrinking herbs.

Sweetbay's Williams began his herb program by setting a shrink expectation right from the start. He argues that over time, a store can grow its herb business, but if shrink isn't allowed, it limits how much the line can grow. "It's a balance of management and investment," he says. "Over the past five years, I've seen the category grow in both sales and profitability."

Another way to control shrink is to take advantage of seasonality. Part of the fresh cooking trend is eating with the seasons, and both natural and holiday seasons affect herb sales. Sage sells the most around Thanks-

"A top row of 4-ft. spring-loaded racks or pegs placed at eye-level will keep a display of clamshell packaged herbs looking tidy and will save on restocking time. Bunched herbs should fill the same space below, for an eye-catching display."

— Marina Pace, Jacob's Farm/Del Cabo

giving and in the fall. During Passover and general spring and summer times, dill is in demand. During Lent and Easter, make sure there are several herbs in the fish department. Mint is popular around the Kentucky Derby for mixed drinks, and around the Fourth of July with berry dishes. Cilantro marketed

with avocado moves during sporting events that include parties and tailgating to make guacamole and salsa. Rosemary is a great summer barbeque herb, especially with lamb, red meat, and shish kebobs; it also moves with roasted root vegetables and potatoes in the fall.



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Pricing is also important based on season. Miami, FL's Rock Garden South sales manager, Jonathan Roussel, suggests, "Promote basil when the basil market is flooded." Once people try an herb, they are much more likely to repurchase it.

For herbs that are close to turning, Fry's Haines suggests stores use them in demos and mark them down. "If someone knows what to do with the herb and can use it that night, they'll bite."

7) Share Your Herbs Well: Cross-Merchandising

Because they are ingredients in recipes, herbs are prime targets for getting creative in cross-merchandising. In addition to seasonal pairing, there are a number of other ways to

"Every time herbs are touched or tossed around, they get damaged. While it may not be totally environmentally friendly, packaging herbs reduces over-handling and abuse."

— Michelle Henning, Shenandoah Growers Inc.

drive sales by placing these fresh ingredients right where customers can see them. "If your customers have already gone through the produce department, they are not going to go back for herbs," says Penalosa. "But if they are already buying fresh meat or fish and they see them, they are likely to purchase them."

North Shore's Overgaag explains further,

"Creative merchandising will help drive fresh herb sales. Merchandising herbs with meat, seafood, cheese, pasta, citrus and potatoes can effectively show consumers how to incorporate fresh herbs into their everyday meals."

One specific cross-merchandising suggestion, which also addresses care concerns, is Henning's idea to merchandise herbs with mushrooms since they have a similar preference for temperature, should not be near moisture or misters and are "often used as complementary ingredients in many recipes."

The best known cross-merchandising, of course, is basil with tomatoes, cheese, oils and pine nuts. This mix covers a number of favorite Italian recipes. Basil also works well near bagged salads or near sandwich fixings in the deli, as a substitute or replacement for lettuce. Thyme, as well as herb blends, works nicely near the poultry or fish sections.

8) Teach Your Customers

For new herb consumers, most companies offer recipes and usage points on their packages, as well as offer information on their Web sites. For example, Henning notes Shenandoah created www.fresherbs.com to be the consumer-centric base of the company with links to other herb Web sites, blogs and educational videos. Additionally, the company has an "Herb of the month" year-long program in their living herb line, which highlight two to three plants with a special recipe insert and a QR code, so someone with a smartphone can access immediate information about the herb online. Stores are told ahead of time which will be the herbs of the month, so they can take advantage of the opportunity.

Another effective selling technique, as Rock Garden's Roussel points out, is to have more demos. Overgaag and Pace agree. Pace also suggests focusing on the health benefits. "Simple demo ideas that highlight the exciting, fresh flavors of different herbs are best," says the Jacob's Farm spokesperson. "For example, chop up mixed herbs and blend with butter for a spread; toss with fresh pasta; or skewer fresh basil leaves with cherry tomatoes marinated with balsamic dressing."

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Tracking by SKU has dramatically improved with the advancement of technology.

Inventory Software Does It With Speed And Accuracy

Implementing a new software system requires a great deal of research, but is well worth the time and effort. **BY BOB JOHNSON**

The computer age has brought an astonishing wave of innovation to the way we track and manage inventory. The new inventory management software systems vary in the bells and whistles they offer, and the producers of these systems vary in how they charge for their products. The systems also differ in what they offer, but one constant basic is the ability to know quickly, easily and accurately what you have and where you have it. “Getting to a live stock is the absolute foundation — knowing in real time what you have and where it is,” says Carl Davies, CEO of Prophet North America, in Bakersfield, CA.

The Benefits Of Technology

This is the age of innovation in inventory management software, and producers are competing to offer astonishing new features. One of the latest innovations allows for tracking and controlling inventory without using screens or hands. “Rather than the system producing pieces of paper, you have voice picking,” says Davies. He explains, “Voice picking is pretty new. In fact, we used it on a

live site for the first time this past year. The software communicates through headsets that tell warehouse personnel what to pick and where to pick it. The warehouse worker then speaks a code that lets the system know what he has picked, and the system updates itself. That can be a huge savings in terms of labor,” Davies says.

Ease of entering and accessing information is a key feature in most inventory software programs. “Software that can be used where inventory is actually handled, such as touch screens, tablets, handheld devices, etc., when used properly, can increase the chances that inventory is kept accurately in the system,” maintains Charles Waud, president of WaudWare Inc., based in Brampton, Ontario, Canada. “If staff need to manually record transactions and put them in the system later, chances are you will have delays, transposition errors, lost transactions and other issues.”

The hardware must be user-friendly enough that everyone involved can quickly and easily read or hear the information. “Easy to understand screens and reports are essential in a good inventory management software

program, and the ability to audit and verify information when questioned,” Waud adds.

One firm offers the convenience of a system that stores the data and the software online, eliminating the need for expensive computer hardware. “With our software, our clients can work from the office, home or the road,” notes Charles Shafae, president of dProduce Man Software, in Half Moon Bay, CA. “They can create, print or e-mail purchase and sales orders and manage inventory right from their iPad or any device they use to access the Internet.”

In addition to detailing the inventory at various locations, some systems can also store significant quality characteristics that help to determine where the inventory can be sold at the best price. “You might have quality specifications on your product so you know who you can sell it to maximize your product,” Prophet’s Davies says.

An important quality specification with some inventory, especially produce, is its freshness, which includes its temperature history. “We’re working with a berry grower in Florida on not only what is available, where it is located, and how old it is, but also the temperature

because that translates into shelf-life,” explains Don Walborn, director of sales and marketing at ProWare Services LLC, in Plant City, FL.

In the area of perishable inventory like produce, Walborn believes tracking the remaining shelf-life of the inventory is crucial. “Right around the corner you’re going to see inventory systems tracking different attributes such as temperature and shelf life,” he says.

Another significant quality factor can be the costs that come in long after it has left the warehouse. “We have software that allows for multiple costing — being able to know the cost of your product, including bills you don’t get until after you’ve sold it, like for shipping or inspection,” says Trevor Morris, senior vice president of Houston, TX-based Edible Software.

Much of the innovation in inventory software is driven by the need to trace products for purposes of food safety. “The main issue we have been dealing with is traceability,” says Morris. “We’ve been doing this for 32 years, and we’ve seen a lot of things, but traceability is really coming to the forefront.”

The need for traceability has spawned the development of software that can track products even as they are included in mixtures. “We can trace products from the vendor, to the end

user and back again,” notes Morris.

The importance of traceability has also led to the creation of systems that can track inventory in detail with great accuracy. “You need accuracy; you’ve got to have a system you can rely on,” asserts Walborn. “You need to have something that allows you to keep count of a particular SKU, and if it tells me what I have, will it also tell me where it is and can it measure the age of your inventory?” Walborn says.

The System To Suit Your Needs

There is no one best system, but there are systems that are best suited to the needs of a particular operation. “You’ve got to know which features are most important to your business,” says Walborn of ProWare. “Look at which features are going to solve your problems.”

The features that matter in software depend on how inventory management fits into the rest of the operation. “You need to know how well this is going to integrate into the rest of the business system,” adds Walborn. “Integration is the key to everything these days.”

In many situations, speed is an essential quality in the inventory management system. “The speed of capturing the data is crucial,” asserts Dennis Ferrarelli, national sales manager

of Produce Pro Inc., headquartered in Woodridge, IL. “When you’re supposed to receive an order of 12 pallets from California, but you only get eight or 10, you want to be able to make the changes as quickly as possible with as little impact to movement as possible. Capturing the information quickly and easily is a precursor to the ability to analyze the information.”

Speed in capturing and analyzing information can make it possible to quickly see potential savings in consolidating shipments. “If you’ve got trucks coming in from California everyday, you want to know which carriers are on time and which are late,” continues Ferrarelli. “You want to be able to see if you could save money by consolidating loads. You want to know which trips are profitable by looking at how many stops there are and how many miles. This lets you analyze your operational efficiency.”

Accurate information can also make it easy to see in detail the efficiency of your warehouse operation. “You want to know the accuracy and return rate of your pickers in the warehouse,” Ferrarelli says.

This sophisticated information system should pay off in faster turnover of inventory “since there is less need to tie up money in

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inventory,” points out Waud of WaudWare. “Other benefits include reduced spoilage, better customer service and the ability to have your staff concentrate on other aspects of their work.”

The online software from dProduce Man is customizable with several modules. “Our customers are moving to a ‘cloud’ platform from a traditional hardware hosted solution,” explains Shafae.

Because it is easy to be overwhelmed by the possibilities in inventory management software, it is essential to check references, including references from customers who were not satisfied. Waud suggests, “Check references of the company providing the software — not just the ones they give you, but ask them for the names of a few companies that are no longer using their software as well.”

Is The Pricing Right?

The cost of inventory software, and the ways of structuring payment, vary just as much as the features in the systems. “The cost all depends on what you need. We price according to your number of concurrent users. You may have 60-plus employees, but if you only have 30 during a shift, that’s how many people need to use the system at the same time,” explains

Morris of Edible Software.

It is important to shop around, and to know how much of an investment is worth the cost. “The best way to compare prices is to get prospective vendors to price per user,” recommends Waud. “You could expect to pay between a few hundred and several thousands of dollars per user. You need to decide what you need. The more you need, the more you can expect to pay. If possible, try and find a system that will offer numerous options, but only turn on the features you need as you need them. It might be less expensive in the long run to buy the better system up front and grow into it, as opposed to changing software down the road. Software changes are, at the least, very painful, and at the worst, could cripple your business.”

Many firms offer modular systems that let you pick the features you pay for a la carte. “Ours is a modular system and people use many modules together — like procurement, sales, inventory management and production systems,” says Davies of Prophet North America.

Prophet sells its products on an annual basis, rather than a permanent license to the software. “Most software companies sell you a license in perpetuity and then sell a service contract. We differ in that we sell a yearly


subscription. It makes it possible to recover your capital quickly,” Davies explains.

The online inventory software will be offered on a monthly subscription basis to allow for a virtually immediate return on investment. “The cost is always an issue,” admits Shafae of dProduce Man. “We have moved our system to an online version. In the past, people had to spend thousands of dollars to buy the physical hardware. Now they can use it online for as little as \$500 a month, and if they don’t like it, they turn it off. In the old days you had to spend \$50,000 to \$60,000 to find out if it is the right product.”

“One of the things you want to look at going forward is how much this is going to cost to own, and how long is it going to take me to recover my expense.”

One important cost factor can be the economics of changing or upgrading the system. “Don’t just look at the initial price; look at the cost of operations like new software, the support service fees and the cost of training,” Walborn adds. “If you need changes in the system, how are they going to get done? Once I get a system up and running will I be able to build onto it? These are important questions to consider,” Walborn says. **pb**

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Eight Ways To Put More Bite In Your Garlic Sales

Spice up garlic sales with savvy sourcing, the right array of products, suggestive displays and regular promotions. **CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD**



Short supplies of garlic have negatively affected pricing, and retailers have struggled to keep pricing under \$4 per pound.

Over the years, garlic has grown from a specialty to a staple seasoning with a projected U.S. per-capita consumption of 2.35 pounds in 2011, according to the USDA's Economic Research Service.

Jim Weber, produce supervisor at Econo Foods, a 6-store chain in Brillion, WI, points out, "Fresh garlic is an essential ingredient on just about every Food Network cooking show. This is a big influence on consumers."

1. Source Strategically And Sensibly

Short supplies for nearly a year and a half have made the price of garlic almost as precious as gold. Weber shares, "We've tried to keep the price down to \$3.99 (per pound) for whole garlic bulbs. Customers are used to \$2.99, but the suggested price this spring has been \$4.99."

"The garlic market is driven from different fronts and in different ways depending upon garlic-producing and non-producing areas of the world," explains Louis Hymel, III, director of purchasing and marketing for Orlando, FL-based Spice World Inc. "Crop yields from one area of the world compared to another will drive global supply and demand."

A glut of cheap garlic entered the U.S. market from China, the No. 1 global garlic producer, up until the late 2000s. This situation saw an about-face when factors such as reduced acreage, poor weather, food safety issues and increased internal demand led to poor output out of China in 2009 and 2010, thus creating a universal garlic shortage and skyrocketing prices.

John Duffus, sales and marketing manager for The Garlic Co., in Bakersfield, CA, says, "Garlic isn't a crop that growers in other regions, such as California, can dramatically increase in production from one year to the next. You need to plant cloves, and with such a strong market for garlic, it's tough to get good quality seed. A big jump from one year to the next is maybe a five to 10 percent increase."

The forecast for China's 2011 garlic crop is more optimistic. "There is an increase of about 30 percent in this year's garlic harvest from China, so it is likely that Chinese garlic prices will fall by July," reports Jim Provost, owner and president of I Love Produce LLC, located in Kelton, PA. "California won't have more garlic than last year, and perhaps less, so the market for California garlic should maintain at a high level."

China supplies about half of the garlic sold year-round in the United States, while California supplies a bit less and also provides a 12-month supply out of storage. The two other major sources of U.S. garlic are Argentina, which exports its garlic from January to March, and Mexico, which ships its more pungent purple garlic north typically from March to June. Peru is a new garlic producer on the scene with a small volume of garlic entering the United States.

There are many factors that go into the decisions retailers and consumers make when buying garlic, including origin, quality and price. At B&R Stores Inc., a 17-unit chain in Lincoln, NE, and operating under the Super Saver and Russ's Market banners, Randy Bohaty, produce director, says, "We prefer domestic garlic due to the flavor and quality."

Patsy Ross, vice president of marketing for Gilroy, CA-based Christopher Ranch LLC, reveals, "We are working to get information to retailers about the advantages of California Heirloom garlic over imported garlic. There is a higher content of the health-protecting phytonutrient, allicin, and higher flavor notes that make it preferred by many chefs across the nation."

However, given that some customers prefer

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MERCHANDISING REVIEW

California garlic and some prefer Chinese garlic, Provost encourages his customers to “carry both in their garlic sections to increase sales. California garlic is generally sold as a bulk commodity and Chinese garlic in a net sleeve with the country of origin label on the package. Put both on the shelf, and let the consumer decide,” he says. “Our sales reflect that there is sales volume and margin enough to justify the presence of these two different products.”

2. Build The Category Around Whole Heads

“Whole heads of garlic remain the anchor of the category,” maintains Bohaty.

Size of heads equates to scale of sales. Anthony Sharrino, president of Eaton & Eustis Co., in Chelsea, MA, says, “The biggest size — Super Colossal — moves the best and commands the best price. Comparatively, small

heads don't move.”

“However, some retailers want smaller bulbs so they can sell more bulbs per pound,” counters Duffus of The Garlic Co. “There's also been a trend toward some retailers selling individual heads of garlic by the each.”

3. Sell Convenience

“Many traditional cooks still use whole garlic if they have the time,” says Spice World's Hymel, “but processed garlic has proven itself as the item in demand by today's consumers.”

Sharrino adds, “On one hand, processed garlic can cannibalize sales of fresh. On the other, new convenient value-added products may introduce fresh garlic to customers that may not have used garlic or used it in other forms in the past.”

“Focus group research indicates that consumers buy a fresh bulb of garlic when they

have time and are preparing a special meal, jarred if they are in a hurry, and dehydrated garlic if they are in an even bigger hurry,” reports Duffus.

“In addition to fresh whole garlic, we carry everything from 4-oz. to 32-oz. jarred garlic in minced, chopped, crushed, roasted and in olive oil,” shares Econo Foods' Weber.

This past year, Spice World introduced its minced garlic in a 9.5-oz. plastic bottle. “Squeeze garlic has taken garlic to a level beyond just a cooking ingredient to a table-ready condiment,” maintains Hymel.

