

# producebusiness

MARKETING • MERCHANDISING • MANAGEMENT • PROCUREMENT

## FOODSERVICE QUEST: The Industry's Pursuit To Balance Flavor, Appearance And Lower Cost

**BIG CITY** NYC  
**PRODUCE**

HUNTS POINT  
PRODUCE MARKET  
LAUNCHES TV SERIES Pg. 80

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NEW YORK PROFILE  
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### INSIDE:

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WAL-MART'S PTI MANDATE  
AND FRESH PRODUCE GUARANTEE  
DISTRIBUTION SOFTWARE  
SOUTH AFRICAN CITRUS  
NEW JERSEY PEACHES  
SPECIALTY PRODUCE  
HEINEN'S FINE FOODS  
GARLIC  
DATES AND FIGS



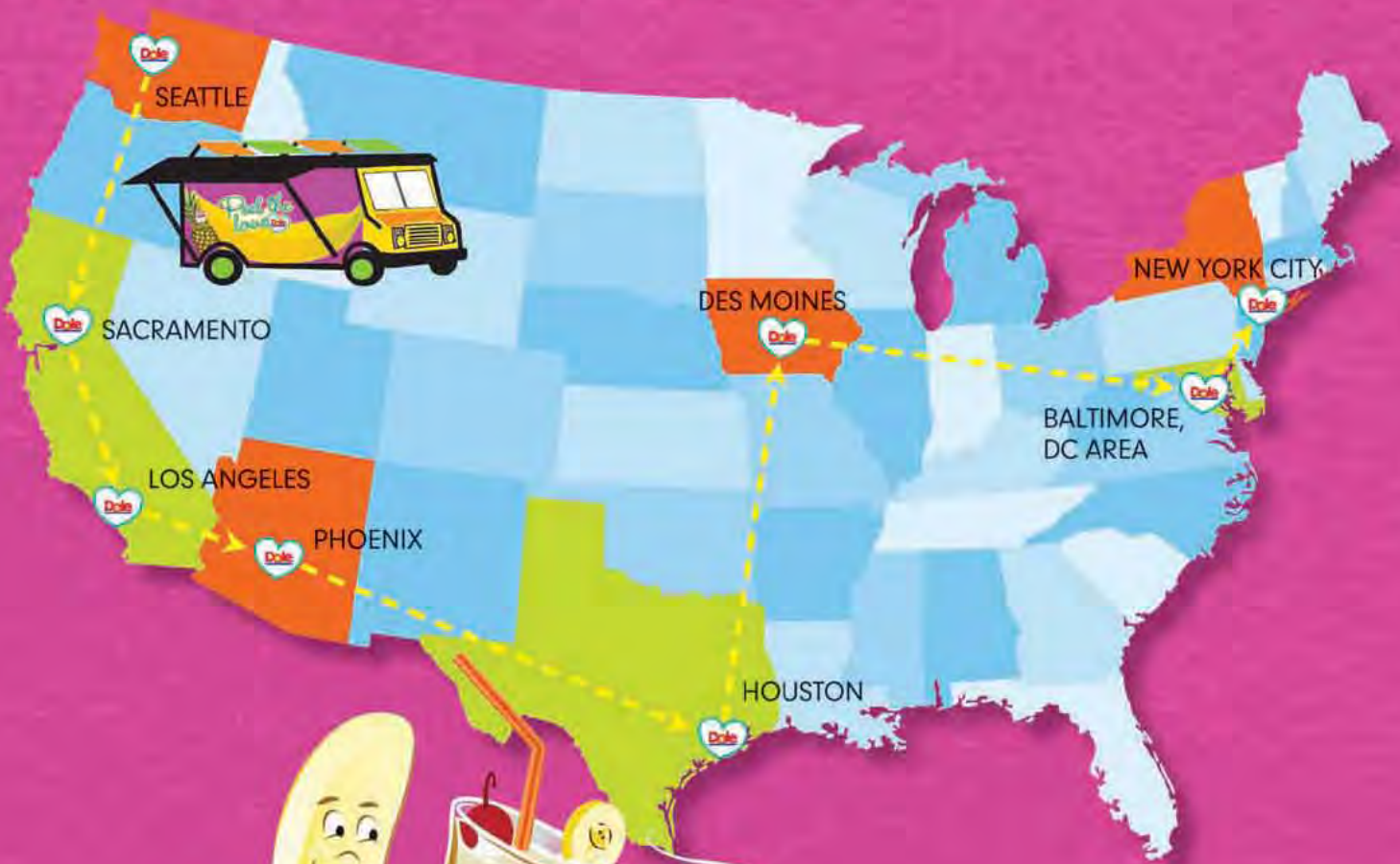
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 The Industry's Pursuit To  
 Balance Flavor, Appearance  
 And Lower Cost

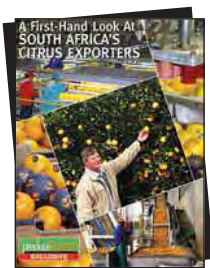
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**THIS MONTH'S WINNER**



**Jeff Simonian**  
Sales Manager  
Simonian Fruit Company  
Fowler, CA

Jeff Simonian is sales manager for Simonian Fruit Company and part of the second generation in the Simonian family business.

Specializing in apricots, peaches, nectarines, grapes, plums, pomegranates, and persimmons, Jeff has his hands full managing all these commodities. "We grow the fruit, pack it and sell it, and I'm in charge of the sales department."

Jeff's father, David, and his uncle, Jim, started the company in 1960 as teenagers, and he is very proud that he gets to work

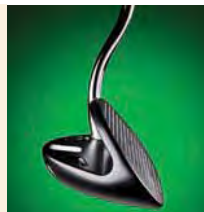
with family every day. "I didn't have as good of a relationship with my dad and uncle until I started working full time in the family business," says Simonian. Once he was given a taste of the industry, he moved his way up through the ranks to his current position.

The company has been receiving PRODUCE BUSINESS for at least 10 years, and Jeff always thought the quizzes were fun, but decided to enter it when he saw fellow industry friend, Steve Highley of Crown Jewels Produce Company, win the May quiz. "The quiz always caught my eye, and I knew Steve won so I thought, 'hey, I'll give it a shot this time.'"

**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.

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**QUESTIONS FOR THE JULY ISSUE**

- 1) What unique coloring is on the skin of a Tiger Fig from Stellar Distributing? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) What type of "signature capture" does Produce Pro Software use on its Driver app? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) What is Duda's booth number at the 2013 PMA Fresh Summit Convention & Expo? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) What track-based LED product line provided by Baro is available in North America today? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) What is Spice World known for? \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) What are the two North American locations for Capespan? \_\_\_\_\_

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Position \_\_\_\_\_

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City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

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Photocopies of this form are acceptable. Please send answers to:  
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# UNITING FORCES AT THE 2013 WASHINGTON PUBLIC POLICY CONFERENCE

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



**T**he fresh produce industry has been in the trenches of immigration reform during the past few months, and has forged amazing progress. United Fresh members have shaped the conversation about immigration reform with a steady stream of calls, letters and visits from members to Congress that emphasize the industry's need for a stable work force. The FDA's proposed rules under the Food Safety and Modernization Act (FSMA) have been reviewed line-by-line by those grower-shippers, fresh-cut processors, wholesaler-distributors, and retail-foodservice members who the FSMA will directly impact. And though the 2013 Farm Bill failed to pass the House, our members were instrumental in advancing the legislation.