“Whole peeled garlic cloves are also finding their sales niche for customers who want fresh flavor without the trouble of peeling,” acknowledges Duffus. “The phenomenon that occurred in the lettuce category with the introduction of bagged salads is happening now in garlic. Witness the increasing popularity of

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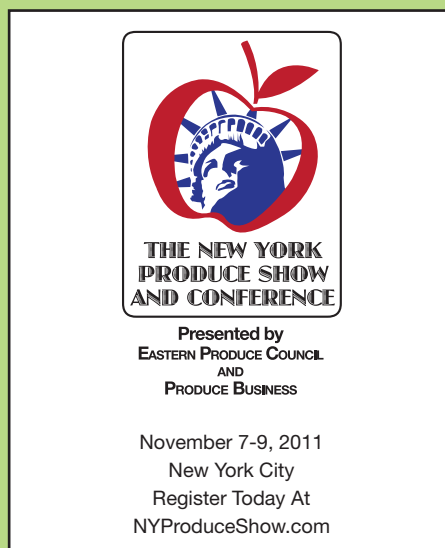
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“The challenge with peeled garlic is to make sure customers know it exists because it has to be kept cold. Produce managers tell me that it sells like hotcakes when it is merchandised right in the middle of the bagged salad section. But this is very valuable space, since they also tell me that garlic sales don’t replace the dollars lost on lettuce.”

— John Duffus, *The Garlic Co.*

whole peeled garlic cloves in single recipe-size vacuum packs.”

Maurice A. Auerbach Inc., in South Hackensack, NJ, is among the latest to introduce a whole peeled garlic product. Paul Auerbach, president, explains: “It’s a 6-oz. pouch with a resealable opening that holds six 1-oz. individually vacuum-wrapped pouches of three to four cloves of garlic each. The resealable closure and individual packaging solves the problem of maintaining the freshness of the cloves once the package is opened.” The company offers the product in both conventional and organic forms in exclusively U.S.-grown garlic.

4. Go For Organic

“Demand for organic garlic is growing at a rate that nearly outpaces supply,” recognizes Christopher Ranch’s Ross. “We have increased our organic garlic production about 10 percent per year for the past several years.”

“Due to the higher price, we only carry organic garlic in a minced form where consumers expect to pay a higher price because of the value-add,” notes B&R Store’s Bohaty. “The jar also provides a barrier solution to the segregation issue from conventional. This would be more difficult with bulk heads.”

Whole heads of OIA (Organización Internacional Agropecuaria)-certified organic garlic is what CF Fresh Inc., in Sedro Woolley, WA, imports from Argentina each year. The first shipments usually arrive in late January. Addie Pobst, import coordinator and food safety officer, says, “The white garlic is well cured, dried, cleaned and large, with heads ranging from 2½ to three inches. It comes packed in 22-lb. plastic crates. We are considering increasing that to 30-lb. crates, like the domestic garlic, to make it easier to order for produce buyers.”

Some companies, such as Spice World, offer an entire line of organic garlic products. These include fresh whole bulbs, whole peeled and ready-to-use jar garlic.

5. Package To Sell

According to Provost of I Love Produce, “The best-selling garlic product is a close split between bulk and 5-bulb packaged garlic.”

Large bulbs are typically sold in bulk, while smaller sizes are packaged into sleeves or bags, says The Garlic Company’s Duffus. “Club stores want consistent size heads, usually packed in two to three pounds, which will retail for between \$5 and \$7 each. The garlic has to be perfect, though. One bad bulb and it becomes an expensive return.”

“Product development in fresh garlic is headed toward higher end packaging and high quality graphics with slick product design,” adds Provost.

6. Build Non-Refrigerated And Refrigerated Displays

“To achieve maximum garlic sales, merchandising a complete selection is the key to profitability,” asserts Spice World’s Hymel. “Supermarkets need to carry at least one size of each variety — fresh, peeled and ready-to-use jars.”

Christopher Ranch’s Ross adds, “Retailers typically merchandise garlic in small baskets or displays, but a large garlic display will catch the consumer’s eye.”

Over a dozen SKUs of garlic are displayed in an unrefrigerated 4-ft. section at Econo Foods. Weber details, “The garlic set includes every shape, size and chop. We’ll also display elephant garlic and black garlic here, too.”

I Love Produce’s Provost explains, “Black garlic is a type of fermented garlic used as a food ingredient in fine dining and Asian cuisine. The taste is sweet and syrupy with hints of balsamic, tamarind and even licorice flavor. Black garlic was voted one of the trendy flavors for 2011 by the National Restaurant Association’s Chefs Survey of over 1,200 American Culinary Association chefs.”

Peeled garlic requires a refrigerated display. Duffus admits, “The challenge with

peeled garlic is to make sure customers know it exists because it has to be kept cold. Produce managers tell me that it sells like hotcakes when it is merchandised right in the middle of the bagged salad section. But this is very valuable space, since they also tell me that garlic sales don’t replace the dollars lost on lettuce. Other places to display peeled garlic are with mushrooms and fresh-cut onions,” he adds. “And make sure to display it at eye-level.”

Another refrigerated garlic product is green garlic or young garlic. Its appearance is similar to scallions. Robert Schueller, director of public relations for Vernon, CA-based Melissa’s/World Variety Produce, says, “Green garlic has been a trend at farmer’s markets for the past five years. It hasn’t totally crossed over to mainstream retail or foodservice yet, but at retail, it is best merchandised near the salad ingredients or fresh herbs.”

7. Creatively Cross-Merchandise

“Cross-merchandising will always create incremental sales and profits,” contends Spice World’s Hymel.

Ross of Christopher Ranch maintains, “Garlic is often merchandised in with the onions and potatoes, but we say, ‘Think of the Italian flag when you merchandise garlic: red (tomatoes), white (garlic) and green (avocados).’ The white garlic will stand out better.”

At Econo Foods, Weber displays fresh heads of garlic on the tomato table in three curved pod displays. “It’s colorful, and garlic is a staple in recipes like salsa,” he says.

8. Don’t Forget To Promote

“Garlic is a sell-yourself staple,” says B&R Store’s Bohaty, “although we do promote it.”

“Promotion is more of a reminder to buy, than an opportunity to move volume,” says The Garlic Company’s Duffus. “If you advertise garlic for half-off, you won’t sell twice as much. It’s more an item that consumers buy a small amount on a regular basis than stock up on.”

Eaton & Eustis’ Sharrino contends, “Price-based promotions are more advantageous in the summer when the new crop comes in.”

Demand and promotional opportunities for garlic can increase with the season. “For example,” says Schueller, “garlic is a good item to feature in the summer when people are making salsa and fresh pasta sauces.”

Promote the garlic category a few times a year, recommends Ross. “Examples could be: Garlic Harvest Promotion/Garlic Festival in the summer and Halloween, positioning garlic as the perfect cure for Vampires.”

pb

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New York's Produce Theater: **Commanding Attention, The Show Runs 24/7**

BY MIRA SLOTT



The Sky's the limit for New York's produce vendors who look to adapt to ever-changing scenes.

As the curtain rises, a huge ensemble cast of diverse produce companies synchronizes choreography, talent and agility to execute a fresh, command performance for a diverse and demanding audience. Like intriguing New York theater, established stars take center stage, yet ambitious produce players are acting to differentiate, innovate and adapt to stay competitive

and steal the spotlight.

In contrast to the Hunts Point Terminal Market, where a bevy of mostly full-line distributors maneuver for position — with a few notable specialists — companies outside of the Market develop distinctive niches and inimitable services to stand apart from the fray.

Directing The Script

“We’re trying to push more and adapt

more as part of our corporate identity to better service the unique needs of our customers,” says Paul Auerbach, president of Maurice A. Auerbach, headquartered in Hackensack, NJ. “Giving us an advantage, we’ll be moving to a new, state-of the art facility in the fall, doubling our square footage with five times the refrigeration, custom-designed to maximize efficiency and versatility. Our major priority is to continue



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to service existing customers during the transition period, and open a path toward growing both our customer base and item base," he says.

Auerbach's customer base is diverse. "We're traditionally a retail supply company, covering all the big retailers, evenly split between major and regional chains, as well as foodservice distributors. We do business on the Hunts Point Terminal Market and seven other terminal markets in the Northeast, including regular visits. We're hands-on with all types of accounts — terminal markets,

retailers, buying and merchandise personnel, as well as foodservice."

Despite price and quality, it's still a relationship business. Partnership arrangements formed with customers and shippers remain paramount to any successful strategy. The way we source product and the logistics we have with our procurement team, transportation network and distribution allows us to move unconventional items," adds Auerbach.

No one goes into the celery root business or stops a truck for 20 boxes of rhubarb, but Auerbach can efficiently run these items,

turning them two times a week in 48 hours. "A small local foodservice distributor will call for jumbo asparagus — we'll have five sizes, two weights of boxes and different price points, with product from Washington State, California and Peru on hand," he explains. "We're not full-line, but we sell large volumes of specialties — out of 50 items, 12 to 15 items account for the core of dollars and units. We're usually on top of the market, and in the areas we service, geographically and product-wise, we're generally well posted," he says.

Direct Source Marketing, based in Mt. Kisco, NY, maintains a targeted business model with two segments: the first area is direct imports primarily honed on South American products: a winter program of Chilean table grapes, stone fruit and cherries running late November through April, Hass avocados from September through February, and Peruvian sweet onions. "Our customer focus is on major retailers in the northeast corridor," says Ira Greenstein, president.

The second concentration is forward-distribution, inventory replenishment from May through November, specifically table grapes and stone fruit. "On the East Coast, this is a



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very key program for retailers. We are complementing their existing source chains, and enabling retailers to better control inventory management. When a retailer is on ad and loading large amounts of fruits, he can count on our fruit as a safety net," he says.

Continuous Supply Chain

Most retailers now are bent on keeping

inventories extremely tight and never being over supplied. "Our customer base knows they can purposely buy 10 to 15 percent short and use our company to fill in those holes," Greenstein explains, noting, they can call Monday for delivery Tuesday.

With trucking shortages in the industry, major retailers are struggling to get product picked up, and can end up paying well above market prices to fill in those gaps, according to Greenstein. "Our retailer base knows when they come to fill in slots, they're not paying more than their already existing delivery cost," he says.

The key to forward distribution is controlling costs effectively to maintain a competitive pricing structure. Greenstein credits that ability to 23 years in the business, building relationships with domestic and international growers

as well as with logistics companies; they've stepped up when trucks are short and given us all the services we need," he says, adding, "It's taken many years to build trust with retailers. The worst thing a company can do is have a rejection on a short buy. Our customers know they can come to us and we can deliver the right quality product."

According to Robert Goldstein, president of transportation and logistics trucking firm Genpro Inc., in Rutherford, NJ, "Everyone is focused on price, and trucking is a very fragmented marketplace, with a lot more competition. We pride ourselves on service and the human element, leveraging our transportation management systems and Electronic Data Interchange integrations. We've built a platform to meet different customer demands on trade and cost-savings, planning with them for the



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future. With diversification and cost savings initiatives of moving to rail, it gives us a niche for highly perishable items with our highly managed system that a rail provider can't do," he says.

This niche mentality is creating a dynamic marketplace for customers and consumers. "Our little niche that we've carved out is growing exponentially," says Raul Millan, managing member at Vision Import Group, based in River Edge, NJ, an import, distribu-

tion and marketing company differentiating itself through a highly targeted branding strategy carried out through strategic partnerships with growers, wholesalers and retail customers, according to Ronnie Cohen, vice president of sales.

Vision's key brand, Mojito Limes, has grown tremendously, which Cohen attributes to both a strong marketing effort and significant growth of the Latino population. Millan points to a new modified atmosphere pack-

aging for Mojito limes that will be in a master case with 17 2-lb. bags in each. "The MAP technology is the newest way we will add value to the consumer while extending shelf-life on the retail store level. We are rolling out this new bagging in the middle of the summer."

Vision Imports has created its newest brand of limes "Havana Limes" and have just received its first shipment. "This will complement our other two brands as well as allowing us to share marketplaces in some cases," Cohen

INTERRUPCIÓN FAIR TRADE

Addressing consumer demands for social, economic and environmentally sustainable practices.

BY MIRA SLOTT

Companies are finding it imperative to integrate corporate social responsibility and fair trade practices into their businesses as more and more consumers demand it in their purchasing decisions, according to Michela Calabrese, director of stakeholder development at Interrupción Fair Trade, Brooklyn, NY. "We started as a non-profit in Argentina in 2000 to battle corruption and unfair treatment of small- to medium-size producers," she explains.

The company mission and reach quickly broadened. Interrupción Fair Trade now spans many countries — Chile, Peru, Costa Rica, Mexico, Uruguay and Brazil — and engages and provides resources to farmers and producers committed to a fair trade sustainable development path.

According to CEO Raphael Goldberg, the Interrupción supply chain manages distribution of fair trade produce to Europe, Asia and the United States. Goldberg mentions that Kings Super Markets in Parsippany, NJ, was one of the company's first supporters in the U.S. "Paul Kneeland [vice president of produce and floral at Kings Super Markets] gave us a shot," Goldberg says. "Kneeland saw the benefit right away."

"We're focusing on mangos and avocados... and bananas soon," says Calabrese. "Out of Mexico we're developing strawberries, raspberries and blackberries."

That growth comes with challenges. "To a degree, people in lower economic brackets in the U.S. don't have as much access to

Fair Trade items, which can come at a premium," Calabrese acknowledges.

"We have focused our efforts in targeted states and demographics," says Goldberg. "Whole Foods is a great customer as it has stores in more affluent areas. Kroger has taken on Fair Trade items in a variety of locations. Different retailers have different margins and promotional plans," he says, explaining that actual costs of Fair Trade organic products are much more expensive than conventional. Currently, organic accounts for about 50 percent of Interrupción Fair Trade products, he adds.

Interrupción wants to bring more transparency to the supply chain through the auditing process, with fair trade practices of individual companies closely monitored. "On our website, for example, you can go to our pear farms and see what we scored in fair and safe work practices for workers and producers as well as fair trade premiums calculated by boxes."

Interrupción Fair Trade signifies that producers and Interrupción have fulfilled their mutual commitment to achieving full Fair Trade Certification, and producers have begun receiving Social Premiums from sales of certified Fair Trade products. "Producers invest that money back into their communities to improve soil and water management, and environmentally sustainable production, in turn becoming more self-sufficient and empowered," she says, adding, "The goal is to accomplish social and economic impact, while at the same time creating value."

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continues. "With such growth, we feel there will be a need. Mojito is our premium brand, but we also want to cater to different mindsets, and labels have special meanings to varying consumer segments."

The Mr. Squeeze label, geared more to the general population and mass market, is really starting to take off, Millan says, adding, "What we have done with 10-lb. limes makes a great presentation." The firm is also importing lemons from Spain and is in the process of

branding those.

In its multifaceted distribution efforts, the Vision Imports team has a kinship with the Hunts Point Terminal Market. "We're looking for strategic customers and because we cut our teeth in the terminal market, that's always been one of our strengths," says Cohen. "Joseph Fierman & Son distributes our Mojito limes in New York. Fierman is doing a great job, being one of the premier houses at Hunts Point Market," he says.



Charlie DiMaggio, Joey Weldon and Liz Vega of FresCo Produce LLC



Raphael Goldberg, Michela Calabrese and Diego Gonzales of Interrupción Fair Trade



Ronnie Cohen and Raul Millan of Vision Import Group LLC

Eli & Ali Organic and Specialty Produce steadfastly commits to a premium branded niche at the higher end of the market. "We don't sell commodities," says Peter Kroner, director of business development. "

We'd rather walk away and not sell it if the product is lower grade," adds Jeff Ornstein, co-owner of the specialty importer, re-packer, distributor and contract grower of both conventional items and organic which now comprise 65 percent of the business. This is our niche and we don't want to taint our brand," Ornstein says.

"We give a lot of product to City Harvest and churches if product is not perfect," says Marc Ross, a co-owner with Ornstein. "Our business is labor-intensive," he continues, noting the attention to detail when selecting and ensuring uniform quality with all variety of product.

To expedite deliveries, Eli & Ali has its own trucks that deliver direct across the Tri-

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State area. "Our variety of product may originate from Canada, Holland and Israel," says Art Hernandez, director of operations. Eli & Ali contracts with Amish growers in Pennsylvania and Michigan, which work in partnership to produce specific specs they need, according to Ross.

Global product procurement is constant. "We fly in product every day from California and at least three times a week from Europe and/or Israel. Typically the product is graded, packed and in distribution to our accounts within 12 to 24 hours of arrival," says Ornstein.

"Let me be clear that every case that we handle and distribute from our warehouse is 100 percent guaranteed to the customer," assures Kroner.

What makes distributor New York Produce unique is its highly specialized service to the Hispanic market, covering an extensive variety of hard-to-find items, according to Michael Ramos, in marketing. On the move since its start in the Bronx Terminal Market in June of 1984 with just tropical produce, the company recently opened a new climate-controlled facility in the Bronx with 45,000 square feet of refrigeration and 17 doors, all cash-and-carry,



Grazyna Ostrowska, Vidalina Demasi, Lucky Lee, Diego Fajardo and Latisha Wallace of Lucky's Real Tomatoes

"We see a lot more crossover with cooking shows. People are more open to trying new things. We're selling more cactus leaves and chipotle peppers than ever, and I see bigger restaurants interested in authentic Mexican food."

— Manny Sanchez, New York Produce

says Ari San Emeterio, general manager.

New York Produce's product offering, some 25,000 items, goes far beyond produce. A range of categories in frozen, dairy, meat and grocery highlight all the national brands from Mexico, Central and South America. "We're more of a one-stop shop, but our whole angle is tropical, niche items," says Manny Sanchez, director of sales, noting five different kinds of chayotes, and

other specialties such as *ajicito*, *panapen* (fruit bread), *quenepa*, *nopal* (cactus leaves), *mamey*, *sopote*, and *agria* (sour oranges).

New York Produce is frequented by bodegas, Mexican specialty stores, restaurants, some jobbers, and even street vendors who come searching for sugar cane, adds sales manager Julio Garcia. What's also notable: "We have merchandisers who visit

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“We are a firm believer of reinvesting in our employees and company, whether it is raising the bar on food safety with progressive technology, updating equipment processes to allow for more customized offerings, installing high-tech management systems to ease employee workloads, or creating more efficient transportation logistics.”

— Michael Muzyk, Baldor Specialty Foods

chain stores and educate staff about unusual items, how to care for and display them,” Sanchez continues.

New York Produce also has a wholesale division to sell to other producer distributors. “We see a lot more crossover with cooking shows. People are more open to trying new things. We’re selling more cactus leaves and chipotle peppers than ever, and I see bigger restaurants interested in authentic Mexican food. Large supermarkets are merchandising more ethnic and hard to find items in the produce departments,” says Sanchez, concluding, “The New York Metropolitan area is made up of many different ethnic groups, and the merchandisers are dependent on us to give them items they’re missing.”

“What we’re trying to do to differentiate is to extend our line as a processor and manufacturer, always looking to come out with new items,” says Merle Axelrod, president of Supreme Cuts, based in Mahwah, NJ. “For our customers, whether retail or foodservice, the more products we can offer in a one-stop shop under our label, the better. From a cost standpoint, we are streamlining the deliveries,” she says, noting that the firm delivers direct to the retail distribution center.

The most important thing from the retail end is fluidity, says Axelrod. Retailers want to see how the markets are going, and order more frequently to manage inventories. To accommodate the big push for locally grown product, the company will tag products if buying in local regions. “For example, when green beans are coming from New York, Connecticut or New Jersey, we put starburst stickers on the consumer packaging, and we let customers know to leverage the local angle,” she says, adding, “We have more and more requests from customers that like to promote local.”

Listening to consumer feedback, the company launched a customized organic line of trimmed green beans, under a new label, Dave and Merle’s, which has been very well received, she explains.

On The Foodservice Front

The laser attention to supplying products that meet particular market needs is evident at

Baldor Specialty Foods in the Bronx, a high-end foodservice distributor. In fact, the firm recently completed an elaborate innovation test

kitchen, where it perfects product ideas, and also serves as an interactive demonstration station as a way to further connect with its customer base.

To that end, Baldor hosts special events, bringing in master chefs from the New York area as well as from Europe to create dishes that highlight Baldor’s wide range of products. Investments behind the scenes, however, are most important, according to Michael Muzyk, president. “We are a firm believer of



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Baldor's Michael Muzyk demonstrates the latest scanning technology the company uses to track inventory.

reinvesting in our employees and company," he emphasizes, "whether it is raising the bar on food safety with progressive technology, updating equipment processes to allow for more customized offerings, installing high-tech management systems to ease employee workloads, or creating more efficient transportation logistics."

Founded on such values and mindset, Lucky's Real Tomatoes, based in Brooklyn, NY, has nurtured and perfected its premium quality tomatoes from humble beginnings in 1979, now supplying several hundred New York restaurants, hotels, foodservice and retail establishments, as well as locations across the country, according to Lucky Lee, vice president sales.

She remembers the early days when chefs in NYC removed tomatoes from their menus because all that was available to them were gassed greens. "In the 1980s, no respectable chef had a tomato in the winter," she says.

Listening to the advice of their dad, Tony, Lucky and her brother, Al, drove their red, freshly picked, tomatoes from Florida to NY, where she would hoist a case up on her shoulder and walk into some of the best restaurants to fill a niche.

This progressive attitude also translated to early investments in stringent food safety measures, including a sophisticated ozone system to cleanse the product, jumping into food safety long before the string of outbreaks in the several coming years would

heighten awareness.

Staying true to the tomato, Lucky Real Tomatoes has turned down lucrative deals to expand into other product categories. Lee says, "We're known for our premium field-grown sun tomato, for flavor that has never faltered," she says.

However, when she heard that Procacci Bros., in Philadelphia, PA, was interested in a partnership to co-brand Santa Sweets with them, she was thrilled. "The Santa Sweet grape tomato is the best there is," she says, calling the opportunity an ideal fit. Since then, their grape tomato sales have grown dramatically, both in the foodservice and distributor segments of their business.

To deal with an uncertain economy, we had requests to provide a value-pack that was more reasonably priced but did not compromise quality," Lee explains. Lucky is recognized for its pristine, uniform, and well-cushioned tomato packs. To accommodate, the firm created Lucky's for Less, an assortment of mixed sizes and shapes that still maintain the same exceptional flavor, she explains, staying true to its core. **pb**



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Produce companies strategize aggressive growth, broader market reach and new ways to service customers, to hedge their bets and take greater control of their own destinies.

BY MIRA SLOTT



Iconic Hunts Point Terminal Market, the largest, most diverse produce operation in the world, is a stronghold for countless Manhattan and Tri-State retailers, restaurants and foodservice buyers, wholesalers, growers and distributors. This integrated supply chain of players orchestrates a fast-paced, logistical feat to feed millions and millions of consumers daily. The South Bronx-based powerhouse ignites competition and economic vigor in the region,

also employing some 3,000 people and generating businesses in surrounding communities.

Debate ensues on repositioning, rebuilding or moving the Market to ensure its future vitality amid complex and shifting variables, state and local politics providing a strong undercurrent. Pros and cons hinge on different companies' vantage points. Regardless of the path, most acknowledge a substantial time lag of at least several years before a new Market would be up and running. Faced with uncer-

tainty, some tenants would prefer to hold back and wait to see what unfolds before taking any bold moves. Yet, companies on the Market and off jockey to gain a competitive edge and hit new plateaus to accommodate a diverse and demanding customer base. [Read about off-market action on page 76]

"This Market breaking up would be devastating to the community," says Joel Fierman, president of Joseph Fierman & Son. Smaller chains and independent green grocers depend

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on Hunts Point Market to keep supplies flowing into their neighborhoods, where fruits and vegetables are of high importance. They understand value and pass it on.

"The green grocers run a hands-on business and don't have a major buying organization, so they can get the best margin of return. With no board of directors to report to, it is flexible to take advantage of good deals, and turn product around with last-minute merchandising and promotions," Fierman explains.

Walking the market is an acquired skill. "You have to be an astute buyer," adds Fierman. "Something could be reasonably priced but doesn't necessarily taste the best. An item might cost more, but the quality far surpasses the additional expense, and not that many people understand that. Off-grade product that tastes good is the toughest sell," he says,

noting, "Product is only as good as the guy packing it for you."

Larger retailers need to evaluate what produce they are serving their customers, Fierman contends. "When they're stuck with strawberries, they may sell large packages, but if the majority doesn't taste sweet, consumers are turned off. Retailers need to come back to the market. For years, 15 to 20 different major retailers came here and presented fantastic produce departments filled with flavor."

The Beat Goes On

"The reality is that we are not waiting for a resolution for our future," says Mario Andreani, general manager at S. Katzman and Katzman Berry.

"I'm keeping an open mind, but whatever deal is struck in the end will come down to the

bottom line," echoes Steve Katzman, president of S. Katzman Produce and Katzman Berry, who is also co-president of the Hunts Point Terminal Produce Cooperative Association.

"No matter what, we're growing our business," Andreani continues. "We're making plans for whatever may come up, building facilities for warehousing space, making more preparation for GAP certification, addressing food safety needs, broadening product lines, packaging operations and customer special orders. The key to this business is logistics, and we now have a whole trucking department to better control it. We have owner presence on the floor every day; there's nothing like seeing the owner for a problem. We're directly in touch with all aspects of the business."

Stefanie Katzman, in sales and procure-

MARKETING THE MARKET

Celebrity promotional campaigns and charitable outreach show the market's value to the public.

BY MIRA SLOTT

When Joel Fierman, president of Joseph Fierman & Son, took over the reigns of Hunts Point Terminal Market's exploratory public relations committee last year, a perfect storm was brewing: its vital role to millions of people in the New York Metropolitan area — long misunderstood — had reached a critical turning point, according to Fierman.

State and local government officials holding the purse strings were assessing the viability and importance of the Hunts Point Market, wielding the power to make fateful decisions on its future, whether to keep it in New York or move it to New Jersey; and competition was heating up with a new market in Philadelphia and non-union wholesale operations in the area taking business away.

It behooved merchants to put a new spin on the market's value to the public, in essence, rebrand its image to a broad audience outside of the produce industry's inner circle, explains Denise Goodman, vice president and secretary of M&R Tomato Distributors, and second vice president of Hunts Point Terminal Produce Cooperative Association. For the first time, the Hunts Point Market moved forward with a dynamic, consumer-centric promotional campaign, infused with a celebrity twist. It brought in national television personality Tony Tantillo, known as the "fresh grocer," to represent the market in ads and television spots strategically aired across the region.

"Launching the campaign last November at the inaugural New York Produce Show created a buzz," says Goodman, noting the benefits of bringing people on a tour of the market. "Until you come down here, the dynamic is hard to grasp. There's a passion and high energy that you don't get anywhere else. There's a premium to stay in New York, but there's a reason, and you get what you pay for."

The public relations strategy is gaining traction. "Our television



Tony Tantillo (above), the "fresh grocer," along with the first annual Knock Out Cancer boxing fundraiser, which will take place on July 23, are helping draw attention to Hunts Point.

commercials are getting good exposure," Goodman says, noting reoccurring spots on the popular New York weather channel and sports channel, educating varied audiences about the impact of the market, on which so many people depend.

"We're the largest supplier of fresh fruits and vegetables in this area," says Myra Gordon, executive director of the Hunts Point Terminal Produce Cooperative Association, noting that the market donates 4.5 million pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables every year to City Harvest and Food Bank, and merchants are extremely charitable, even in difficult economic times.

"The merchants on this market have amazing hearts," says Gordon, adding that the Market will be partnering with the American Cancer Society to host the first annual Knock Out Cancer boxing fundraiser on July 23. Net proceeds of the event will support the Society's efforts in research, advocacy, education and services.

"So much research points to the health benefits derived from eating produce, rich in vitamins and antioxidants. What better venue than Hunts Point Market to support this event and connect with a cause that touches everyone in some way?" Gordon asks, furthering the Market's goal to enhance symbiotic relationships.

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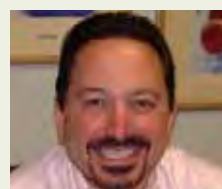
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Dana Taback, Joseph Fierman & Son Inc.



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Ralph Communale, E. Armata Inc.



Mark Alfisi, Juniors Produce Inc.



Craig Augone, Juniors Produce Inc.



Lori Hirsch DeMarco, LBD Produce



Peter Pelosi, A&J Produce Corp.



Cary Rubin, Rubin Bros. Produce Corp.

ment, pulls no punches. "I see this company doubling in the next six to eight years."

Morris Okun Inc., more than 100 years old, is branching out. "We're very excited about our expansion," says Roni Okun, director. "We took additional space on Row D, and the 4.5 units is a big jump for us. We enlarged our fruit department, full-fledged, which was another jump, and also brought tropicals in on Row D. We are trying to fulfill the needs of our customers and they like to be able to one-stop shop," she says.

Thomas Cignarella, president of Morris Okun, adds: "We're growing with the times.

Either you keep up or you're out of business." To that end, "Whatever help our customers need, we guide them in terms of conditions; if product is running well, they could do better buying an increased percentage from the Market. We advise buying a certain amount FOB and leaving some room for deals from the street; anything the retailer could buy FOB they could buy onsite," he says.

Nathel & Nathel, which supports the wide range of Hunts Point Market customers, accommodating special requests of the smaller chains, independents and restaurants, saw a gap in reaching the larger chains and national

retailers, who weren't coming to the Market, says Ira Nathel, president. "In the works for about 11 years, Nathel International opened last year, extending its wholesale operation to sell and supply the big retailers direct around the country," says Sheldon Nathel, president of Nathel International.

"The goal is to turn our relationships with growers in Peru and Chile into nationwide relationships, bringing together the international growers with U.S. retailers, and Nathel & Nathel can be the liaison between the two," continues Sheldon. "Our growers in Peru and Chile wanted me to take more product but I couldn't unless I went national. I'm learning the retail part of it, which is new to me as a wholesaler. Supplying the big guys of the world direct is a different business. In the end, our goal is to integrate international with our domestic business to supply national retailers year-round."

Opportunities are vast. However, Sheldon Nathel emphasizes, "We don't want to spread ourselves too thin, so we're taking it slow. We've worked hard to build respect and integrity for 90 years. It is important for us to always protect and strengthen our name and reputation."

For Sal Vacca, president of A.J. Trucco Inc., his partnership with vice president, Nick Pacia, has transformed the scope and reach of the company, allowing him to supply and service a varied customer base within Hunts Point Market, as well as going direct to large national retailers. And the company continues to hit



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Michael Martori of Martori Farms and Mishalin Modena of Growers Express/Green Giant



Chris and Chelsea Armata of E. Armata Inc.



Howard Ginsberg and John Stewart of A.J. Trucco Inc.

new plateaus, strategically extending its brand programs, launching several new products, with more in the pipeline.

A.J. Trucco Inc. brought in Chilean figs for the first time, the first company to import them to the U.S., Pacia says. "Now that Chile came into play, we can provide fresh figs all year, and basically close the gap on figs from California. I like the competitive challenge, and we've received good retail feedback."

Two new projects include WOW brand from Chile with new premium product packaging, first on kiwis, second blueberries, third apples, fourth grapes. "We loaded the first container of pomegranates for pilot tests. We're

aggressively pursuing product that reinforces our Chilean presence. Relationships are very important on the sourcing and distribution sides for success," Pacia emphasizes, noting that it took seven years to find the right grower relationship for its Kiwi Star brand, which has developed into a substantial volume program.

Shoring Up Safety And Adding Services

"Necessity is the mother of invention, and if backed into a corner, companies will find a plan to get out of it," says René Gosselin, operations manager at Coosemans New York, discussing proactive strategies companies are

exploring to hedge bets and be independent. "Maybe they're delivering direct, and have 50 trucks on the road," but for Coosemans New York, we don't deliver, so we depend on people coming to the Market. We grow because our neighbors grow, and even as competitors, we depend on each other as a co-op," he says, noting that the Coosemans family of companies gives Coosemans New York buying power."

Gosselin says food safety will be paramount to any industry strategy, adding that Coosemans continues to ramp up its HACCP and food safety programs. The importance of food safety and security stan-

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dards will only be increased with all the regulations coming down. “Federal rules will mandate more stringent procedures from the grower to distributor to secondary distributor to final retail destination,” he adds. “We don’t do outside deliveries, so once product leaves our facility, and if it is mishandled, it is out of our control,” he acknowledges. “This is where safety programs are going to extend.”

To gain additional command of its supply chain, last January, A&J Produce started

TJAMS Logistics, a truck brokerage company. “Logistics is a lot more complex than people realize,” says Jeffrey Stern, operations manager, “and the subsidiary makes our company move smoother. We wanted more control in real time, better flow of information, improved knowledge of where trucks were at all times, to monitor temperatures and ensure all product remains intact and the cold chain is not disrupted. We coordinate outside trucks; it’s a negotiation, and perish-



Mohammad Ramadan, buyer, and Artie Rosato of Albee Tomato Co. Inc.



Joe and Billy Fierman of Joseph Fierman & Son Inc.



Stefanie Katzman and Mario Andreani of S. Katzman Produce/Katzman Bery Corp.

ables are a different business, so establishing relationships becomes important. We’re the revolving door behind selling produce — get it here, get it picked up and get it transported to its destination. We keep it in the family here,” he says, “which gives our customers an extra level of trust.”