That's why we're headed toward the 2013 Washington Public Policy Conference with high expectations. The event gives our members the chance to connect with key members of Congress, their staff and top regulatory officials for strategic, face-to-face dialogue on critical issues. Disagree with the immigration reform package? Disappointed the Farm Bill failed? Ready to move along with food safety? Those conversations happen with your senators and representatives at the Washington Public Policy Conference.

"For a single company, it's easy to focus solely on your own business and forget the impact that policies set in Washington have on your day-to-day operation," says Ron Carkoski, United Fresh Chairman-elect and president & CEO of Four Seasons Family of Companies. "By coming to Washington, you'll give direct feedback to lawmakers and government agencies on the way federal policies work for your business on the ground level. You'll also have the opportunity to meet and exchange ideas with hundreds of other produce industry leaders, all keyed in to the same importance of industry involvement here in Washington. In this way, the small

investment it takes to come to the Washington Public Policy Conference pays huge dividends for your business."

We've always known that a united voice is a stronger voice — and the proof is in the long list of successes that our members have worked toward in the past few months. For example, many United Fresh members contributed their perspectives to the association's review process of the FDA's proposed rules under FSMA. Together, the industry made it clear that the final rules must be commodity-specific, formed from the best available science, risk-based, and consistently applied. These comments are currently being compiled and will be submitted by United to FDA before the September deadline.

At this year's Washington Public Policy Conference, attendees will have a unique opportunity to continue the discussion of the proposed rules and the impact that FSMA will have on their operations directly with representatives from FDA. On Wednesday, October 2, United will hold an exclusive forum with the FDA for attendees to discuss FSMA and other food safety issues with influential administration officials.

The 2013 Washington Public Policy Conference takes place on September 30 through October 2 and features two days of meetings on Capitol Hill with lawmakers who are voting on the decisions that impact your business. The produce industry's most prominent and influential executives will have the chance to weigh in on immigration reform, the Farm Bill, health care reform, nutrition programs, food safety, research initiatives and more.

Brendan Comito, chief operations officer of Iowa-based Capital City Fruit Company, knows firsthand the value of connecting with Congress for his business. "Not only are we able to communicate major industry issues to

**THE WASHINGTON  
PUBLIC POLICY  
CONFERENCE IS  
CONNECTING THE  
PRODUCE INDUSTRY  
TO SHAPE A BETTER  
BUSINESS FUTURE.  
WITH YOUR HELP,  
THE POTENTIAL TO  
DRIVE THE INDUSTRY  
FORWARD IS  
LIMITLESS.**

policymakers at the Washington Public Policy Conference, but we are also able to develop relationships with lawmakers. For example, we met with Senator Charles Grassley for years at the event, each time inviting him to visit our facility. He finally took us up on the offer and spent over an hour with our team. He later came to our 60th anniversary party. This would not have been possible had we not developed this relationship with the senator through United and the Washington Public Policy Conference."

The opportunity for broader engagement, on behalf of the industry, is one that cannot be missed if we are to reach our collective goals. Whether it's the Farm Bill, food safety or comprehensive immigration reform, the march on Capitol Hill makes a bigger impact with strong numbers and a passionate message. The Washington Public Policy Conference is connecting the produce industry to shape a better business future. With your help, the potential to drive the industry forward is limitless. See you in DC!





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## TRANSITIONS

### SOUTHERN SPECIALTIES POMPANO BEACH, FL

Southern Specialties announces that **Katie Johnston** has joined the company as key account manager. Johnston most recently worked with Chiquita as regional customer manager. Her responsibilities included managing sales of Fresh Express salads in the southeastern United States. Johnston will work out of the company's Pompano Beach headquarters.



**Robert Saake** has joined Southern Specialties as key account manager. Saake has eight years of experience in the produce industry, most recently in the sales department of Hugh H. Branch, Inc. in Belle Glade, FL.

### COUNTRY FRESH MUSHROOM CO. AVONDALE, PA

Country Fresh Mushroom Co. announces the appointment of **Kirk Wilson** as regional sales manager. Wilson brings a great deal of experience to the company, having spent six years working in the mushroom industry at Highline Mushroom Limited in Ontario, Canada. The addition of Wilson will better service the Southeast market area.



### MARKET FRESH PRODUCE, LLC NIXA, MO

Market Fresh Produce announces that **Hannah Harris** has joined its business development team, reporting to director of business development, Steve Ford. The addition of Harris will allow Market Fresh to continue meeting client expectations and add strength to the talented team of professionals.

### MAGLIO & COMPANY GLENDALE, WI

Maglio & Company announces a fifth-generation son has entered the business. **Paul Maglio** joins the company as a member of the buying team. His initial responsibilities focus on commodity buying and will expand later this year to include the full scope of tomato items that the company distributes from growing regions across North America.



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### AWE SUM ORGANICS CORNERS NEW ZEALAND-TO-NORTH-AMERICA ORGANIC APPLE MARKET

Awe Sum Organics, Capitola, CA, claims to import well over 90 percent of all organic apples coming in from New Zealand to North America, as well as fruit from both Chile and Argentina. Due to the organic apple supply, Awe Sum Organics offers Organic Royal Gala, Granny Smith, Fuji, Cripps Pink, Braeburn, and Red Delicious all in various sizes, tray-packed and bagged.



### CUSTOMS BROKER EXPERTS RETURN TO INDUSTRY

Fresh produce and imports customs brokers Patricia Compres (right) and Maria Bermudez (left) announce the launch of their new Miami, FL-based firm, Advance Customs Brokers & Consulting. The firm specializes in fresh produce commodities, but also handles other products such as fish, as well as dry and frozen cargo.



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### COLORADO POTATOES FUEL HIGH-ALTITUDE CYCLISTS

For the fifth time in the 28-year history of Ride the Rockies (a week-long, 500-plus mile bike ride) volunteers associated with the Colorado Potato Administrative Committee of Monte Vista, CO, cleaned, wrapped, baked and distributed approximately 1 ton of potatoes to more than 2,000 cyclists and supported team members.

### SWEET GEORGIA PEACH SEASON ARRIVES

Sweet Georgia Peaches are arriving at grocery stores. This year's crop is expected to not only be delicious, but also, abundant. To extend its consumer awareness and education efforts, the Georgia Peach Council in Fort Valley, GA, will schedule a number of television cooking demonstrations now throughout July and into August.



### GEORGIA BLUEBERRY COMMISSION HOSTS RECIPE CONTEST

The Georgia Blueberry Commission, Waycross, GA, will host its first-ever "Sweet Georgia Blues Recipe Contest." Georgia blueberry fans are invited to create and photograph an original recipe. Submissions will be posted on the Georgia Blueberry Commission's website and Facebook page for voting. Winners are announced in July.





**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**NEW DOLE SALADS WEBSITE INSPIRES SALAD FANS**

DOLE Fresh Vegetables, Monterey, CA, has launched a new website reflecting the growing culinary evolution of salad and the DOLE Salads prepackaged salad blends and all-natural kits. The new site, dolesalads.com, offers consumers a comprehensive digital resource devoted entirely to leafy greens and vegetables. It combines hundreds of delectable new recipes with educational content, new photography, serving suggestions and entertaining tips.