“Many companies consider transportation brokers a necessary evil and want to cut out the middleman,” says Paul Kazan, owner of Hunts Point-based Target Interstate, but the risk a truck broker assumes in this business is probably the most undervalued. Transportation has always been the stepchild, but its role is a vital and integral part in the supply chain, he says. “For financial protection, it is advantageous for companies to go through a broker because transportation is the weak link in the PACA 1934 Commodity Act, and it is not covered in the same way as other segments of the supply chain,” he claims. “Target has 5,000 active carriers in its system, with 200 trucks

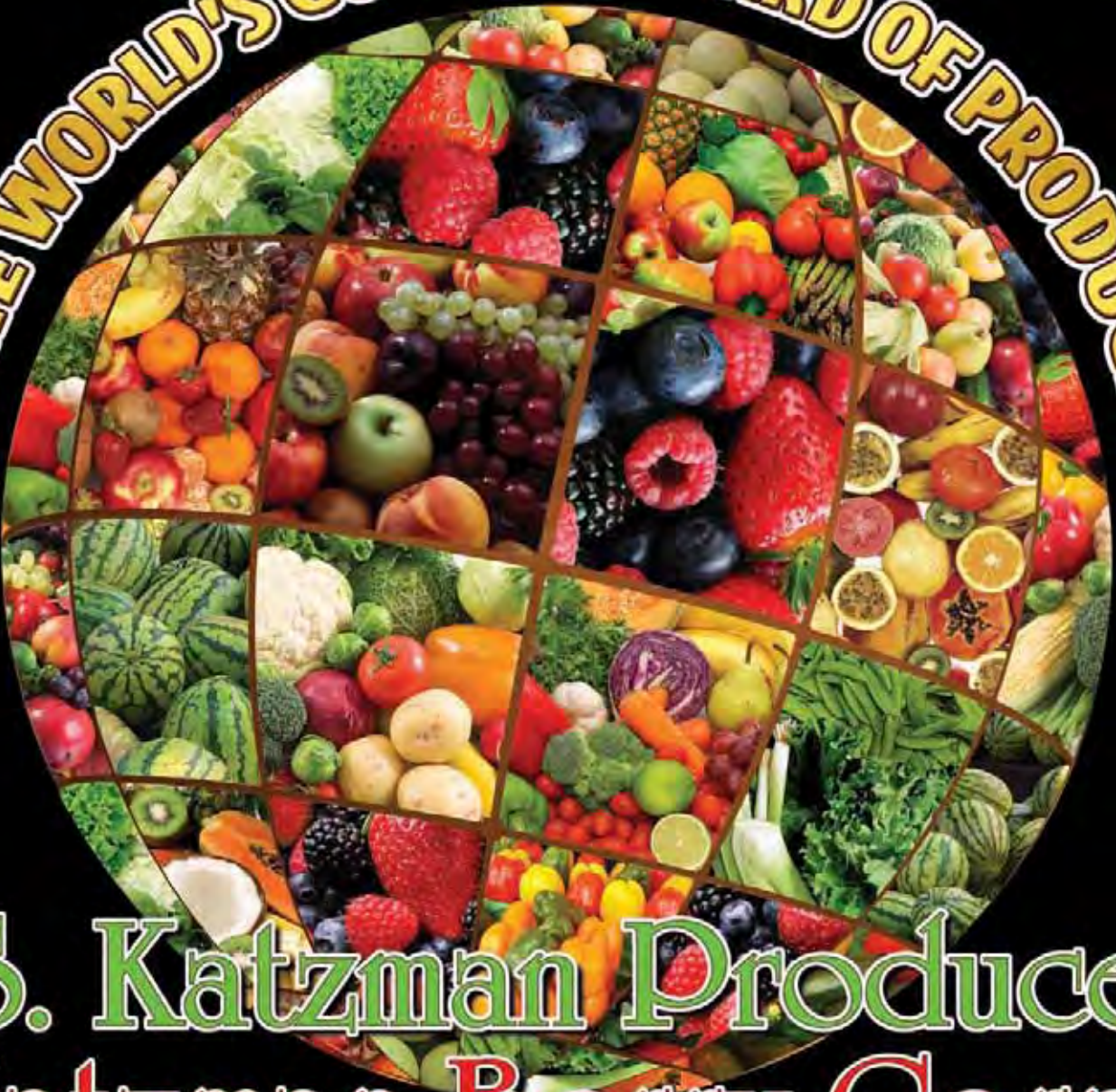
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Paul Armata, Chris Armata and John Acompora of E. Armata Inc.



Mike Cochran, Louie Langone and Richard Cochran of Robt. T. Cochran & Co Inc.



Eric Mitchnick, Rich Comunale and Herman Salvatierra of E. Armata Inc.

going back and forth on any given day, and works with the majority of vendors on the market," says Kazan.

To move supplies faster and to better service East Coast receivers, Hunts Point brokerage firm Top Katz opened a new operation in McAllen, TX. "Mexico is upgrading its infrastructure, making roads from Nogales, Arizona and South Mexico more feasible for East Coast retailers. It's much easier to bring products from South Mexico to McAllen," says Paul Manfre, general manager of sales and procurement at Top Katz noting, "We'll all still deal with Nogales; many suppliers have dual offices now. This is a 24-hour business, people are counting on us to predict the market and keep supplies fluid for shippers and incoming receivers," he continues. "Large chain stores have to commit early on advertising promotions and lose out on the value shop. Shortages and gluts happen here on the Market and retailers should take advantage of it."

Manfre contends many stores today act quickly on impulse buys; they want to be first on sale when the product is not great. They do

"As our expenses and customers' expenses have increased, there is less tolerance for fair quality. It is preferable to pay a little more and get top quality because it's easier to sell."

— Chris Armata, E. Armata Inc.

a disservice to the industry and to consumers. "If they moved produce when it had to be moved, gluts wouldn't last as long. This is a supply-and-demand market, and everything gets its turn."

Chris Armata, president of E. Armata Inc., says the market illustrates the perfect economic supply and demand model, with price fluctuations that ebb and flow based on numerous market conditions and variables. The Market is a tremendous aspect of this industry, moving huge volumes and a vast range of items and grades. There isn't anything you can't find here.

"As our expenses and customers' expenses have increased, there is less tolerance for fair quality. It is preferable to pay a little more and get top quality because it's easier to sell," Armata contends. That quality/value ratio

correlates back to the shipper base, "which is rightly concerned about protecting its money and getting paid. If you've earned a good reputation and are able to pay, you have an excellent chance of building strong relationships." Those relationships have helped E. Armata to broaden its services, product offerings and category depth. "Our customers that come to buy lettuce now add strawberries, and at the right price and quality, there's a good chance of selling everything," he says, pointing to the advantages of being full-line.

Team Efforts

"Competing with all these big guys requires resourcefulness, flexibility and a good sense of humor," says Toni Settanni, president of Albee Tomato Co. "During the historic blizzard last winter, I heard there were trucks on the market," she says, describing her travails driving from New Jersey on the treacherous icy roads. "If the Market is open I want to work," she says, adding, "When my salesman couldn't make it, I stayed here all night."

"I talk to everyone; I joke around with people. Sometimes you have to give to develop a relationship," she continues. One customer needed three skids of lemons, another wanted kale and collards. "I don't bring those in, but I do that for them. "Our thing is tomatoes, but if lettuce is good I'll fill in. I can move green squash and yellow squash. I'll keep onions here in case someone needs them, just to make it easier for customers," she says, noting, "I'll try anything, and if it doesn't move, I won't bring it in anymore."

A lot of small companies in Hunts Point Market can't afford the investments to keep up with the full-line distributors. "I like the line of





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Myra Gordon, Hunts
Point Terminal
Produce Cooperative
Market



Toni Settanni,
Albee Tomato Co
Inc.



Larry Schembri,
S. Katzman Produce/
Katzman Berry Corp.



Leo Fernandez,
Joseph Fierman &
Son Inc.



Matthew D'Arrigo,
D'Arrigo Bros. Co.
of New York

items I carry, but the people I deal with are my best assets," Settanni continues, describing how she visits the growers and goes to the packing houses to learn the nuances of the business. "When it is perishable, you have to do it right, and you have to treat your customers well."

Bucking the trends, Jim Renella, president of J. Renella Produce, remains the last hold out on the market to only carry a singular item —

seedless watermelons. He wants nothing to detract from his focused quality control. In fact, to inextricably cement his identity with his product, Renella decided to introduce his personally branded J. Renella watermelons. He explains, "I do a heck of a business, and when customers have a problem, we straighten it out. My customers trust me, and count on me to steer them right. If you pay less, you'll get less quality and a crummy box... 'Don't buy

today, wait until tomorrow. I'll have a better batch,' I'll tell my customers."

Renella certainly has developed a loyal customer base. A long-term independent buyer stopping by for his regular order calls out to Renella, "You've got the best watermelons on the market. How about adding honeydews?" Renella has no intention of expanding his product line. "I do one thing and it is working. When I'm out of quality product, I sit low. I don't sell to others on the market if I'm over because I can't know for sure how my watermelons will be handled, and my business is my name."

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Emblematic of the opportunity that has drawn so many to the Hunts Point Terminal Market, an unexpected new tenant, FresCo, decided to launch his company on Row B earlier this year. "I'm following my dreams," says Charlie DiMaggio, 34, FresCo's president. "I always wanted to be on the Market, since I was six or seven years old, accompanying my father, who had retail stores in Hells Kitchen and in Nassau County. I was born into it and I loved the action," he says.

DiMaggio gained experience working in the retail stores, purveying for restaurants and hotels, and taking on tough hours as a night salesman on the Market, where he entertained the idea of owning his own business one day. "Before moving into the market, we invested in state-of-the-art climate-controlled refrigeration with the most advanced software and video monitoring system to ensure food safety, traceability and quality," he says.

With the backing of his two best friends, his pursuit recently became a reality. "Hunts Point Market volume is like no other terminal market," he says. "I opened up with no customers; where else could you do that?"

Something For Everyone

From the newest tenant to the oldest tenant, some things remain constant. At Hunts Point Market, you can get what you want... not just peppers, but a choice of 30 pepper varieties, top quality product for the premium guys, stuff for the less expensive guys, excellent service, quick deliveries. There's

something for everybody; regional chains, specialty stores and independents, restaurants, street vendors... "It's a business where an immigrant can start up with \$500 and a truck," says Richard Cochran, president of Robt. T Cochran & Co., the oldest company on the Market, which his grandfather helped to build. "If you ask what we specialize in, I'd say a good deal, a quick sale and a quick payout," says Cochran's son Mike.

"We're here for the working man, specializing in service and small amounts of items for all the little restaurants, Mom & Pops, bodegas, small grocery stores and peddlers," says Louis "Junior" Augone, president of Juniors Produce. "We move two loads of bananas a day, but I've always done a full-service," he says, pointing to the big displays stacked high and overflowing.

"If we don't have the produce in house, we get it from other vendors; 70 percent from Hunts Point Market, Augone continues. "I'm a purveyor, or I take stuff they can't sell. They love it," he notes. "Traffic flows like clockwork... at night the Afghans arrive, then the Turks, after that the Dominicans, and then the Koreans are here... 10:00, 11:00, 12:00... We cater to everyone and we're always busy. Mario Andreani of S. Katzman comes by to read the traffic from here. He says if he doesn't see enough people, he's worried!"

Augone grabs an order ticket as the next customer waiting his turn reels off numerous items he wants in single-digit quantities. Skipping the calculator, Augone quickly adds up his handwritten list in his head and hands the

NEW YORK MARKET PROFILE



Lenore Rios, Paul Manfre, Jimmy Corn and Jason Gelbaum (seated) of Top Katz Brokers LLC



Daniel Fichera, Nick Pacia, Sal Vacca and Tony Biondo of A.J. Trucco, Inc.



Guy Buonomo of Morris Okun Inc. and Peter and John Levantino of Giunta's Meat Farms

receipt to the customer, while picking up a ringing phone in his other hand.

Ciro Poricelli, vice president of Jerry Poricelli Produce, is also well-versed in this juggling act, still doing things the old fashioned way, self-sufficient with a stack of work order sheets at his side, handling 70 different items on any given day. "When my father started with cilantro, he might get an order of five boxes a day; now we do 300 to 400 boxes of cilantro a day. Our herb business is phenomenal," he says.

In fact, it hasn't been easy the past few months. Poricelli is considering bringing in a salesman to lessen the workload, but realizes it will involve computerizing his old system. As a close-knit family business, "I need to find someone I can trust and who understands the way I work. I've got my own methods and do everything by hand. I'm out front with the

customers, and I don't want to risk losing that personal touch," he says. "I'm maxed out with space — at full capacity — which is a good sign," he says. "I always want to expand to satisfy my customers," he says of opportunities with a possible new market, "but I know that comes with additional headaches!"

Lori Hirsch DeMarco, president of LBD Produce, and on the market 34 years, can relate. "We're third-generation. My mother was in the business and inspired me with a

hard work ethic, understanding how important this market is to the livelihood of so many people," she says. "This is our established home. Our company is still doing well and we're still busy. We would really like to stay here. We're a family business. Hopefully, my brother's children or my children would have a future here."

Hunts Point blends well-established, seasoned sales people, some still working off handwritten ledgers and paper tickets and

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younger generations infusing modernity and fresh perspective, a contrast of small and large companies, from niche to full-line competitors. Whether inseparable friends through the generations or just situational confidants in tough times, they are part of a unique and dynamic environment necessary to create a seamless supply chain in order to meet the needs of an ever-evolving, ethnically diverse and demanding customer base.

According to Peter Pelosi, vegetable buyer

at A&J Produce, "Hunts Point has a captive audience, steady customers we rely on, and a flow of new ones. It's a nice ballet... we move product in and out; it helps buyers, who always stay fresh and count on us to keep them lean, lowering exposure, and there's always a deal on something here. If you're a good opportunity-buyer, you can find value here everyday if you're on the ball and shopping on a regular basis."

Pelosi speaks from experience as a produce



Donny Ng and Donald Conyers of Krisp-Pak Sales Corp.



Stefanie and Steve Katzman of S. Katzman Produce/Katzman Berry Corp.



John Bonomolo, Bobby Adhin and Leo Weiler of A&J Produce Corp.

buyer for eight years at Gristedes, the landmark New York regional supermarket chain, before joining A&J Produce last year. Big receivers can buy 80 to 85 percent FOB in order to stay flexible, save 15 to 20 percent for fill-ins. "For Gristedes, I bought FOB and walked the Market, trying to play the numbers game, and capitalizing on the Market if tight," he says, noting buyers can use the Market whether procuring one package or a load.

Bang For The Buck: Who's Getting It?

Chains thought they could do better sourcing everything themselves direct. "As bigger chains, that philosophy — a bottom-line, number-crunching mentality — hasn't worked out," A&J's Pelosi contends. "You're not always getting the best prices if only dealing with six shippers, regardless of scale," he says, noting Gristedes, which first opened its doors in 1888, is a private company where there are not

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so many layers of management.

"While big retailers have a lot of access to shippers across the country, the smaller chains and independents don't have storage facilities or warehouses, so we help them," says Pelosi. "Being such a big market, firms generally find specialty items a normal receiver wouldn't load."

Often times, customers avail themselves of market expertise when faced with supply disruptions. For example, when prices of Romaine lettuce went through the roof, Just

Salads, a restaurant chain in New York City, didn't know what to do because the product was a critical component on its menu, according to Jeff Young, a buyer for A&J, noting the company supplies the chain with all of their vegetables. "One of the owners, Nick Kenner, called, 'What can we do to reduce costs?'" recalls Young. "I suggested mixing lettuces, since Spanish lettuce red leaf was a significantly better value. Not only did the chain reduce costs by 50 percent, the



Paul and Evan Kazan of Target Interstate Systems



Sal Vacca of A.J. Trucco Inc. and John McAleavey of the Eastern Produce Council



Hannu Huttula, Jeffrey Stern and Joseph Bonomolo of TJAMS Logistics

new salad mix was a hit and the chain kept it on the menu."

Many chain stores don't use the market to full advantage, according to Joe Palumbo, managing member of Top Banana, and first vice president of the Hunts Point Terminal Produce Cooperative Association. "They come to the market only when the market is screaming. They call when short, or when they over-order. The proof is in the pudding if they're not doing well," he says, adding, produce is not like Ivory soap, where you have a slot for so many bars each week.

Waldbaum's buyers used to walk the market daily and could move on a dime. "When Peter Levantino [owner of Giunta's Meat Farms, a six-store Long Island chain] gives me an order, through snow storms and blizzards, he's going to get what he ordered and it will be right," he says. Levantino hedges his bets procuring half his produce direct and half at Hunts Point Market.

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"Look at Peter's prices. He shops the market and does it right. If eggplants are high he buys one skid; if squash is cheaper he buys more and moves it around [see retail profile on page 130]. Customers use the market as their warehouse, affording flexible buying with no shrink," he adds.

According to Cary Rubin, vice president of sales at Rubin Bros. Produce Corp., "It's no secret bigger accounts move toward direct

buying. All you can do is be there and service them when they need you. It's easy for large shippers to sell direct; but in this Metropolitan area, smaller retailers represent the majority." The company has an exclusive partnership with Dole Fresh Vegetables in the Hunts Point Market to distribute its national branded salads to stores Dole wouldn't be sourcing directly.

"Dealing with the biggest grower is an avenue for us to get product on a short basis.

On short markets where chains can't cover their order, I can choose to sell them some of my own inventory," says Rubin, adding, "We have certain relationships with big chain store retailers, where it's all about supply and demand, and some can only fill shorts with the same brands." At the same time, chain store business remains a low percentage of the company's sales. "We don't depend on it. At the end of the day, I'm still a wholesaler."