**WELL-SIZED FRUIT EXPECTED FOR GIUMARRA'S LEMON SEASON**

Giumarra of Wenatchee, Wenatchee, WA, is looking forward to another successful year of marketing New Zealand Meyer lemons. Also new this season for the Meyer lemon is its own specifically assigned PLU, which will help distinguish it from regular lemons at store display. Giumarra of Wenatchee will offer the fruit both bagged and bulk.



**CALIFORNIA GIANT BERRY FARMS RALLIES FOR CHARITY**

The Watsonville-based California Giant Berry Farms is teaming up with Sony Pictures Animation, Feeding America, and some of the leading growers in the fresh produce industry for a groundbreaking cause-marketing campaign in conjunction with the highly anticipated release of the animated comedy Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs 2. The collaboration will help provide thousands of nutritious meals to families in need.

**TURBANA JOINS PRODUCE FOR KIDS' 'GET HEALTHY, GIVE HOPE' CAMPAIGN**

Turbana, Coral Gables, FL, announces its partnership with one of its longstanding retailers, Price Chopper, Schenectady, NY, to kick off the Produce for Kids 2013 campaign, titled "Get Healthy, Give Hope." The campaign aims to educate consumers about healthy eating with fresh produce, while raising funds for local children's charities.



**BLACK GOLD FARMS PARTNERS WITH MCCORMICK**

Teaming up with McCormick Produce Partners seasonings of Sparks, MD, Black Gold Farms of Grand Forks, ND, has created an easy-to-prepare, value-added fresh potato side dish packed with flavor. The pairings are designed to provide consumers flexibility when preparing dinner by reducing prep time and eliminating the guesswork for making fresh, delicious, family-friendly potatoes.



**BC HOT HOUSE FOODS ADDS AN 11-ACRE GREENHOUSE**

BC Hot House Foods Inc. of British Columbia, Canada, recently added a new 11-acre greenhouse facility to its portfolio. Armand Vander Meulen of Green Valley Family Farms has built Bakerview Greenhouses in Abbotsford, British Columbia, Canada. This state-of-the-art greenhouse will grow red peppers for the 2013 season with room for further expansion in 2014.

**GREENGATE FRESH OPENS NEW FACILITY**

GreenGate Fresh opened its new facility in Salinas, CA. GreenGate Fresh employed "green" construction methods to transform an existing 50,000 square foot concrete tilt-up structure into a state-of-the-art processing facility. The new facility was built to meet all current food safety standards while simultaneously operating in an environmentally friendly manner.



**CHELAN FRESH ENGULFS SOCIAL NETWORKING**

Chelan Fresh Marketing, Chelan, WA, is on the cutting edge of the digital "shout out." The sales and marketing arm of Gebbers Farms and Chelan Fruit Cooperative has established itself with a large Facebook presence, several boards on Pinterest and as a trail-blazer with Greenscans' mobile platform. The company's marketing material continues to develop in pace with Internet-based technology.



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



## ANNOUNCEMENTS



### GROWER DIRECT MASTERS A MONSTER APRICOT

Grower Direct Marketing and OG Packing, Stockton CA, kick off the California tree fruit season by shipping the proprietary Monster Cot apricots. This is the fifth harvest season for these apricots. OG Packing created the Monster Cot for the millions who may never get that chance to eat fruit picked directly from the tree.

### FPAA MEMBERS ATTEND ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

The Fresh Produce Association of the Americas (FPAA) annual membership meeting in Nogales, AZ, presented several significant highlights. Jaime Chamberlain of J-C Distributing, Inc., (at left in photo with Lance Jungmeyer, president of FPAA) received the FPAA Member of the Year award. A slate of seven distributor board directors and two associate board directors was elected by the membership, and members discussed several issues and opportunities for the coming year.



## NEW PRODUCTS



### DJ FORRY CREATES POMEGRANATE ARIL PACKAGE

DJ Forry, Reedley, CA, is set to release its new Forry's Finest Sweet Bursts pomegranate arils. Sweet Bursts will arrive to market in a new two serving tub package configuration. The new Sweet Bursts aril package represents the latest Forry's Finest offering which include stand-up pouch offerings for California grapes, cherries and stone fruit.

## NEW PRODUCTS

### DJ FORRY CREATES STONE FRUIT CONSUMER PACK

DJ Forry, Reedley, CA, is set to kick off the 2013 California stone fruit season with the release of its new Forry's Finest California Summer Fruit Trio. The new two-pound package configuration contains a combination of kid friendly sized Tree Ripened Peaches, Plums, and Nectarines.



## NEW PRODUCTS



### TO-JO INTRODUCES NEW BELLA-BLENDED MEATBALL LINE

To-Jo Fresh Mushrooms, Inc., Avondale, PA, introduced its new Bella Blended line of meatballs at the recent 2013 National Restaurant Association Show in Chicago, IL. The company presented the new item, which will be available in 0.5 oz., 1.0 oz., and 2.0 oz. sizes in mild and spicy varieties, showcasing appetizers to entrees.

### POM LAUNCHES THREE FRUIT-JUICE BLENDS

POM Wonderful, Los Angeles, CA, has introduced three new flavors to its Tropical Blends line of Pomegranate Juice: POM Hula, POM Mango and POM Coconut. The new Tropical Blends combine the benefits of POM Wonderful's 100 percent premium pomegranate juice with three light, refreshing and delicious 100 percent fruit-juice blends.



### MALENA PRODUCE HIGHLIGHTS THREE GRAPE VARIETIES

Malena Produce, Inc, Nogales, AZ, a premier eggplant and winter vegetable supplier, launches a new spring grape and melon program to focus on expanding assortment and services to retailers. Of special note is the introduction of new varieties like Summer Royals, Autumn Royals and Red Globes. The company also continues to ship Perlettes, Flames and Sagraones.



### YERICIC LABEL INTRODUCES 'LABELBLING'

LabelBling, a new line of high impact labels by Yericic Label, New Kensington, PA, uses the latest techniques to create an upscale look at an affordable rate for fresh produce growers, packers and shippers. The line focuses on eye-catching visuals such as holographic films, sparkle inks and embossing to draw attention of the shopper.

## CORRECTION



In the June 2013 issue of *PRODUCE BUSINESS*, a photo in the "United Takes Flight" special feature was incorrectly labeled. The correct names for the corresponding photo are: (from left to right) Sammy Perricone, Perricone Farms; Kristyn Lawson, Cabo Fresh; Arturo Paniagua, Safeway.



# PRODUCE HITS THE BIG SCREEN



PHOTOS COURTESY OF GRIMMWAY FARMS, GOURMET TRADING COMPANY, CHIQUITA, & CRUNCH PAK



Each year, from Memorial Day to Labor Day, crowds flock to their local movie theaters to watch the latest sequels, animated features and action-packed blockbusters. This summer, Produce is the star! **BY MICHELE SOTALLARO**

**W**e celebrate the following companies for their creative cross-promotional strategies with this summer's spectacular movies. Each company illustrates vibrant co-branded marketing collateral across digital platforms and in-store merchandizing.

## Crunch Pak/*Monsters University*

Crunch Pak was among the first companies to create a co-branded line of produce with Disney.

"Engaging kids in a fun, interactive way is key to getting them to eat more produce," advises Tony Freytag, senior vice president of sales and marketing with Crunch Pak in Cashmere, WA. "We are competing with major fast food and packaged goods companies that have substantial advertising budgets."

Crunch Pak believes that Produce should be positioned as colorful and playful when marketing in stores. To accomplish this spirited effect, Crunch Pak's new Monsters University packaging showcases a variety of artwork. For example: each clamshell holds five bags of fruit, and those can have any one of four Monsters University character designs on them.

"We also have a 'Rub To Smell The Flavor' sticker on the outside of the FlavorZ packaging; a first-of-a kind technology," shares Freytag.



Since available space in Produce can be tight, Freytag offers some real estate suggestions. "Displays drive sales. We recommend increasing the display and providing secondary displays during peak promotional periods — such as when the movie is released."

## Chiquita/*Despicable Me 2*

In June, Chiquita launched a fully integrated consumer campaign with Universal Pictures and Illumination Entertainment that featured unique product labels, point-of-sale materials at retail, digital and social media, a dedicated website, and a consumer sweepstakes. The collaboration is Chiquita's largest global licensing promotion to date.

"The partnership with Universal was natural since the favorite food of the movie's Minions is bananas," says Rob Adams, director of marketing for Chiquita.

From a retail standpoint, Adams suggests stores use the POS materials that Chiquita supplies. "For the theatrical release, the POS encourages repeat visits to the banana table. The combination of stickers and POS will generate enthusiasm around Chiquita banana tables during the two promotional windows; there is also a tremendous amount of online interaction and social activity," reports Adams.

## Gourmet Trading Company/*The Smurfs 2*

"After the success of our previous co-

promotion for The Smurfs theatrical and home entertainment release, we are excited to bring back Smurfberries!" says Julia Inestroza, marketing director for Gourmet Trading Company based in Los Angeles, CA.

As part of the promotion, from now through September 30, consumers can enter Gourmet Trading Company's The Smurfs 2 Sweepstakes for a chance to win a trip for four to Hollywood and Gourmet Trading Company's Blueberry Farm in Bakersfield.

The gimmick is to collect each berry item with different characters on the labels. "This is one of our most popular promotions. When blueberries become Smurfberries, packaging becomes a collectible as consumers seek out a complete set," says Inestroza.

"To promote the berries at retail, we suggest displaying all blueberry packages featuring The Smurfs together with a Point of Sale sign provided by Gourmet Trading Company to bring awareness and interest to their berry section," advises Chloe Varennes, marketing manager at Gourmet Trading Company.



## California Giant Berry Farms, Cal-Organic Farms, Duda Farm Fresh Foods, Grimmway Farms and National Watermelon Promotion Board/*Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs 2*

One of the most notable cause-marketing campaigns in the industry, this collaboration will help provide thousands of nutritious meals to families in need. As part of the alliance, Sony Pictures Animation will lead the way with a cash donation to Feeding America.

In addition, the participating food growers will donate over 80,000 pounds of fresh produce to Feeding America's nationwide network of food banks.

"For Grimmway Farms, the cause marketing effort to fight the hunger epidemic by donating to those in need was very appealing about this partnership," says Bob Borda, vice president of marketing of Grimmway Farms in Bakersfield, CA.

The campaign coincides with Hunger Action Month (September), a month dedicated to raise public awareness of the more than 50 million people who struggle with hunger in the U.S. **pb**



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Conference Venue: Disneyland Hotel, Anaheim, CA  
Conference Management: Fresh Produce & Floral  
Council, La Miranda, CA  
Phone: 714-739-0177 • Fax: 714-739-0226  
E-mail: [info@fpfc.org](mailto:info@fpfc.org)  
Website: [fpfc.org](http://fpfc.org)

**July 26 - 28, 2013**  
**PMA FOODSERVICE CONFERENCE  
TOURS & EXPO 2013**

The PMA Foodservice Conference & 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  
E-mail: [solutionctr@pma.com](mailto:solutionctr@pma.com)  
Website: [pma.com](http://pma.com)

**AUGUST 7 - 9, 2013**  
**TEXAS PRODUCE CONVENTION**

Conference Venue: Westin La Cantera Hill Resort, San Antonio, TX  
Conference Management: Texas International Produce Association, Mission, TX  
Phone: 956-581-8632  
E-mail: [lilly.garcia@texipa.org](mailto:lilly.garcia@texipa.org)  
Website: [texasproduceassociation.com](http://texasproduceassociation.com)

**August 19 - 21, 2013**  
**THE PACKER'S MIDWEST PRODUCE  
CONFERENCE & EXPO 2013**

Conference Venue: Hyatt Hotel, Chicago, IL  
Conference Management: Vance Publishing, Lincolnshire, IL  
Phone: 866-671-6789  
E-mail: [mpe@heexpo.com](mailto:mpe@heexpo.com)  
Website: [midwestproduceexpo.com](http://midwestproduceexpo.com)

**August 29 - 30, 2013**  
**AMHPAC CONVENTION**

Conference Venue: Ritz Carlton, Amelia Island, FL  
Conference Management: Fresh Produce Association of the Americas, Nogales, AZ  
Phone: 520-287-2707 • Fax: 520-287-2948  
E-mail: [info@freshfrommexico.com](mailto:info@freshfrommexico.com)  
Website: [freshfrommexico.com](http://freshfrommexico.com)

**SEPTEMBER 3 - 8, 2013**  
**38TH ANNUAL JOINT TOMATO CONFERENCE**

Conference Venue: The Ritz-Carlton Golf Resort, Naples, FL  
Conference Management: The Florida Tomato Committee and the Florida Tomato Exchange  
Phone: 407-660-1949  
E-mail: [reggie@floridatomatoes.org](mailto:reggie@floridatomatoes.org)  
Website: [floridatomatoes.org](http://floridatomatoes.org)

**September 23 - 25, 2013**  
**FFVA CONVENTION 2013**

Conference Venue: Ritz Carlton, Amelia Island, FL  
Conference Management: Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association, Maitland, FL  
Phone: 321-214-5200 • Fax: 321-214-0210  
E-mail: [information@ffva.com](mailto:information@ffva.com)  
Website: [ffva.com](http://ffva.com)

**September 22 - 24, 2013**  
**FLORIDA RESTAURANT & LODGING SHOW 2013**

Conference Venue: Orange County Convention Center, Orlando, FL

Conference Management: Reed Exhibitions, Norwalk, CT  
Phone: 203-840-5910  
E-mail: [atencaza@reedexpo.com](mailto:atencaza@reedexpo.com)  
Website: [frestaurantandlodgingshow.com](http://frestaurantandlodgingshow.com)

**September 30 - October 2, 2013**  
**UNITED FRESH WASHINGTON PUBLIC  
POLICY CONFERENCE**

Conference Venue: Hyatt Regency, Washington, DC  
Conference Management: United Fresh Produce Association, Washington, DC  
Phone: 202-303-3400 • Fax: 202-303-3433  
E-mail: [info@unitedfresh.org](mailto:info@unitedfresh.org)  
Website: [unitedfresh.org](http://unitedfresh.org)

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Conference Management: Koelmesse GmbH, Koln, Germany  
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E-mail: [anuga@koelmesse.de](mailto:anuga@koelmesse.de)  
Website: [anuga.com](http://anuga.com)