Rubin Bros. is building its branded offerings. "We'll take on any type of branded product that doesn't conflict with Dole packaged salads," he emphasizes, adding, "We started handling retail packaged Azumaya tofu packs, Artisan lettuce from Tanimura & Antle — conventional but in clam shells — and Zeigler's apple cider, a higher end brand. These products have no affect on Dole packaged salads," he says, noting, "We advertise their salads on our trucks and trailers and in conjunction with them use their advertising slogans."

Long Term Relationships

It takes time to develop relationships; they don't happen over night. "Our arrangement with Dole was over 20 years in the making,

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(From left) Casey Bassetti, Lucky Varra, Doug Turner, Lubi Valdez, Red Blossom, Salinas, California

NEW YORK MARKET PROFILE

years of nurturing and being a true partner. They would call upon us to help them, and they would supply us with goods," says Marc Rubin, president/director of Rubin Bros. Produce Corp. "We handle pretty much every product they have and maintain their pricing structure. We strive for the upper echelon, highest quality product, which equates back to shippers and the relationships we've built over three generations."

Branding is becoming more of an issue, but

it doesn't control the industry. "A lot of products are sold in bulk, but it is still important to have a good shipper, recognizing what we put out really speaks for itself," says Cary Rubin, adding, "Buyers are savvy."

First and foremost, shippers are customers and partners. "Our suppliers will tell us gray areas of the market and invite us into them. To help us move their product, we team up for the long-term," says Matthew D'Arrigo, vice president and third generation at D'Arrigo Bros.



Thomas and Steve Cignarella of Morris Okun Inc.



Thomas and John Tramutola of A&J Produce Corp.



Guy and Guy Jr. Buonomo of Morris Okun Inc.

Co. of New York Inc., as well as co-president of the Hunts Point Terminal Produce Cooperative Association.

"I'd estimate we have 50 shippers who have done business at least 30 years with us," D'Arrigo says. "Hunts Point Market, like New York City, is unique and important, vibrant and thriving because of the amount of customers and the incredible buying power; that's why we're different from virtually every other market. Hunts Point Market is a total reflection of the market we supply, possibly the most diverse population in the world, with every country represented," says D'Arrigo, adding, "We are a dynamic hub, and while we compete against each other, we remain an entity. What happens to Hunts Point Market will have a ripple affect across the New York region." **pb**

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New York City's Greenmarket Program Lets Local Produce Shine

PRODUCE BUSINESS sits down with Michael Hurwitz, director of GrowNYC, the city's Greenmarket Program, to discuss keeping things fresh, local and honest.

BY MIRA SLOTT



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PRODUCE BUSINESS: *Could you describe the scope of the Greenmarket program? What are the rules about who can sell and what they can sell?*

MICHAEL HURWITZ: Our farming region is 250 miles north, 120 miles south, 170 miles east and west. If you come from that region, that's your first way for eligibility. You also have to produce what you sell. We're not looking to have resellers in the program. If you're a baker, we have criteria — a point system — for eligibility; you need to use local eggs, local dairy, local sweeteners, a minimum 15 percent local grains and then we'll award extra points for using Fair Trade products and local items, if a farmer is also baking.

As far as processed foods, pickled and preserved is OK, and you don't need to be a farmer to bring those in, but they have to be locally processed in our region. For prepared foods like salsa, you have to grow the defining ingredients.

We don't have land requirements, but we don't want folks to rent lands that others have planted and taken care of, but that may change with perennials.

PB: *How many producers participate in Greenmarket farmer's markets, and are there any limitations on size?*

MH: Right now, there are 235 producers

selling in about 54 farmer's markets. We focus on small farms. International corporations or farm cooperatives are not allowed in the market.

PB: *Do you have a definition of what constitutes a small farm?*

MH: We don't actually. We're not looking to welcome Perdue into the market, or producers owned by big import/export companies. Small family farms is a relative term; for Greenmarket producers, the average farm is 80 acres, but we have some as small as one acre and some as large as 1,200 acres.

PB: *What procedures do you follow to make sure all vendors are following Greenmarket rules?*

MH: We have a pretty strict enforcement regiment, from checking inventories at market to on-farm visits, requiring crop plans to compare what is being sold and maps of fields to identify exactly where products are grown. It involves a lot of work and a lot of resources.

PB: *How often do you visit the farms?*

MH: It depends on the farm, and whether or not we have found any problems or violations. We make general visits at least every two years and based on the situation, follow ups could take place four or five times.

NEW YORK MARKET PROFILE

PB: What happens in the event of a violation?

MH: It ranges from fines to expulsion.

PB: How often do you find violations?

MH: Out of 235 producers, I'd say we'd find one or two where there's a problem.

PB: On your Web site, some farmers list they sell Mexican specialty vegetables.

Are these being imported from Mexico?

MH: No. These farmers are growing Mexican products here, not in Mexico. We are in a number of predominantly Latino communities, so there are increased demands for certain items that producers are learning to grow locally.

PB: Nationwide, reports reveal fraud taking place at farmer's markets, or



PHOTO COURTESY OF GROWNYC

sellers bringing in product that is not locally grown. It becomes most obvious when a product is being marketed as locally grown when it is not even in season there... Why do think Greenmarket has such a good record?

MH: There has been such an explosion of farmer's markets in the past few years. What's happening is that people are referring to something as a farmer's market when there are resellers, and the rules and missions are different.

If you examined several hundred locally driven farmer's markets with missions like ours, you might find a handful of farmers breaking the rules. There will always be people who don't like to play by the rules and put greed ahead of honesty, but eventually the law or karma will catch up to them. At Greenmarket, we're strict and have integrity in what we say. That's why New York is so supportive of the farmers.

PB: Do you receive state or city subsidies? How do you fund the program?

MH: We are mostly self-sufficient through farmer fees. We do receive some grants, and run a food stamp program in the farmer's markets, as well as a youth education and training program.

PB: Could you elaborate?

MH: We work with over 5,000 kids a year; they come from schools and summer camps, and we have a program through Teachers

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College at Columbia University with activities ranging from cooking classes to scavenger hunts. In schools, we also have seasonal and nutritional curricula as part of art classes, and our 12-part educational series from seed to plate, which involves hands-on instruction in cooking, field trips to a farm and visits to the market. Farmers come to their classes as well.

PB: What projects are in the pipeline?

MH: We're in the process of expanding our wholesale farmer's market with a facility in the Bronx, where farmers can move product down here. We're identifying property and looking for co-tenants for inside the facility, and farmers who want to sell on a wholesale basis. We'll have farmers selling out of trucks in the parking lot, and those who might want to rent storage for products.

PB: What do you do in terms of monitoring food safety?

MH: We require everything required by

law on food safety. We often advocate for food safety and work with the Department of Agriculture to create a safe marketplace based on science and safety rather than arbitrary requirements.

PB: What inspired you to become involved in Greenmarket?

MH: I've been doing this for 11 years and in

my current position for a little over four years. I was a social worker and had a partner that was a farmer. I started a 2.5-acre urban farm in Brooklyn and learned side-by-side with the kids. I became interested in helping farmers get their products in restaurants and creating marketing opportunities for them, developing and working with farmer's markets in that pursuit. **pb**

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Keeping It Real At **Bar Pitti**

Bonjourno to produce: keeping it classic, simple and real.

BY MIRA SLOTT



PHOTO COURTESY OF IRA JESSE PFEFFER

Owner Giovanni Tognozzi wants the fresh produce to reflect the familiar, pure and unfussy ambience of this classic trattoria evocative of Florence, Italy — but 35 years ago, before his native country was overrun by touristy commercialization. “We’re nothing fancy; anyone hungry is welcome; there’s no elite attitude here,” he says of this bustling, rustic-style eatery in Manhattan’s trendy West Village,

which only takes cash and no reservations. You’ll spot the rich and famous waiting their turn like everyone else for a cozy, unadorned wooden table, featuring today’s fresh, in-season specials jotted down on old-fashioned chalkboards. Some regulars have remained loyal to certain tried-and-true Bar Pitti recipes on an intentionally limited, dependable and modestly priced menu since it opened its doors and warm-weather alfresco dining on August 29, 1992. “We are not the chicest, but we are

simple and real. This is home cooking, with genuine traditional recipes and choice ingredients,” he says.

“We don’t disguise the product, so it has to be the right one — the best quality — or we wait to make that dish,” he says. No-frills Eggplant Parmigiano remains “a No. 1 favorite because we start with a nice premium eggplant. Another hit is the *Taglierini all’Empolese*, an Italian tradition with thin home-made pasta, artichokes, leeks, garlic, olive oil

NEW YORK FOODSERVICE PROFILE

and a touch of tomato.” Baby artichokes are the key to the dish, he contends. “They must be the small tender ones, my favorites being Ocean Mist loose baby artichokes, which can be very hard to find.” Contrary to the big artichoke, the beauty is you can eat all of it including the heart.

Giovanni, [he insists on keeping the exchange on a congenial, first name basis] is ultra-particular when it comes to his produce. “*Bonjourno*,” Giovanni greets his Hunts Point Market delivery friends on an early weekday morning wheeling in boxes and boxes of fresh vegetables. He admires the heavenly aromas, now complementing the steaming espressos he’s been brewing in the background for an energizing lift as he scurries around readying the trattoria for its first lunch customers. A flurry of discussion ensues on the size of the spinach leaves, a critical issue for the success of a dish he’s planning. “*Bravo*,” for the jumbo garlic, he says, inquiring about the possibility of bringing in more oyster mushrooms and French green beans for the holiday weekend. “We’ll talk — me and Charles Doria [tenured broker on the Market...],” says Giovanni.

“Charles picks up everything I need from Hunts Point Market. I have complete confidence in him. He knows me and gets the right items at the right time at the right prices, and he’ll send them back if they’re not right.” Giovanni used to walk the Market himself. “It’s not easy. It’s a rough job,” he says, adding, “I don’t go any more because I’m tired. If I had the time and I could, I’d personally shop the Market again because I enjoy picking up what I want at the moment.” But Charles knows the ins and outs. “He’s buying five cases, not 50, and if need be, we can wait until tomorrow. We do recipes for what we have at that moment and what we have in season. We can be selective. We’re waiting for the windows and tailor our plan based on what is fresh and best quality,” he explains.

Giovanni procures almost all of his vegetables from Hunts Point Market, except for Puntarelle, a member of the Chicory family also known as Rome, imported direct from Italy, for its wild chicory salad. “We can get it from California, and while it looks quite similar, it’s a different flavor. We can substitute arugula and it’s still good, but not the same thing, so we wait,” he notes.

Bar Pitti’s small menu can change daily, but some dishes customers count on. “If, by the



PHOTOS COURTESY OF IRA JESSE PFEFFER

afternoon, we run out of one thing we can add something else. Certain customers love the calf’s liver with olive oil, garlic and sage. Others the oxtail, rack of veal, and we always have the organic chicken breast, which has a good flavor,” he says. At Bar Pitti, you won’t find many main courses. “I really don’t do main courses. I’m more for the pastas, and antipastas,” he says, highlighting a lobster, crab-meat ravioli and homemade *Pappardelle alla Fiesolana*, flat, large pasta with smoked bacon, cream, tomatoes and Parmigiano. “A wine ragout with broccoli rabe by Andy Boy is good and healthy, and always the best quality.”

Some people time their visit for the Burrata, “the special mozzarella variety from Italy that we only have once a week. It’s a creamy quality with a wonderful flavor that I prefer over Buffalo mozzarella,” he says, as do many Bar Pitti converts.

“I would say I know a good 75 percent of my customers, especially in the winter time,” he says. In the summer, Giovanni still recognizes the faces but there are more foreigners, a



Above: Baby artichokes, leeks, garlic and a touch of tomato are ingredients in Bar Pitti’s Taglierini all’Empolese.

Inset: Giovanni Tognozzi

growing number now with the Euro-to-dollar exchange rate, he explains, adding, “The European country that brings us the most customers is France,” but of course Bar Pitti attracts many Italians as well. In January and February, the temperatures can drop below freezing and alas, the regulars wait too long in the cold, Giovanni laments, but they continue to come. In New York City, there are myriad restaurants all over, and New Yorkers always want to try new things. “Then what happens, one week later,” says Giovanni, “They’re right back here again.” **pb**

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Veritas

Chef Hazen pulls from his produce roots to wow customers and critics.

BY MIRA SLOTT



PHOTO COURTESY OF GEERT TEUWEN

At Veritas, the Farmer's Market Tasting changes regularly, and is inspired by what is available at the Union Square Greenmarket.

When acclaimed Executive Chef Sam Hazen took over last year to revitalize and reposition the high-end, white-glove restaurant, he looked at why this once shining culinary star and wine destination had lost its way, becoming better known as exorbitantly pricey, snobby and aloof.

Chef Hazen determined the key to restoring its esteemed reputation meant going

back to his roots; employing an inviting and relatable concept that celebrates his immersion growing up in his family's vibrant restaurant business enveloped by wonderful cooks and incredible food; and marrying 31 years ago into a family, "where gardening was just as important as cooking to my family," reaping access to the freshest, most succulent produce.

"I'd go to my father-in-law's acres of organic test gardens with salt and pepper in my pocket, pull vegetables out of the ground and eat them;

run to pick the first ripe corn husk, minutes later drop it in a boiling pot of water for the sweetest taste possible," he recalls. It was very exciting for me, pulling leaks from raised beds nurtured with solar heat, cultivating Shitake mushrooms from oak logs, teaching my son to grow garlic..."

These sensory, organic experiences have helped guide Chef Hazen through his culinary journey to always stay grounded and true to the ingredients. In many ways, the focus on the

NEW YORK FOODSERVICE PROFILE

simplicity of a perfectly harvested vegetable contrasts the complexity and grandiosity of his illustrious career — from the Culinary Institute of America to tenures at Cote Basque, Quilted Giraffe, Quartorze, Le Gavroche, Cascabel,

“I’m excited to get back to my roots to do the kind of cooking I enjoy, going to the Greenmarket right down the street, and taking my time with the menu every day. I surround myself with people who have the same ideas about food as I do.” — Chef Sam Hazen



Chef Sam Hazen poses with one of the 3,000 bottles of wine offered at the restaurant.

and Tavern on the Green. Yet, Chef Hazen may be best known for his innovative development of Tao New York and Tao Las Vegas. At least until now with Veritas — his reinvented contemporary American gem was recently rewarded with a coveted three-star review by respected *New York Times* critic, Sam Sifton.

“I’ve worked in restaurants that do thousands of covers a week to now 500 covers a week at most, where I can thrive on attention to detail, driven by top quality products,” says Chef Hazen. “My mantra: Buy the best ingredients. I’ve always said cheap is expensive.”

“I’m excited to get back to my roots to do the kind of cooking I enjoy, going to the Greenmarket right down the street, and taking my time with the menu every day. I surround myself with people who have the same ideas about food as I do. There are people in the kitchen that have been with me 14 years, and others that worked with me at Tao.” Chef Hazen points to a valued, long-term relationship with Michael Muzyk, president at Baldor Specialty Foods. “I trust Mike dearly. When I was at Cote Basque, Mike would send a list everyday; what’s grown locally and what’s the freshest, and we continue to drive our dishes from that,” he says.

“When I was asked to come to Veritas, I wanted to figure out why it was struggling,” he



PHOTOS COURTESY OF GEERT TELUWEN

explains. “I noticed the old chef was creating complex, unfamiliar dishes that people didn’t understand. There was a need to make food more approachable; everyone could identify with a simply cooked piece of fish or seasonal greenmarket vegetables.

Capturing this way of thinking, Veritas features a Farmer’s Market Tasting plate inspired by Union Square Greenmarket that changes every week. “Chef de Cuisine, Alexander Williamson, goes to the Greenmarket Thursday or Friday to see what’s available and we plan the dish for the following week,” says Chef Hazen, noting that he was working on a ramp flan with pickled ramps, ragout of fava beans, morels, roasted purple and orange carrots, and also roasted ramps.

“Customers appreciate the Market dishes we put together,” he continues. In that light, Chef Hazen has fashioned a refined yet accessible menu, bringing food back to its roots, he

explains, referencing a beet dish in three different components; raw, cut into spaghetti strands, flavored with mustard oil and pistachio; a beet hotpot cooked in fata paper roasted with beet juice truffle oil, truffle juice; and goat cheese gratin with foreign vinegar and olive oil, incorporating bulls blood micro greens from the tops of the beets.

While Veritas is known for its exceptional wine collection of more than 3,000 wines, people would say, “We can’t get out of here without spending \$300 or \$400 for wine,” according to Chef Hazen. “Now, we’ve



created wines of value, an extensive choice of bottles under \$100. We’re not in it to make money but to have the best pairings,” he continues. “Our head sommelier, Ruben Sanz Ramiro, works with us. He and I often talk about the menu for the table. When it’s a wine-driven table, I recommend the food, and for a food-driven table, he’s my driving force on what to pair,” says Chef Hazen, adding, “We create an *amuse* for each VIP table,” such as straight carrot juice, roasted carrots, fava and himachi.”