**October 12 - 15, 2013**  
**NACS SHOW 2013**

Conference Venue: Georgia World Congress Center, Atlanta, GA  
Conference Management: NACS (National Association of Convenience Stores), Alexandria, VA  
Phone: 703-684-3600 • Fax: 703-836-4564  
E-mail: [show@nacsonline.com](mailto:show@nacsonline.com)  
Website: [nacshow.com](http://nacshow.com)

**October 18 - 20, 2013**  
**PMA FRESH SUMMIT 2013**

Fresh Summit International Convention and Expo  
Conference Venue: Ernest N. Morial Convention Center, New Orleans, LA  
Conference Management: Produce Marketing Association, Newark, DE  
Phone: 302-738-7100 • Fax: 302-731-2409  
E-mail: [solutionctr@pma.com](mailto:solutionctr@pma.com)  
Website: [pma.com](http://pma.com)

**NOVEMBER 7 - 9, 2013**  
**45TH NOGALES PRODUCE CONVENTION  
& GOLF TOURNAMENT**

Conference Venue: Tubac Golf Resort and Spa, Tubac, AZ  
Conference Management: Fresh Produce Association of the Americas, Nogales, AZ  
Phone: 520-287-2707 • Fax: 520-287-2948  
E-mail: [info@freshfrommexico.com](mailto:info@freshfrommexico.com)  
Website: [freshfrommexico.com](http://freshfrommexico.com)

**November 10 - 13, 2013**  
**WESTERN GROWERS 88TH ANNUAL MEETING**

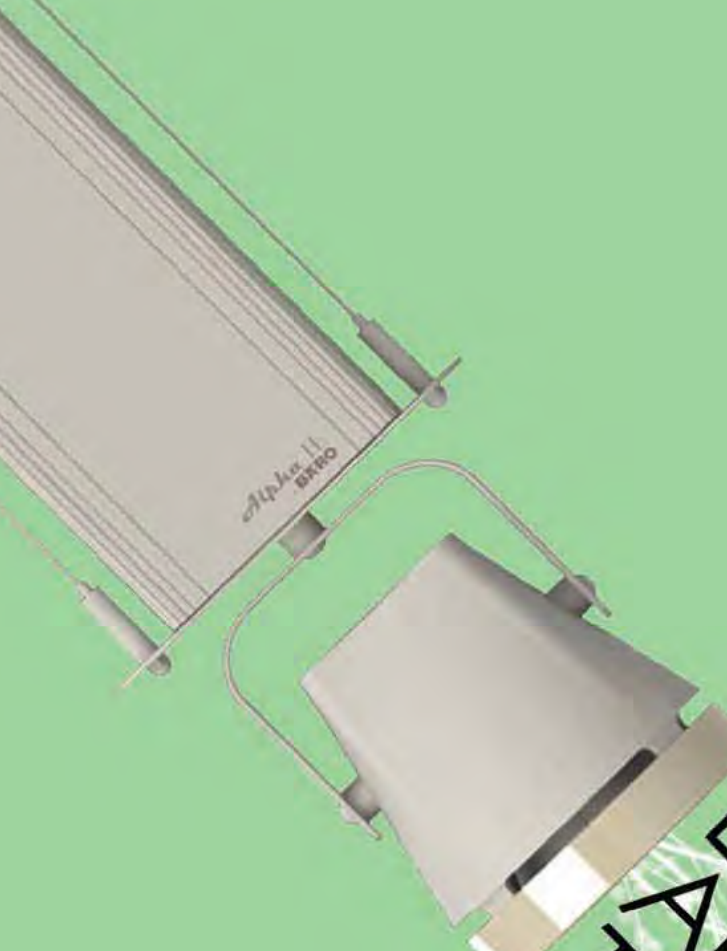
Conference Venue: Sheraton Resort Waikiki Hotel, Honolulu, HI  
Conference Management: Western Growers, Irvine, CA  
Phone: 949-863-1000  
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Website: [wganualmeeting.com](http://wganualmeeting.com)

**DECEMBER 10 - 12, 2013**  
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Conference Venue: Pier 94, New York, NY  
Conference Management: PRODUCE BUSINESS, Boca Raton, FL  
Phone: 561-994-1118 • Fax: 561-994-1610  
E-mail: [info@nyproduceshow.com](mailto:info@nyproduceshow.com)  
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# Boosting School Kids' Familiarity With Produce May Increase Consumption

BY JESSICA THOMSON, RESEARCH EPIDEMIOLOGIST, USDA AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SERVICE AND LISA TUSSING-HUMPHREYS, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF MEDICINE, UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO AND UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS CANCER CENTER

Childhood obesity is a national public health threat with approximately 15 percent of children 2 to 19 years of age classified as overweight and 17 percent classified as obese. Once believed to be adult onset conditions, hypertension, dyslipidemia, osteoarthritis, and Type 2 diabetes are now commonly seen in child populations. One strategy to fight childhood obesity, advocated by the pediatric medical community, is for children to eat the government-recommended daily amount for fruits (1.5 servings) and for vegetables (2 to 2.5 servings).

school located in Mississippi. Participation rate for free or reduced school meals was 95 percent, although 100 percent of children at this school were eligible. All 4th- to 6th-grade children were invited to participate in the study. Fruit and vegetable snacks were offered three times per week in the six-week study period. The snacks consisted of 12 fruits (green and red apples, apricots, cantaloupe, red and green grapes, kiwis, mandarin, Clementine, and Navel oranges, pears, and tangerines) and five vegetables (broccoli, baby carrots, yellow squash, grape tomatoes, and zucchini).

Before beginning the study, we measured the children's familiarity (recognition of and prior eating experience with) and willingness to try selected fruits and vegetables. Responses for willingness to try were recorded as "no," "maybe," and "yes" with higher scores corresponding to greater willingness to try a food.

The educational component of our study consisted of a short presentation in which the fruit or vegetable was named and fun facts about the food were shared with the children. Subsequently, the children were given time to eat the snack. Snack containers were weighed prior to distribution and after the snacking period to determine the amount eaten.

## Results

Our sample size consisted of 187 of the 214 (87 percent) 4th- to 6th-grade students enrolled at the rural elementary school. Prior to the study, children's recognition ranged from 9 percent (apricot) to 100 percent (baby carrot and red grape); previous eating experience ranged from 46 percent (apricot) to 100 percent (red apple); willingness to try ranged from 30 percent (grape tomato) to 96 percent (red grape); and unwillingness to try ranged from 0 percent (red apple) to 5 percent (cantaloupe).

Average familiarity and willingness to try scores indicated that children recognized and had previous eating experience with most (80 percent) of the selected 12 fruits

and vegetables, and were willing to try them. In general, if children had previous eating experience with a fruit or vegetable, they were more likely to recognize it and more willing to try it.

Average consumption amounts for the fruit and vegetable snacks ranged from 50 percent (baby carrots and grape tomatoes) to almost 100 percent (kiwis and red grapes). Average consumption amount for all snacks combined was 67 percent. In general, there was a positive association between consumption amount and willingness to try — such that, higher willingness resulted in greater consumption. While recognition did increase during the course of the study, it was not predictive of consumption.

## Industry Implications

Our study provides evidence that a school-based, fruit and vegetable snack-feeding program can increase children's familiarity with, and potentially, the consumption amount of fruits and vegetables. While familiarity was not predictive of consumption, it is possible that an indirect effect was present given that greater familiarity was associated with higher willingness to try the fruits and vegetables.

Importantly, our results show that willingness to try fruits and vegetables was high in these children, and even those indicating they were unwilling to try a specific fruit or vegetable did eat at least a small portion of the food when it was offered. Hence efforts to introduce fruits and vegetables into school meal programs through education and repeated offerings may increase students' demand for such healthy foods, both in the school and home environments. **pb**

Our results show that willingness to try fruits and vegetables was high in these children ...

However, children's unwillingness to try healthy foods, such as fruits and vegetables, has been given as the reason for their low consumption of these foods. Therefore, we conducted a fruit and vegetable snack-feeding trial to determine: (1) elementary school children's familiarity with and willingness to try fruit and vegetable snacks; (2) if a school-based fruit and vegetable snack-feeding intervention can increase children's familiarity with, and consumption of, fruits and vegetables; and (3) associations between familiarity, willingness to try, and consumption of fruits and vegetables.

## Methods

The School Kids Access to Treats to Eat (SKATE) study was a school-based, fruit and vegetable snack-feeding trial conducted with students enrolled at a rural elementary



The Agricultural Research Service (ARS) is the U.S. Department of Agriculture's chief scientific in-house research agency. Its mission is finding solutions to agricultural problems that affect Americans every day, from field to table.



# Why Not Study Obscure Items?

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

**I**t is not surprising that the comeuppance of many research reports is that more research is required. This is true more often than not, and it is especially true when it is children and their perceptions that are being studied.

Still this research includes several oddities. The study starts with a sort of “straw man,” with the researchers claiming that “...children’s unwillingness to try healthy foods, such as fruits and vegetables, has been given as the reason for their low consumption of these foods.” Presumably someone has made this claim, but it is not a common analysis of the cause of low produce consumption.

The recognition of childhood aversion toward many of the healthiest vegetable items, such as spinach, is a fair assessment; but there is no category-wide aversion to fruits and vegetables. After all, children almost ubiquitously eat lots of fruits and vegetables — bananas, berries, grapes, potatoes, corn, baby carrots, etc. There is no evidence that children are more recalcitrant about trying fruits and vegetables than other food groups — try offering tykes some liver or limburger cheese!

Some of the numbers reported are logically inconsistent indicating that the children may have not known certain terms or that they were answering in a way they thought pleased the questioners. For example, how is it possible that only 9 percent of the participants recognized an apricot while, supposedly, 46 percent of the children had eaten apricots?

Other findings are just odd. The maximum percentage of students who were unwilling to try an item was only 5 percent — and this was cantaloupe? Does this mean that more students were unwilling to try cantaloupe than broccoli?

The analysis also seems to disregard the researchers’ own findings. The researchers explain that “While recognition did increase during the course of the study, it was not predictive of consumption.” Since this explains that recognition alone doesn’t prompt consumption, the researchers’ con-

clusion is quite a stretch: “Our study provides evidence that a school-based, fruit and vegetable snack feeding program can increase children’s familiarity with, and potentially, the consumption amount of fruits and vegetables. While familiarity was not predictive of consumption, it is possible that an indirect effect was present — given that greater familiarity was associated with higher willingness to try the fruits and vegetables.”

Familiarity doesn’t seem to actually be a problem — at least on the 12 fruit and vegetable items studied here. No more than 9 percent of these students were unfamiliar with any item. If you expanded the subject population to include children raised in more affluent families, the number would probably fall further.

Raising familiarity on these items seems to be a very marginal activity if one’s goal is to increase consumption. In fact, with only 5 percent of the children unwilling to try any of these items, there is unlikely to be a lot of upside in increasing willingness to try these items.

Although the researchers explain, “...efforts to introduce fruits and vegetables into school meal programs through education and repeated offerings may increase students’ demand for such healthy foods,” the study does not establish any fact or sure solution to increased consumption. Yes, such efforts “may” do this, but they also “may not” do this. This study, though well intentioned, is just not particularly illuminating on this point.

One can think of some interesting ways to do this type of study in the future. A possibility is to repeat the study with less familiar items. It may well be that the children who gain familiarity with items they have never heard of will be more likely to consume them. But if you do the study on apples, you can’t really find that out.

Another interesting possibility would be to distinguish between availability and education. If one school simply started featuring kale salads and another featured them and included education, it would be

**Raising familiarity of already familiar items seems to be a very marginal activity if one’s goal is to increase consumption.**

interesting to see how the education component impacted trial and consumption.

Many of the nutritional benefits of produce come from eating more bitter produce items rather than sweet snack fruit. It is not clear if trialing these items actually favors consumption. A study as to the impact of trial on the sustained consumption of bitter greens by children would be enlightening.

Also, the relationship between increased consumption of any one item and total produce consumption is uncertain. Among adults, for example, there has been a boom in kale consumption. Yet it is not at all clear that the sudden rage for kale is increasing produce consumption. Perhaps consumers are simply replacing a lettuce-based salad with a kale-based salad.

Finally, the researchers begin their piece by pointing out the national problem with obesity. The obesity crisis, serious as it is, cannot be solved by shifting consumer preferences from apples to oranges. In order for produce consumption to play a role in reducing obesity, total consumption of produce must increase and replace less healthy alternatives. So instead of a candy bar, children have to eat an apple. Instead of a Big Mac, they go for a spinach salad. This study, though raising intriguing questions, doesn’t dig deep enough to give us the answers we need. Someone needs to give these researchers another grant so that they can proceed to Round II.

**pb**

# RETAILERS POISED FOR FOODSERVICE GROWTH

By James Prevor  
President & Editor-in-Chief



**T**he relationship between the produce industry and the foodservice industry has long been tempest-tossed. Restaurants and other segments of the broader foodservice industry are, of course, enormous and important customers of the produce trade. Yet their procurement is somewhat problematic. Most substantial shippers would like to establish equity for their brands, yet foodservice buyers loathe

paying a branded premium, as consumers will rarely know the branded source of the ingredients.

The relationship has also become strained because, unlike retailers that always have dedicated produce executives, foodservice operators typically do not — they have broader food and beverage responsibilities. The industry has endeavored to make foodservice operators part of the produce trade. Most notably, the Produce Marketing Association (PMA) exemplifies this by bringing foodservice operators to the very chairmanship of the association. Yet it has never really succeeded in getting the businesses to view the produce industry as anything other than an important vendor.

Companies in the produce industry have always been challenged in knowing how to be the kind of partner foodservice operators need. The commodity-like nature of much of produce has made most companies hesitant to invest in the kind of collaborative product development necessary to get items placed on menus. After all, the company that makes such investments has little assurance that it will ultimately get or retain the order, when some other producer — freed of the cost of maintaining staff to deal with such complexities — is better positioned to undercut the price.

On a policy level, the restaurant trade has used the produce industry. Four years ago, PMA, the National Restaurant Association (NRA) and the International Foodservice Distributors Association (IFDA) announced a grand initiative to double produce consumption in foodservice by the year 2020. It was a brilliant strategic move by the executives at the NRA. At a moment when the restaurant industry was under severe attack (as the restaurant industry was accused of being the proximate cause of the nation's obesity crisis), the NRA announced to legislators, regulators, NGOs and the media that the restaurant industry is on the side of the angels and is working closely with the fruit and vegetable people to boost consumption and make meals healthy. Unfortunately, the NRA has done almost nothing to achieve the goal it committed to.