VIP tables aside, Chef Hazen introduced a less costly a la carte menu, wine-friendly small plates and bar snacks. “People were sitting at the bar drinking, but not eating,” he acknowledges. “We shaped a bar menu that connects with our customers.” In the spirit of Chef Hazen’s new approach, fan favorites include duck fat French fries, and a prime hamburger served rare with Vidalia sweet onions — food everyone understands. **pb**

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Giunta's Meat Farms

Buying agility and smart produce deals capture a diverse customer base.

BY MIRA SLOTT



John and Peter Levantino, with Philip Giunta.

Giunta's Meat Farms, a growing six-store Long Island chain, runs like a well-oiled operation, fueled by strong revenues created by fresh produce sales. Masterfully driven in a competitive field by co-owners Peter Levantino and Philip Giunta, this 30,000 square-foot store stakes its claim on winning the favor of ethnically diverse customers. A produce guru, Peter Levantino honed his skills, agility and passion as a broker for 19 years on the Hunts Point

Market, in the Bronx, NY. Now, Levantino capitalizes on the elasticity of doing half his buying direct and half on the Market to maximize availability, value and price.

"Fast-turning produce makes the stores work," says Levantino, walking the sprawling produce department, which spans one-third of the Farmingdale, NY location; other fresh perishables account for the sizable balance. "We're not fooling around. It's a major commitment," he says, adding, "Three carts can fit in an aisle." Levantino plans to expand the Farm-

ingdale store, now in its second year, by taking over a neighboring vacant unit in the shopping center. Another Giunta's Meat Farms will be opening in Holbrook, Long Island, within a year or so, he adds.

"In produce, we can compete with the bigger chains. As long as we have the right price, we sell it," says Levantino. "Diversifying gives me a little edge. If I can't get product direct myself, I find it at Hunts Point," he says, noting his willingness to try anything new he discovers.



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Undetected and unexpected, Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA) is claiming our youth. Cardiovascular disease is the second leading medical cause of death in children and adolescents in the United States. Data estimates that 1 in 50 high schools have a SCA in a student on school grounds each year. Affected youth usually appear healthy and normal...until they have an arrest. The good news is that early detection is possible, heart conditions are treatable and young lives can be saved. Knowledge of the observations and actions that can make the difference between life and death are key to a successful outcome.

Early detection is crucial. The Louis J. Acompora Memorial Foundation promotes the early detection of heart conditions in youth through heart screenings. Frequently, the warning signs and symptoms of a heart condition in youth go undetected.

Most occurrences of SCA in youth occur in public places. The increased availability of publicly accessible automated external defibrillators (AEDs) in schools and school-sponsored athletic events will dramatically increase the probability that youth and adults alike will survive a sudden cardiac arrest. Knowing and properly executing the critically time-urgent links of the Cardiac Chain-of-Survival can help save the life of someone in SCA.

In June of 2002, Governor George Pataki of New York signed Louis' Law, which requires AEDs in all New York public schools. To date 56 lives have been saved as a direct result of this law in New York public schools. Each time a vibrant, seemingly healthy child suffers a Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA), the Louis J. Acompora Memorial Foundation mission of protecting youth from SCA and preventable Sudden Cardiac Death (SCD) becomes even more critical. We know it happens and we need to collectively assure others realize it by sharing our Mission and Vision.

1. Early Recognition of Sudden Cardiac Arrest

- Collapsed and unresponsive
- Seizure like activity
- Gasping, gurgling, snoring or labored breathing noises

2. Early Access to 9-1-1

- Confirm unresponsiveness
- Call 9-1-1- and follow emergency dispatchers instructions
- Call any onsite Emergency responders

3. Early CPR

- Begin cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) immediately

4. Early Defibrillation

- Immediately retrieve and use an automated external defibrillator(AED) as soon as possible to restore the heart to its normal rhythm

5. Early Advance Care

- Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Responders begin advanced like support including additional resuscitative measures and transfer to a hospital.

THESE STEPS WILL SAVE A LIFE PLEASE TAKE THE TIME TO KNOW THEM AND LEARN CPR.

Contact the Louis J. Acompora Memorial Foundation for more information

www.LA12.org

NEW YORK RETAIL PROFILE



“Our customers can buy as much produce as they want at the right price, and with the economy so volatile, most people are dependent on price,” says Levantino’s son John, the chain’s supervisor. “We’re all about perishables — produce, meat, seafood, deli...We can’t compete on water and coke with the supermarket chains. We work on very low percentages with perishables to win,” he says.

Every Monday to Thursday, the father-son team scopes out Hunts Point beginning at 5:00 a.m. “As the Market winds down, we hit five or six of our retail stores, finishing up at the warehouse in Oakdale, to assess and compare what’s coming in direct to ensure it’s priced correctly. We make all the prices together,” John continues. “I love working with my father. We have a good, close-knit relationship and can always trust each other. It’s a family business,” he notes, adding, “my brother handles dry groceries and all the complaints!”

Consumer feedback, however, is overwhelmingly positive, and for good reason. The produce department breaks out highly customized sections devoted to different ethnic cultures and tastes, filled with exotic varieties of fruits and vegetables that are cross-merchandised and tailored to accommodate daily needs, as well as special holiday requests. “Some customers say it feels like they’re in a foreign country due to the unique mix of products,” says John, pointing to the kohlrabi, appreciated by Arab Muslims and African immigrants. “We used to cater primarily to Italians, but now we try to have all the vegetables and fruits for every ethnic group, with many cultures making frequent shopping trips several times a week for fresh produce. That’s why we do a lot of business; anything we can sell, we try,” he says,

“We bring in a substantial amount of local product out of Long Island and New Jersey direct from farms. If it’s the right price and good quality, we take it. We go to the farms to pick up product and certain farms deliver to us. Anytime local farmers have availability, we buy it, and whatever people ask our manager for, we try to get.” — Peter Levantino

noting success with red and green dandelions.

An Indian customer shared a recipe that inspired a display of Indian eggplant. “I work with all the customers to understand what they want,” John continues. “A Muslim customer requested Medjool dates, so now we carry them packaged specially for different holidays. We have a lot of Jewish customers, so we set up large table displays for the holidays, incorporating items such as black radishes, horseradish, parsley and dill, and cross-merchandising with the special meats we carry.”

A vast tropical section includes regular sales of 20 to 30 items such as aloe leaf, *malanga coco*, casaba bread, *batata* (Spanish potato) sour oranges, yampi, white *yautia*, tropical chayotes and water coconut. “We have everything to cater to each customer, and while we may not carry as much of a specialty item, we keep it there, diversifying as we go along,” John says, adding, unusual items are not difficult to purvey because of strongly developed supplier connections.

At the same time, it is paramount not to lose sight of the critical role the value proposition plays to the retailer’s strategic positioning. “We tried organic, carrying an organic salad here or there, but it didn’t pay off. At premium prices, our customers really don’t want it,” says John. Deals abound in the produce department. For example, apples are 99-cents a pound for every variety in the store. “We used to do 88-cents a pound for one apple variety and \$1.69 for another, but customers like that they can choose any kind they want for the same low price,” or they can opt for a large prepackaged bag of apples priced at \$1.99, “a value almost impossible to find elsewhere,” he contends.

“We get a lot of Florida citrus direct,” Peter Levantino notes, justifying his ability to offer four mangos for \$2, but “we bring in a substantial amount of local product out of Long Island and New Jersey direct from farms. If it’s the right price and good quality, we take it,” he continues. “We go to the farms to pick up product and certain farms deliver to us. Anytime local farmers have availability, we buy it, and whatever people ask our manager for,

we try to get.”

“In the summer,” adds John, “we sell so much produce coming in bins from the local farmers and people love it. A few farmers we deal with grow big stalks of broccoli and cauliflower triple the size of the typical kind, and we sell a ton of that. It’s totally different and our customers can’t wait for it.”

Some of the big supermarket chains will just throw product out if it’s not perfect, but Giunta’s Meat Farms has customers that really appreciate a bargain. “We put a reduced package out, too. It’s a little less quality and consumers understand this, but we want to offer things for everyone.”

On the other hand, “When raspberries are \$60 a case, we won’t bring them in. We’ll wait until we get a good value and won’t step into that world,” says Peter.

“When we started stem tomatoes, we got the best quality from a broker in Canada. We saw some that were cheaper, but we decided to stick with the better quality and sell at the same price, and just make it up on volume,” says John.

Another bargain is the extensive selection of assorted fresh-cut fruit and vegetable packages, which are all prepared in the back of the store and sold at tremendous values. “We incorporate seven varieties of fruit, including a selection of more costly berries not often found in the manufactured versions, which we sell for \$10.66, compared to a higher-end competitor’s, which is not any better in quality for \$35,” contends John.

Giunta Meat Farms translates its reputation into its own label, positioned as high quality for much less money. “We’re getting into our own brands for produce,” notes Peter. With prices so low on the fresh-cut in-house produce, a labor-intensive business, turning a profit could seem challenging. “It’s a volume business. That’s how we keep prices down,” he says. “We don’t want any of our customers to be disappointed, so we keep the prices low, but in the end, it’s a perishable business so we have to keep it moving. That’s how we have a successful business.” **pb**

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Manhattan Fruit Exchange

Hot-Off-The Press: A Food Lover's Paradise

BY MIRA SLOTT



Chefs, celebrities and food aficionados from all parts of New York City and surrounding areas flock to this Chelsea Market flagship, but the Manhattan Fruit Exchange also cultivates a fan club across the United States, as well as an international following. All this fame and attention might have gone to the owners' heads, inflating egos, but nothing could be further from the truth. Three unpretentious, relentlessly hard-working, down-to-earth

brothers, Delio, Vito and Louie Latilla, have toiled to build what, in its early stages, seemed a crapshoot for success, they say, crediting fortuitous timing, entrepreneurial risk-taking, and a collaboration of individual skills, experience and personalities, replete with a good dose of humor since its launch in the mid-1990s.

And the formula has paid off, exemplified by a glowing review in the 2011/2012 Zagat *New York City Food Lover's Guide*:

"If it grows in the earth, they'll have it" at this Chelsea Market "cornerstone," a "premier"

purveyor of an "awesome" variety of "beautiful" fruits and veggies that's well stocked with "exotics" you'd have "trouble finding elsewhere," not to mention "assorted cheeses," candy, nuts and other "goodies;" that "they only accept cash" is a "downside," but nonetheless, it's "hard to shop anywhere else" given the "dirt-cheap" prices.

In case that "downside" tainted an otherwise perfect appraisal, Manhattan Fruit Exchange now accepts charge cards, says Vito, the merchandising expert, who oversees the

NEW YORK RETAIL PROFILE

retail operation and day-to-day issues.

Manhattan Fruit Exchange, some 40,000 square feet, continues to reinvent itself. Now the brothers are looking to expand the 20,000 square feet of retail selling space by moving out its significant wholesale operation to another



Vito, Delio and Louie Latilla

distribution center. They are scoping possibilities in Long Island and the Bronx, reveals Vito. “We used to have 50,000 square feet. We downsized after September 11, but our volume has quadrupled.”

“More than 15 years ago, we were a wholesale operation,” says Delio, whose persistent and resourceful produce buying for chefs and independent retailers would prove invaluable in the new partnership venture, where he does all the buying and runs the evening shifts, receiving and routing trucks. “Chelsea Market developer, Irwin Cohen, who had a pipedream, and a pipe in his hand for rats in the then bug-infested and drug-ridden area, wanted us as the anchor and made it irresistible for us to take a chance,” says Delio.

“Meanwhile, the whole neighborhood changed overnight, and Chelsea Market helped to spark the entire revolution of the Meat Packing District,” adds Louie, a former director of pharmacy for Lutheran Medical Center in Brooklyn, who joined his brothers to handle the accounting/finance side of the business. “All these years later, I’m back in produce,” he says, pointing out that he was born on a small farm in Bari, Italy, as was Vito, before their family immigrated to the United States; and a few years later Delio was born in Brooklyn.

From the moment Manhattan Fruit Exchange was born, it took off. “We went from one register to six in the first week and couldn’t handle the crowds,” Louie says of those 16-hour days, adding, “We’re now open 7 days a week, Monday to Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., and

“We can’t do the business without Hunts Point Market. We bring in 8,000 to 9,000 packages a day, and out of that maybe 200 packages go back. On holidays and special events, volumes skyrocket with skids all over the place. To go completely direct is foolish. It’s all supply and demand.”

— Delio Latilla



shoppers. “Chefs call and ask what’s new. We get everything first,” he contends, adding, “When you can’t find an item elsewhere, we’ve already had it for a week.”

Category depth is also important to meet restaurant needs, notes Vito. A sweeping mushroom display takes one’s breath away with dozens of varieties of mushrooms — loose, packaged, organic, conventional, fresh and dry.

Farmer’s market-style, unfettered displays brandish a glorious array of vibrant, top quality fruits and vegetables, as the palpable aromas of citrus and fresh herbs waft through the aisles.



Tina and Jennifer Latilla

Saturday and Sunday 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., but 24 hours a day for wholesalers.”

On a typical morning, there could be 10 to 12 trailers outside packed with produce from numerous Hunts Point Market vendors. “We have eight of our own trucks we use to run produce and deliver to the restaurants,” says Delio. “We can’t do the business without Hunts Point Market. We bring in 8,000 to 9,000 packages a day, and out of that, maybe 200 packages go back,” he says of the quality and consistency. “On holidays and special events, volumes skyrocket with skids all over the place. To go completely direct is foolish. It’s all supply and demand,” he explains.

The retailer also pulls from local farms and Vito is quick to promote “First of Season,” or “Sweet Like Sugar” to educate and tantalize

With *Food Network* upstairs in the building (as well as NY 1 production and the Major League Baseball channel), the stars constantly stock up on products, Vito recalls one occasion when the whole Food Network team came in and shot a program. “Produce Pete showcases items, and Tony Tantillo calls this his studio,” he says. Still, he prefers not to provide a who’s who list of celebrity regulars, at the risk of leaving someone out.

“Certain days, we’re ready to change our name to *Entertainment Tonight*,” adds Louie. Famous actors can be spotted walking the produce aisles, underplayed and out-of-context, he says, joking that it takes him time to place them by picturing the roles they played in hit movies. At Manhattan Fruit Exchange, Delio, Vito and Louie remain the true stars. **pb**

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Dates And Dried Figs Need Space Of Their Own

Increased date and fig sales should earn more retail displays throughout the year. **BY BARBARA ROBISON**



Displaying dried figs and dates in produce departments makes sense because they are complementary to a wide variety of fresh produce items. Many retailers are discovering this as consumer interest in dates and dried figs grows. “Our data shows that when dried fruits are displayed in produce the sales increase 5-to-1 over grocery sales of the items,” reports Andrew Stillman, president of Amport Foods/American Importing Co., based in Minneapolis, MN.

A.J. Trucco Inc., headquartered in the Bronx, NY, found its sales of dried figs and dates increased 20 to 30 percent when offered in produce departments, according to president Salvatore Vacca.

Both Stillman and Vacca highly recommend promoting dried figs and dates throughout the year, not just during the peak holiday season. “We used to sell the items only during the holiday time, but now our season has expanded and volume has increased,” reports Vacca.

“We import the dried figs from Greece, beginning in September,” states John Maybeck, a sales associate at Great Neck, NY-based William H. Kopke, Jr. Inc. “They are considered

a fall holiday item. However, now the demand continues well into January, or as long as the figs are available.”

Vince Mastromauro, produce director at Sunset Foods, a four-store chain based in Highland Park, IL, notes, “We sell dried figs mainly in the fall and winter, but we do carry dates and dried figs year-round, and always have dates in different forms. The biggest use we find is in baking.”

Product Location Counts

Placement of dried fruits in the produce section seems to be a conundrum for produce managers. “When I see California dates in the produce section, the majority of the time the bulk boxes are positioned with bananas, and are often unreachable by the consumer,” contends Lorrie Cooper, manager of the Indio-based California Date Administrative Committee (CDAC). “Individual packaged fresh dates are often placed below the eye level of the shopper, on a shelf below the display stand. With increased consumer demand, it may be time to set aside an area on the display stand for placement of dates in their own right.”

David Daks, president of White Plains, NY-based Devik International, an importer of

dates from Israel and South Africa, maintains the importance of placing dates in the produce department. “We want to educate retailers not to automatically put them with the other dried fruit,” he says. “After all, they are not a dried fruit; dates are fresh, just like the other items in the produce department.”

Vons Companies Inc., located in Arcadia, CA, and a division of Pleasanton, CA-based Safeway Inc., recognized increased interest in dates with a recent display in one of its markets. A long table, placed at one side of a large banana display, offered customers a variety of dates products. This included a bulk display of individual Medjools with serving tongs, Medjools in 12-oz. packages, coconut date rolls and chopped dates. The display provided consumers a wide selection that was easy to see and purchase.