It is not hard to understand why. Its membership is in the business of selling food consumers want to eat, not re-educating the masses. Sure, some politically savvy chains, such as McDonald's, realize they better keep some salads on the menu so they can stand behind the banner of consumer choice when they are attacked for being unhealthy. But, in the end, if consumers enjoy meat, restaurants will sell meat; if they like pasta, restaurants will sell pasta, and if they want produce, they will sell fruits and vegetables. Restaurants are not, however, partial to selling one over the other.

Despite these difficulties, the produce trade needs to get more, not less, engaged in foodservice. Part of the issue is, as Ed McLaughlin — director of the Food Industry Management Program at Cornell University — has pointed out, we have 100 years of good data showing a long arc of a continuous increase in the percentage of food dollars spent in foodservice rather than retail. Nothing new there.

What is much newer is that retailers themselves are increasingly becoming foodservice venues. At first, it was the large-scale stores such as Wegmans or the Whole Foods Market at Kensington in London. Today, however, it is just as true of the more upscale smaller stores. Kings recently opened a new store in Gillette, NJ, and you see the future of retailing there, with a lot less square footage in traditional grocery, an expanded emphasis

**The good news is in-store foodservice items often have very substantial produce content, and that means there is an opportunity to use these retail outlets to increase sales.**

on perishables — especially a more important foodservice offering with specialized stations.

The good news is in-store foodservice items often have very substantial produce content, and that means there is an opportunity to use these retail outlets to increase sales and boost consumption. But doing so is going to require a very different approach than the produce industry is accustomed to making when it talks to retailers.

Retailers themselves have a way to go. Some retailers have already advanced in offering restaurant-quality food, especially in the deli department. However, in share groups facilitated by this columnist, the deli group is divided between some stores still focused on old-style fried chicken, pizza and mac and cheese as the heart of their foodservice offering, and the others offer a truly delightful assortment of fresh foods, typically with a big produce component.

So the produce trade has two tasks: To catch up to the most progressive retailers and be the kind of partner these firms need to continue serving restaurant-quality food with innovative produce-centric dishes; while at the same time, the produce industry has to help nudge the more traditional retailers to progress and serve the substantial consumers' interest in healthy and flavorful options that a more produce-focused offering can bring to the table.

**pb**



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# With Wal-Mart's PTI Mandate And 100% Guarantee On Produce, One Wonders If Local Is Included Or Is There More Fluff Than Real Stuff

FROM JIM PREVOR'S PERISHABLE PUNDIT 06.06.2013

**W**e have written a great deal about Wal-Mart. Now, like a one-two punch, Wal-Mart has roiled the produce industry with two separate announcements. It declared that it would begin to enforce the requirements of the Produce Traceability Initiative (PTI) on vendors and that it would "recommit" to providing consumers with the freshest fruits and vegetables by rolling out a "100 percent money-back guarantee" for consumers. Significant organizational change would also be executed in order to accomplish this goal.

Wal-Mart's PTI announcement is interesting, if true. The letter to suppliers is robust. Let's take a closer look at some key passages:

Date: May 29, 2013

To: Wal-Mart and Sam's Club Produce Suppliers

Re: Case Labeling Standard

*As you know, both Wal-Mart and Sam's Club are longtime supporters of the Produce Traceability Initiative, its milestones and standards. Along with that, we are corporately placing a heightened focus on freshness, quality and satisfaction of the produce we sell to our customers. In the past months, we've invested significant resources to improve our freshness, flow, and store-level execution. To ensure customer confidence in produce industry-wide, food safety and traceability continue to be one of the most important focus areas.*

*The fundamental pieces are in place, and are being demonstrated on a commercial level by many small, medium, and large suppliers. It is now the time for us to move it to the norm:*

- *Effective November 1, 2013, all fresh commodity produce delivered to a Wal-Mart Distribution Center will be required to have standardized case labels, consistent with the PTI standards. Wal-Mart and Sam's Club receiving specifications will be updated with a requirement for standard case label including GTIN, Lot/Batch#, Voice Pick code and Pack- or Sell-By Date.*

- *We will work with suppliers who are making a good faith effort towards standard case labels by using the spec exception process. Through buyer discretion, additional time may be allotted to those who are working hard at achievement, but still need a little more time.*

- *Initially, product that is not label compliant will be received as A- out of spec unless an active exception has been issued by the buyer prior to delivery.*

- *On January 1, 2014, product out of compliance will be rejected as out of spec unless an active exception has been issued by the buyer prior to delivery.*

*These efforts are designed to create transparency in the supply chain so our customers can be confident in the freshness of the produce they are bringing home to their families.*

Dorn Wenninger, Vice President – Produce / Floral  
Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.

Russell Mounce, Senior Director – Produce / Floral  
Sam's Club, Inc.

If one studies this letter carefully, it is filled with loopholes: 1) It covers "fresh commodity produce," which could be interpreted to exempt branded or private label product. 2) It allows for "buyer discretion" to allow "a good faith effort" exemption. No limit to this exemption is set. 3) It specifically says that product will not be rejected if an "active exemption" has been granted.

Perhaps just as important is what is not said in the letter. Wal-Mart has strong initiatives for produce, from "Heritage Agriculture" to buying "local," and there is nothing in this announcement to indicate that Wal-Mart will insist that such vendors also conform to the standard. Since this is obviously an issue of great concern, both to the supplier community and those concerned with public policy, Wal-Mart's silence on this matter is deafening.

In addition, no mention is made of fill-ins and similar efforts by distributors and wholesalers, none of which are able to conform to this standard right now.

If Wal-Mart and other large buyers are really serious about PTI, here is what the announcement has to say:

Effective X Date, we will reject any produce that is not compliant with PTI labeling rules.

- 1) We will not provide any extensions or exemptions.
- 2) If product is not available that meets these requirements, we will do without the product.
- 3) If compliantly labeled product is more expensive than non-compliant alternatives, we will pay the higher price rather than change our standards.
- 4) We will hold all producers — local, regional, national or international — to the same standards. There will be no exemptions or postponements for local product or any other class of producer.
- 5) We will enforce the same standards on our own private label product, product owned by our global sourcing operation, etc., as we do on products of other producers.

Lo and behold, if any retailer does this — it constrains its supply chain and thus provides an opportunity for producers to profit from investing in PTI — shock of all shocks, conformity with the standard will come very quickly. Until the buyers do this, progress will be achingly slow.

To jump-start PTI, we need retailers to say: "We will not buy non-PTI compliant produce and if it is delivered, we will reject it."

Wal-Mart's "Fresh Produce Guarantee" announcement could be more far reaching. Let's examine it closely as well:

## **Walmart Launches Fresh Produce Guarantee in U.S. Stores**

*Grocer recommits to guaranteeing customers the freshest fruits and vegetables, announces changes across sourcing, training and operations*

**BENTONVILLE, Ark., June 3, 2013** — Walmart ... announced today new efforts that will ensure the quality and freshness of the fruits and vegetables that it offers customers. The retailer is standing behind this promise by rolling out a 100 percent money-back guarantee\* and making changes across



produce sourcing, training and operations.

The retailer's initiative includes:

- Delivering produce from farms to store shelves faster by purchasing fruits and vegetables directly from growers and leveraging Walmart's produce experts, distribution centers and trucking systems;
- Executing independent weekly checks in its more than 3,400 Supercenters, Neighborhood Markets and Express Stores that sell produce; and,
- Launching Fresh Produce Schools and other expanded training programs to 70,000 associates.