Other dried fruits were available on a shelf below and in displays nearby. “Safeway has been a good supporter of dates year-round,” reports Ben Antongiovanni, sales manager of Atlas Produce & Distribution Inc., in Bakersfield, CA.

Location of the products in the produce department is certainly key to increasing sales, but there are other ways to entice customers to

DRIED FRUITS AND NUTS

purchase more dried figs and dates throughout the year.

Usage Ideas Help Build Sales

"There are numerous recipes using dried figs and dates that are perfect for summer get-togethers and other events throughout the year," says Joe Tamble, vice president of sales for Sun-Maid Growers of California, headquartered in Kingsburg, CA.

"Recognizing the need to provide suggested uses for dates, we have recipe pads for our customers and provide demonstrations on a regional basis," describes David Nelson, vice president of sales for the Bard, CA-based Bard Valley Medjool Date Growers Association (BVMDA). In the demos, the dates are cut in half and spread with cream cheese or peanut butter, showing an easy idea for entertaining and snacking.

Daks considers educating consumers a crucial component to the success of dates at retail. "We use demos and recipes at POS to familiarize shoppers with our product. Educating children, specifically, makes a big difference," he notes. "Kids love our products since they are naturally sweet. They tell their parents about them and are an influential

source on the shopping list. Plus, they make a great lunch-box addition."

"We carry Medjools, a few chopped dates and some dried figs out of California," reports Dave Lukens, produce manager at the single-store Akron, OH-based The West Point Market. "I would say 70 percent of our date/dried fig business is the Medjools."

"According to an IRI (Information Resources, Inc.) survey, dried fig sales are up among the fruits in the dried fruit category," comments Linda Cain, vice president of marketing and retail sales for Valley Fig Growers Inc., in Fresno, CA. "We believe if dried figs are promoted during the entire year, consumers will think of them frequently and include more in their weekly menus. We have a selection of dried fig recipes for year-round use on our Web site. One is for a kabob, made with other fresh fruit, which is ideal for the warmer months."

Packaging Adds To Product Presentation

Packaging can also play an important role in gaining consumer attention. "The company provides 100 recipes for dates on our Web site and 70 are not holiday-related," says Stillman of Amport Foods. "Recently, we decided to put

some of the recipe ideas on our packaging as a reminder to consumers that dried fruit has many great usages. We also have pitted domestic dates and diced imported dates available in cups, which have been well received."

A.J. Trucco provides a 15-lb. container of Medjool dates, along with a pair of tongs, for retailers to merchandise to shoppers as a "serve-yourself" option. Valley Fig Growers offers a zipper stand-up bag and special tray and cup packages for their figs.

POS Can Change Consumers' Mind Set

Another tool that can be helpful in creating dried fig and date awareness is POS posters and display cards, as well as freestanding shippers. Sun-Maid Growers provides all retail customers with up-front sales materials and planning options to maximize consumption year-round. BVMDA has stand-alone shippers available for customers selling their Medjool dates. The CDAC will have a new recipe brochure for consumers available in the fall.

Freestanding shippers offer more opportunities for cross-merchandising. For example, a date or fig display in the salad area with suggestions on ways to add the dried fruit to a variety of salads will help build sales. Date displays in



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Nutritional Powerhouses

An area often overlooked when promoting dried figs and dates is nutrition. "Dried figs and dates provide superior nutrients compared to many of the fresh fruit items in the produce department," states Tamble of Sun-Maid Growers. "For instance, they have higher fiber and potassium contents per serving than fruits such as oranges, strawberries, apples and peaches."

The American Heart Association has recently approved California dates for Check Mark Certification, a heart-healthy fruit. The dates are rich in polyphenols, a plant antioxidant; they have natural sugars, with no-added sugar, and are nutrient-dense in dietary fiber, potassium and manganese. The dates can add a natural sweetness to a recipe without adding fat and can act as a sweetener, replacing brown sugar and honey, in many recipes. Dates are a good alternative for the "power bar" snacks, suggests Antongiovanni of Atlas Produce and Distributing.

Daks of Devik International points out, "Dates have four times the potassium of a banana, more antioxidants than a pomegranate and are a natural energy booster. In fact, they are highly recommended for athletes following a workout as they are a natural source of energy. They really are the next 'superfruit.'"

Agrexco (USA) Ltd, in Jamaica, NY, an importer of dates from Israel, estimates 90 percent of the time dates are eaten as snacks. "We believe one reason our business has increased 50 percent over the past year is because people realize that our dates are a healthy snack," says president Benny Ravet. "Working with our clients, we offer a variety of package sizes, from bulk to 2-lb. small packages."

Regular And Religious Holidays Offer Sales Opportunities

Special holidays, such as Mother's Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day and Halloween can offer produce retailers opportunities for promoting dried figs and dates. Whether it is with timely recipes or as healthful snacks, the fruits can provide more check-out rings. Religious holidays, of course, afford more sales opportunities, especially among Christians and Jews. However, Ramadan, the Islamic holiday, was mentioned by suppliers as also being extremely important. Agrexco USA estimates

that 30 percent of its date business is done during Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. Ramadan 2011 starts on or about August 1 and lasts for 30 days, ending about August 30. Fasting from dawn to sunset is part of the rituals. As the family gathers for the fast-breaking evening meal, the meal always starts with the eating of a date, just as Prophet Muhammad was believed to have done. Thus, dates are essential in the celebration of Ramadan.

Consumer exposure to dried fig and date usage through the media is growing. The dried fruits are being shown on Food Network shows and in major food magazines. More ethnic recipes using the fruit also are appearing in new cookbooks and on Internet blogs.

Shrink is also a thing to consider compared to other fresh produce items. Longer shelf-life and less shrink are two benefits to increasing dried figs and date promotions in produce year-round. **pb**

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Ideas From IFE

Miami Beach Convention Center, June 14-17, 2011

1. CANDY CORN COLORS scream Halloween in this fall floral extravaganza complete with displayed QR code, presented by World Class Flowers, Egg Harbor City, NJ. **2. SHORT, SWEET AND SUSTAINABLY GROWN** is what consumers find when purchasing these pre-made, petite bouquets shipped with retailers' convenience in mind, offered by Organic Bouquet, Maitland, FL. **3. CHRIS HILLEGONDS**, floral supervisor with Strack & Van Til, Schererville, IN, chuckles with a Corgi — one of 25 animal breeds in the My Own Pet line of helium-filled balloons introduced by burton + BURTON, Bogart, GA. **4. CROSS-MERCHANDISE** with this "Game on Mums" promotion featuring 6.5-inch incurve novelty chrysanthemums complete with inflated 9-inch NFL balloon picks, offered by Clearwater Nursery Inc., Nipomo, CA. **5. ONE LOOK AT THIS HEARTLAND DISPLAY** of bouquets made of flowers grown in the United States and customers will want apple pies from the bakery as add-ons. Designed and sourced by The USA Bouquet Company, Miami, FL. **6. A MIXED BOX** of potted blooms, offered by Bay City Flower Co., Half Moon Bay, CA, makes it easy for retailers wanting to try an assortment without a full pallet commitment.



ANNOUNCEMENTS



BORGEN CUP WINNER NAMED

Matt Winchester (right), produce manager of Publix Supermarket store #828 in Sarasota, FL, received the Borgen Systems Cup Award for Merchandising Excellence. Presented in June during the keynote breakfast in Miami Beach, FL, at the International Floriculture Expo, Winchester was recognized for the 20-foot Eiffel Tower display promoting Valentine's Day floral products. The annual award was presented by Arden Borgen (left), founder and CEO of Borgen Systems, Des Moines, IA.



POHMER HONORED

Stan Pohmer, executive director of the Flower Promotion Organization in Minnetonka, MN, was recognized for his outstanding accomplishments and years of industry dedication during the June International Floriculture Expo flower naming ceremony. The new lily, "Lilium Stan Pohmer," was developed by a breeder in the Netherlands and grown by The Sun Valley Group in Arcata, CA.



TIED FOR BEST IFE BOOTH AWARD

The Sun Valley Group, Arcata, CA, and Dependable Packaging Solutions, Miami Gardens, FL, tied for the Best Booth award at the International Floriculture Expo. Voted on by show attendees, the award was presented to Lane deVries (standing left in left picture), Sun Valley president, and to several DPS representatives (right). Bob Callan, IFE show director, presented the awards on Center Stage, June 16, at the Miami Beach Convention Center.

ANNOUNCEMENTS



NEW PRODUCT AWARDED AT IFE

Vase Collar Company, Miami, FL, was awarded Best New Product at IFE for its patented line of Vase Collars® — colorfully printed and vibrant waterproof chokers for the fresh-cut and potted floral categories. Consumers add the collars to the neck of vases to personalize floral arrangements using Everyday, All Occasions and Holiday designs.



NOMINATIONS FOR FLORAL MARKETER OF THE YEAR

Produce Marketing Association, Newark, DE, is accepting nominations for Floral Marketer of the Year. The award recognizes an outstanding individual who has served the mass-market floral industry with dedication and distinction. The recipient should be someone who has had a positive influence on the entire industry. All nominations must be received at PMA no later than the end of August, 2011.



2011 FARWEST SHOW

Oregon Association of Nurseries, Wilsonville, OR, will host the Farwest Show at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland, August 25-27. In its 39th consecutive year, Farwest will showcase New Varieties and New Products. Seminars and tours are also scheduled. The popular Garden Center Pavilion will again inspire attendees with profitable ideas.

NEW PRODUCTS



DESKTOP GARDENING

Penang Nursery Inc., Apopka, FL, introduces Terrarium Gardens for desktops and home decor. Packed eight per case, the low-maintenance terrariums measure approximately 6" w x 8" h. The no-leak, scratch-look base is made of ceramic. Featuring greenhouse-grown foliage plants, these terrariums are ideal gifts for people of all ages.

Making A List And Checking It Twice

Growers and floral retailers are prepping for the holiday season with a cautious eye on the economy and a solid commitment to value. **BY MEREDITH AUERBACH**



December demands elegant white floral displays in addition to the traditional red and green.

This year, holiday floral planning is all about value — and very careful planning. There's little talk about grand new visions, themes or color palettes. Innovation shows itself in the disciplines of planning and communication, ordering, packaging and shipping. It's as if the fine art of logistics has taken over Santa's workshop.

The Impact Of The Economy

"Our sense of the economy still leans toward recession practices," comments Robert DeBellis, lead designer for World Class Flowers, headquartered in Egg Harbor City, NJ, "which means consumers stay traditional in style and very value-conscious. For cut flower bouquets, we design to five retail price points from \$7.95 to \$19.95. As the retail price point increases, naturally, so does the bouquet size, number of stems and the variety of flowers used."

Kirk Slater, national sales manager of major poinsettia grower Kurt Weiss Greenhouses Inc., headquartered in Moriches, NY, generally agrees, saying, "We think this year

looks good and stable. The floral segment provides good value to consumers who prize the traditional looks of small to large poinsettias, wreaths, Christmas greens planters and roping. Our supermarket customers let us know the price points they need and we work to achieve those numbers."

One closely watched number with huge impact is the price of gasoline. "There's pressure to maintain pricing and the cost of delivery keeps increasing," reports Bill Byland, manager of St. Louis, MO-based Mickey's Minis Flora Express. "We don't know where it will be when it's time to ship."

"In our area, Christmas means cut trees, wreaths, poinsettias, greens and cones more than flowers," comments Cindy Hatton, floral designer and buyer for Harmon's, located in West Valley City, UT. "Tradition is important. Christmas is not our biggest holiday, and a strong cultural value is thriftiness. You have to know this market and provide excellent value."

Add Excitement

It seems that regardless of a stressed

economy, the lure of Christmas and the winter holidays makes dark days look lighter, and people continue to decorate their homes and offices, give gifts to family and friends and indulge in a few special treats.

Chances are, Christmas will always be about the colors of red and green and white — but with a few variations to keep the season fresh. Byland says, "The popularity of white poinsettias and mums spray-painted and frosted with glitter is going through the roof. Red poinsettias with red glitter are popular, too. These are simple, cost-effective and a value to the consumer for a quick special gift."

"We're seeing great interest in red rigor begonias and variegated poinsettias," concurs Kirk Slater of Kurt Weiss.

For those who prefer the natural look, Steve Koning, president of Second Nature Dried Flowers, based in Rockton, Ontario, Canada, recommends, "White birch logs and branches offer a new look. These can be combined with greens and other natural items as outdoor Christmas urn inserts with a dramatic look.

Create the Impulse

Impulse buys account for as much as 80% of total supermarket floral sales.

Besides a sign that says "Free Flowers", few things help create that impulse better than quality, dramatic lighting.



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Plan For An Early Start

The selling season for Christmas and winter holidays is gradually moving earlier in the year, increasingly right after Halloween. Crossover products such as greens, dried flowers and tabletop trees can be offered for Thanksgiving as well as Hanukkah, Christmas and New Year's. Kim Tosier, assistant sales manager for the Shelton, WA-based Hiawatha Corp, a major producer of holiday western greens, wreaths and garlands, says, "For us, production and shipping begin in October and continue through mid-December."

The Pinery, headquartered in Escondido, CA, grows small-sized living trees of pine, cypress and rosemary and ships for the holiday season starting in October throughout Canada, the United States and Mexico. According to Pinery president Phil Guardia, "We ship them as tabletop container plants for decorative or culinary use or have larger 5- and 7-gallon plants for patios or entranceways. They make terrific gifts instead of a bottle of wine or fruitcake. We can shape them into topiaries, wreaths or trees — whatever customers need."

Getting Ready

Ideally, planning for the 2011 holiday season started in January — the time when details are fresh, and quickly scribbled notes are most decipherable. Tying in details such as weather, local happenings, the economy and what the competition did help fine-tune projections. Growers who offer individual custom programs to supermarkets need advance notice to plant and grow for desired size and timing. Accurate projections can drive the financial success of the season.

"Store-level departments operate as profit centers, an incentive to keep detailed notes during the previous season," points out Debbie Loche, floral buyer and merchandiser for the 18-store Roche Brothers, based in Wellesley Hills, MA. "We actually write orders in January, then adjust them in summer."

Don Dickerson, systems manager at Augustus Growers LLC, (formerly Dickerson's Greenhouse) in Gobles, MI, reports, "Our major holiday plants are poinsettias and cyclamen. We start with cuttings from breeders and grow tightly to projected needs and planned pricing. Orders for specialty plants and larger sizes have to come in early to guarantee shipment."

"We have a bit more flexibility," says Hiawatha's Tosier. "Because we are primarily producers and shippers of Western floral greens and moss and have small lines of deco-



PHOTO COURTESY OF BAY CITY FLOWERS

The eight-day celebration of Hanukkah starts December 20.

rated wreaths and centerpieces, we encourage customers to order early in September. Some do place orders in November or even later, but then availability can become an issue. We do begin planning in January in concert with our largest customers so that our product manager knows well in advance how much product will be needed."

Often, it is the close relationships between growers, suppliers and retailers that make the complicated floral supply chain work smoothly. Well-timed orders improve the performance of suppliers and producers and help adjust for intervening problems of extreme weather or disrupted shipping. Retailers working on tight time budgets and high consumer expectations count on receiving complete and high-quality orders of product. As Harmons' Hatton says, "We are the face of the industry when a consumer asks, 'Am I going to have white lilies for my Christmas Eve wedding or not?'"

Annual face-to-face meetings kick off the projection process and help assure agreement on designs as well as numbers. DeBellis comments, "Typically, supermarket floral executives send proposals for what they want for the next year. We meet with them to show what we can do — along with a

number of other suppliers. It is a competition to win the work.”

Innovation Counts

Helping supermarket floral retailers do a better job is a critical success marker for any supplier. Supermarkets in many regions have been pulling back from offering fresh-cut Christmas trees. Issues of space, labor, tree care, supplies and security explain the change. On the consumer side, the cost of trees, transporting them home and the need for proper post-holiday disposal have contributed.

“What is Christmas without a Christmas tree?” asks Tom Leonard, owner of Peak Seasons, in Riverside, CA. “We have developed the Quick Fit Christmas Tree Stand to enable supermarkets to offer their customers 2- to 4-foot trees, ideal for apartments, smaller city homes and individual rooms. The stands come as part of the trees so they are ready to go. We supply tree growers with the stands; they can be shipped in conventional bins and this provides a better way to sell trees. Buying trees this way is really taking off because it makes it easy for everyone.”

“We may only have 14 stores, but we have developed a specialty floral center and warehouse that enables us to have a strong floral presence in the stores and the community,” says Hatton. “The director defines the program, then each store can tailor it to the demographics of their area. We can order directly from growers and make custom as well as pre-made bouquets and consumer bunches. Customers can come into the stores or place orders at the Floral Design Center.”

“Many of the supermarkets we speak with want their suppliers to do as much as possible for them while still leaving them space to insert some individuality,” shares DeBellis of World Class Flowers. “The associates are so time-starved. We know that when you educate consumers, they tend to buy more and buy more often so we constantly feed ideas and tips via our online floral design videos and my blog, which tends to attract associates more than consumers. It helps provide a community for them.”

“Floral professionals constantly seek out the ‘Wow!’ factor and can do it during the holidays with mixed greens bouquets, flowers and fillers to add color and texture,” says Bruce Brady, vice president of marketing and business development for Los Angeles, CA-based Mellano & Co. “We’re introducing a new and innovative design concept for the holidays.”

Because in-store space and associate time is limited, display during the holidays is always a challenge. Display-ready shippers can make

holiday design easier and encourage placement in other areas of the store. Speed covers for pots, picks and accessories offered by companies such as Mickey’s Minis and Augustus Growers let associates change themes instantly.

Design Drives Impulse Sales

Roche Brothers’ Loche defines her approach to design, “Working with our suppliers means we can move away from a generic look and compete on bringing unique

designs to the stores. All have a strong floral presence. We focus on tabletop trees, custom and pre-made bouquets, greens and strong décor items.”

In-store, not many consumers have floral products on their shopping lists. A lot of purchases are impulse buys, an emotional response to freshness, color, fragrance, style and design. Especially during the holidays, the idea of gift solutions makes the supermarket floral department very appealing. **pb**

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APPLE VARIETAL EXPANSION



The saying, “An apple a day keeps the doctor away,” has been around since the early Romans believed apples had magical powers to cure illness. For centuries, new varieties made their way into the marketing mainstream almost by accident. Reportedly, there have been over 7,000 apple varieties, but by the mid 1900s the number of significant varieties sold to consumers could be counted on one hand. Red Deli-

cious volume, primarily grown in the state of Washington, was head and shoulders larger than any of the others.

Gradually, plant breeders were developing new varieties, but it has been only in the past several decades that a significant number of new varieties available to anyone willing to pay for them to develop an orchard began making their way into commercial production and competing for access to consumer taste buds.

As world trade began significant development several decades ago, new varieties from New Zealand and elsewhere began to open consumer eyes and arouse taste buds, creating the potential for expanding interest in the category. Now, new apple varieties consistently become available from numerous countries.

Plant breeding staffs at major universities across the northern tier of states perceived incentive to expand the developmental research. Soon the race was on and growers were producing and shipping a whole new realm of product throughout the year. But the numbers were still manageable for both growers and retailers.

Consumer varietal choice at any one time expanded from three or four to as many as five or six, but rarely more. For the retail category manager, differentiating was not difficult as there was ample volume of each, with Washington Red Delicious having by far the largest volume.

For the university breeders, the renewed interest was becoming a small bonanza as the return on newly developed varieties began to pay off. Perhaps the largest return on investment came from the discovery of the Honeycrisp variety at the University of Minnesota. Originally, the apple cultivar was designated in 1974, but the patent was not filed until 14 years later and released to the public in 1991. Until the U.S. patent expired in 2008 the University of Minnesota had received over \$8 million dollars in royalties with approximate amounts possible from future international payments.

At Washington State University, in the largest apple growing region, for example, four distinct trial and testing steps are followed before initial seedling selection make their way to commercialization.

Is it any wonder the Honeycrisp took so long before reaching the grower community?

Now every major university is looking for an equally successful achievement as well as other variety improvements, which may become commercially feasible. The challenge becomes how the consumer will be able to differentiate among all the new names that are thrown at them as they pass by an apple category dominated by multiple red shade appearances.

Although retailers and consumers are coping with the multitude of new varieties, growers are always looking for the next special variety good enough to command a substantial premium to the rest of the competition. The most recent attempt is the University of Minnesota breeding what has been named SweeTango.

The apparent genius of the program is a marketing agreement licensing control of the variety to one organization, which has formed a co-op with 64 growers including two from Minnesota, strategically located in selected northern states and Canada. In essence, the University released the SweeTango as a managed variety rather than a public variety similar to the Honeycrisp.

The objective is to assure that production and marketing of quality fruit grown under the proper conditions will prevent overproduction thereby enabling premium pricing for product consumers identify as premium. However, other Minnesota growers found themselves collec-

tively limited to the purchase of 50,000 trees soon cried foul and entered into a lawsuit last spring.

Although a judge rejected most of the claims in February ordered both sides to mediate the remaining claim, the plaintiff’s alleged they were denied procedural due process. This mediation has failed and the court battle is slated to continue.

From a slightly different approach, the Cornell University extension plant-breeding program has decided to limit purchase of several of its prized varieties to growers within the New York State boundary. Naturally, growers in surrounding states are unenthused with the decision. Interestingly, at least one large New York State grower is growing these new varieties as well as being part of the SweeTango cooperative.

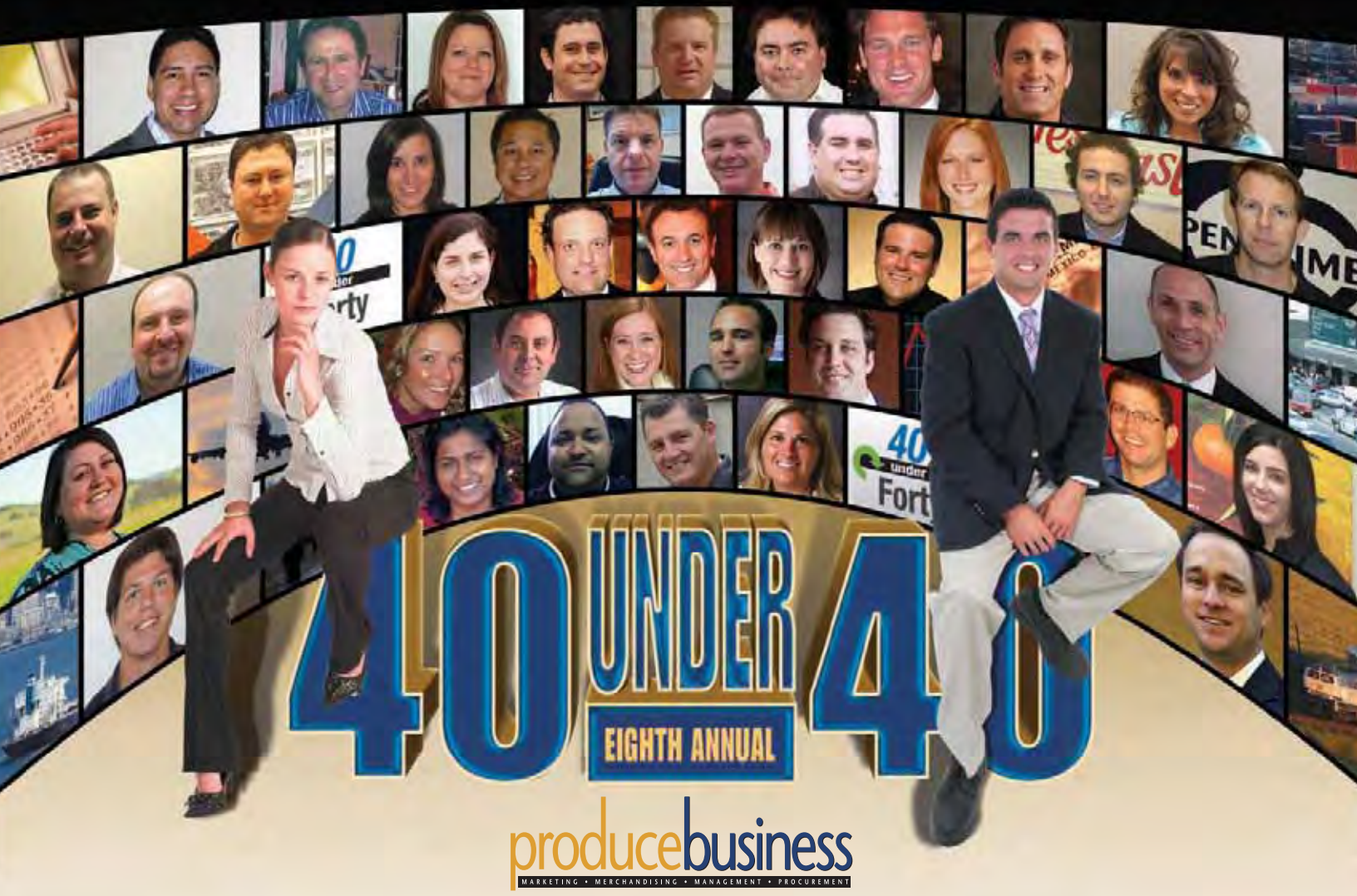
Perhaps the marketing answers will come from future advancements in consumer technology enabling them to access product information as they walk past a display reading a bar code incorporated into a price sign. Sampling in another form removes the mystification of overwhelming choice. Coupled with packing line advancements discarding more external and internal defects can the perfect fruit item to the taste be far in the future?

Although retailers and consumers are coping with the multitude of new varieties, growers are always looking for the next special variety good enough to command a substantial premium to the rest of the competition.

pb

By Dave Diver

Dave Diver is the former vice president of produce at Hannaford, and a regular columnist for PRODUCE BUSINESS.



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

Honorees will be selected based on their professional accomplishments, demonstrated leadership and industry/community contributions. To be eligible, nominees must be under the age of 40 as of January 1 (People born after January 1, 1972).

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CAN THE AMERICAN IMPORT BUSINESS TO EUROPE BE RECOVERED?



SFI Rotterdam has strong roots in the U.S. produce business. In 1972, the founder of the company, Dirk Schulz, was one of the first to import Texan grapefruits into Europe. In the first season these were already 60,000 boxes. In the peak years — the late 1970s until mid-eighties — SFI Rotterdam imported from the United States approximately:

- 250,000 boxes of Mineolas

- 250,000 boxes of oranges
- 30,000 boxes of lemons
- 50,000 boxes of California grapes
- 120,000 boxes of Anjou pears
- 25,000 Washington apples
- 800,000 boxes of grapefruits from Texas and Florida
- and some Bing cherries

It was quite common for our company to charter entire reefer vessels to import the fruit directly into Rotterdam. The last charter was in 1998.

This season, our U.S. imports fall drastically short of the old numbers. They are:

- 1,260 boxes of Florida grapefruit
- 1,960 boxes of Anjou pears

In no more than 20 years, our imports dropped from more than 1 million boxes annually to around 15,000. So what happened?

From our perspective, there was a lack of interest on the part of U.S. suppliers to adapt to consumer trends in the European market. The Florida citrus industry became very inflexible in regards to packaging requirements. For example, the rest of the world began shipping grapefruit in 60x40 open-top boxes, but Florida chose to keep the U.S.-style telescopic box, sometimes in a paper quality not even suitable for the long overseas transport. The industry focused too much on the U.S. market, the gift shipping, the juice prices and then, finally, the European customers were considered. However, by that time, cheaper, better looking, albeit worse tasting, grapefruit from Turkey and Spain had conquered the market share and were not going to give it up. Today, European retailers largely ignore Florida grapefruit, or they take it as a

niche product for a special promotion. Texas has also become extremely difficult to sell.

For years, SFI Rotterdam had a deal secured with one of the largest retailers in Germany for U.S.-grown Anjou pears. But as food safety became an increasingly important issue, retailers began to demand GlobalGAP certifications from the producers. U.S. producers largely ignored the issue, thus forcing retailers to replace the U.S. Anjou program.

No matter where in the world, retailers expect their suppliers to respect and comply with their standards. U.S. producers did not do so — and lost the business. SFI still supplies the retailer with pears, just not from the United States.

The European produce industry is strongly dependent on the large retail organizations that have market shares in all European countries, also the former East. The U.S. produce industry waited too long to embrace the demands of European retailers. Of course, consumers can still find U.S. products in the European market, and they love the taste and quality. And certainly, there are those U.S. exporters that are aware of the European consumer demands, but as an industry, the business as a whole has been lost, and must be reconquered.

We do see opportunities for the future. A strong Euro — for as long as that will last — will offer American exporters an advantage. No matter what the product is, work with the importer; they know their markets. Make use of their local knowledge. Re-direct the marketing funds of your marketing organizations from (European) retailers to the importers. They are the ones in daily contact with the costumers. We have seen it too many times that retailers have had a tasting campaign and the fruit was not available.

pb

No matter what the product is, work with the importer; they know their markets. Make use of their local knowledge. Re-direct the marketing funds of your marketing organizations from (European) retailers to the importers. They are the ones in daily contact with the costumers.



Dirk Schulz, founder of SFI Rotterdam and a pioneer in the European import industry.

By Beatrice Betley

managing director at SFI Rotterdam, based in Rotterdam, The Netherlands



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Royal Rose LLC	121	831-758-1957	www.radicchio.com
Rubin Bros.	82-83	718-589-3200	www.rubinbros.com
SAGARPA - Embassy of Mexico	30-31	202-728-1727	www.amhpac.org
Sandrini Sales, Inc.	65	805-792-3192	www.sandrini.com
Silver Creek Software	69	208-388-4555	www.silvercreek.com
Southern Specialties	121	954-784-6500	www.southernspecialties.com
Spice World, Inc.	71	800-433-4979	www.spiceworldinc.com
Spice World, Inc.	73	800-433-4979	www.spiceworldinc.com
Sun Date	117	760-391-5400	www.anthonynineyards.com
Sunview Marketing International	122	661-792-3145	www.sunviewmarketing.com
Sunview Marketing International	66	661-792-3145	www.sunviewmarketing.com
Tanimura & Antle, Inc.	156	800-772-4542	www.taproduce.com
Target Interstate Systems, Inc.	81	800-338-2743	www.targetinterstate.com
Top Banana	107	718-328-6700	www.topbanananyc.com
Top Katz, LLC	91	718-861-1933	www.topkatz.com
Trinity Fruit Sales	66	559-433-3777	www.trinityfruit.com
Trinity Fruit Sales	122	559-433-3777	www.trinityfruit.com
A.J. Trucco, Inc.	105	718-893-3060	www.truccodirect.com
United Fresh Produce Association	41	202-303-3400	www.unitedfresh.org
United Fresh Produce Association	115	202-303-3400	www.unitedfresh.org
The USA Bouquet Co.	146	800-306-1071	www.usabq.com
Village Farms	122	877-777-7718	www.villagefarms.com
Vision Import Group	79	201-968-1190	www.visionimportgroup.com
Well-Pict Berries	123	831-722-3871	www.wellpict.com
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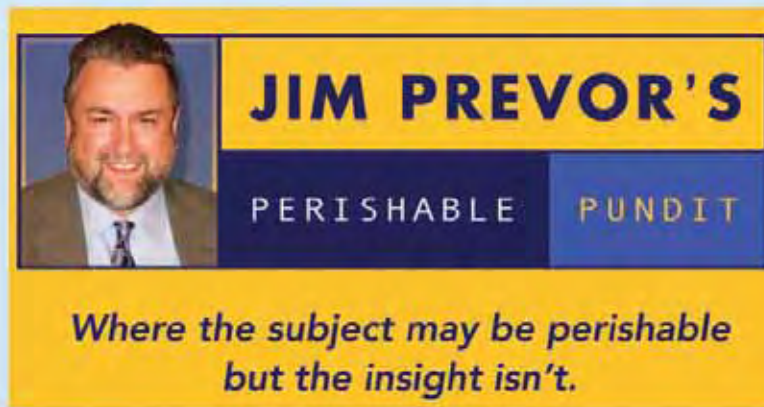


Denise Goodman, who, with her brother Michael, owns Bronx-based M&R Tomato Distributors Inc., has her father, Jack Tambor, to thank for the success of her family business. Tambor, pictured holding a box of tomatoes in the photo above, “was a pioneer in the tomato repacking industry,” says his daughter. “He always had a very good reputation, and people still talk about him. He was known for being tough, but fair and honest. He had a good sense for buying and was an incredible advocate for the tomato industry,” Goodman continues. “He worked tirelessly for the industry, even becoming politically involved to help pass regulations regarding standards for tomato repackers.”

It was actually Goodman’s uncle Milton Tambor who started the business in 1958 at New York’s Washington St. Market, where this photo was taken. “In the old market, everybody sold specific commodities,” says Goodman. “At the time, we sold tomatoes. We brought them in from a number of different growers, repacked them and shipped them out. I don’t think any of those companies are even still around.”

Since then, the produce industry has changed in a number of ways. “You see, then, tomatoes were still packed in crates. That is no longer the case,” reminds Goodman, “and we have since moved from the Washington Street Market. But beyond those obvious changes, there has been an evolution in the variety of products available, even just in the tomato world. Our customer base has expanded; the population is changing. We now sell to a lot of retail purveyors, bodegas and some foodservice clients.”

Nonetheless, one thing that has remained the same over the years is the importance of family in the industry. “It was my father and sister, Bonnie, who expanded the company, bringing in other items and diversifying the operation,” recognizes Goodman. “It is really a family business. It was my uncle who started it, and my father who then took it over from him. Now I run the business with my brother, Michael. We are the second generation, but we both have children, so hopefully it will continue in their hands. They’re young, so it’s still too early to tell if they will join us, but family is always welcome!”



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