### **LEVERAGING PRODUCE EXPERTS AND DELIVERING FRUITS AND VEGETABLES TO CUSTOMERS FASTER**

To improve quality and freshness, Walmart has hired produce experts to work directly with farmers in the key growing regions where the company has produce-buying offices. Building long-term partnerships with farmers while having Walmart associates in the regions — and in the fields everyday — where produce is grown has made it possible for Walmart to select farmers who grow the best fruits and vegetables. As part of this program, Walmart works closely with local growers in the U.S. to fulfill its commitment to double the company's sales of locally grown produce by December 2015.

Walmart's produce offices, combined with Walmart's advanced supply chain and efficient trucking network, have enabled the retailer to decrease the days needed to get produce from growers to individual stores. Reducing the number of days produce is in transit has made it possible for Walmart to deliver a fresher product to customers so it lasts longer at home.

### **WEEKLY PRODUCE CHECKS**

Independent teams responsible for checking Walmart produce departments are going into stores each week to ensure only the freshest fruits and vegetables are on Walmart store shelves. Results are reported to every level of store management. Through this program, Walmart is benchmarking itself and its competitors week over week.

There is a bit of a flavor of "weren't you already doing this" to the announcement. It is hard to believe that Wal-Mart never had people checking the produce departments before and comparing them to competitive departments. Didn't Wal-Mart executives always try to leverage Wal-Mart's logistics abilities? Didn't the company always provide necessary training to their associates?

The announcements are sufficiently vague to sound like PR fluff. To the extent they are specific, they raise as many questions as answers.

#### **1) Buying The Best Fruits And Vegetables**

The release claims that hiring people in the field has enabled Wal-Mart to identify and buy from the people who grow the best fruits and vegetables. This doesn't really make any sense. Very small retailers can have people walk a terminal market and select not just a Washington Extra Fancy apple, but the particular lot that is extraordinary. But Wal-Mart's volume needs preclude this.

#### **2) Fresher Produce With Better Shelf Life**

There is a claim being made that somehow Wal-Mart's buying

office, logistics and trucking enables Wal-Mart to get produce to stores faster, resulting in fresher product with consumers getting longer shelf life at home. It is not clear what this meant or if it is true. In most cases, the product goes direct from a packinghouse in, say, Yakima, to a DC and then to the store — which is what happens at Kroger, Safeway or, for that matter, a terminal market. So how/if this is faster is unclear. Sure there are cross-docking efforts and Direct-Store-Delivery (DSD) initiatives, but doing these things for Wal-Mart is not really any different than doing them for Costco. It is not clear that this is a Wal-Mart edge.

If Wal-Mart produce actually had better at-home shelf life, that would be a pretty easy thing to prove and it would be a valuable thing to promote. That no such study is being proffered makes us think this whole line is just PR.

Back in the Bruce Peterson days, he had begun an initiative to deliver produce seven days a week to every store regardless of size. This basically would have eliminated the need for stores to hold any significant produce inventory — thus keep produce in optimal storage — so it provides consumers with maximum shelf-life. But that project was killed when Bruce left the company.

#### **3) Independent Weekly Produce Checks**

This is a great idea, though it is not clear what it means by the term "independent." Store level execution has been Wal-Mart's problem since the birth of the supercenter, so constant evaluation

and benchmarking against competitors can be a very useful tool. Of course, what management does with this data is the \$64,000 question.

#### **4) Training and Operations**

The one big potential "game-changer" in this announcement is the plan to provide produce training for 70,000 associates. Traditionally Wal-Mart associates are generalists, not specialists, and merchandising efforts had to be "dumbed down" to allow these efforts to be executed by staff.

Wal-Mart does not have produce department managers or produce merchandisers. Essentially, the same person who is putting out the underwear today may be putting out the lettuce tomorrow.

Now we don't know who, precisely, will get this training. Is it store managers, assistant managers or employees who work in produce? We also don't know precisely what the training will teach or what authority the employees will have to execute. Still, extensive produce training has to be a good thing for the consumer and thus for the produce industry.

Whether it is a good thing for Wal-Mart may hinge on an issue not discussed in the press release. Many years ago, when the unions were trying to organize Wal-Mart's meat operations, Bruce Peterson was able to stand before the National Labor Relations Board, raise his right hand and solemnly swear that in a case-ready meat operation, no specific training was required. This is a crucial issue in determining whether something is a separate "business unit," and thus subject to being unionized independently of the larger store.

Now, Wal-Mart just gave the unions a Valentine's Card, publicly declaring it needs to provide specialized produce training. We don't know enough yet about what the training is or who is being trained to assess all these implications. But, quite possibly, the positive PR that this press release has generated may be forgotten when the unions are using it as "Exhibit A."

**Wal-Mart just gave the unions a Valentine's Card, publicly declaring it needs to provide specialized produce training.**

# FOODSERVICE QUEST:

## The Industry's Pursuit To Balance Flavor, Appearance And Lower Cost

*By Jodean Robbins*



**T**o achieve the USDA's MyPlate goal to include fruits and vegetables on half a plate at restaurants, produce must look attractive and taste good. It's become a chal-

lenge for foodservice to find the perfect balance between appearance, flavor and cost.

Current trends indicate a prime opportunity for increasing produce consumption with foodservice playing a lead role. "The move-

ment to increase produce consumption is growing with the younger generations caring about what they eat and the fight against obesity in our country," says Rich Dachman, vice president of produce for Sysco in





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Houston, TX. "It's our job to use the highest quality product with the proper ripeness to assist the efforts being made to increase produce on the menu."

"With the explosion of celebrity chefs and restaurant shows, diners today are much more educated on specialty foods — including produce," adds Peter Grannis, director of produce for Maines Paper and Food Service, Inc., in Conklin, NY. "Produce is a key component to plate presentation, but it's crucial for the flavors to balance and to play off each other."

"Consumers equate freshness and quality ingredients to healthy options," says Gene Harris, senior purchasing manager for Denny's Corporation in Spartanburg, SC. "Fresh fruits and vegetables provide color and texture to our dishes that processed foods cannot supply. For these reasons, consumers continue to show interest in bright, fresh fruits and vegetables, which not only look great, but also fulfill their need for healthful produce."

While presentation is important for first-impression, the consequence of flavor is increasing recognized. "Taste is high for consumer and foodservice kitchen needs," says Michael Muzyk, president at Baldor Specialty Foods, Inc., in the Bronx, NY. "Chefs are keeping it simple, keeping it clean, and showcasing product taste."

"Flavor has always been a key driver," says Sysco's Dachman. "Consumer education on when to eat a product, meaning season or peak ripeness, is fundamental. I still see too many green bananas or hard stone fruits being served and turning consumers off due to lack of flavor."

Thriving operators are embarking on a quest to find the perfect balance of flavor, appearance and functionality. "In reality, flavor drives continued increased consumption," states Jerry Cerand, director and category strategy leader for produce, seafood and dairy in the strategic supply chain management group at Avendra in Rockville, MD, with over 5,000 customers in the hospitality industry. "If you eat a peach that looks beautiful yet tastes terrible, you won't want it again."

"People eat with their eyes first," says Edward Carpenito, produce manager at Performance Foodservice/AFI in Elizabeth, NJ. "If the plate is attractive to a patron, then they will order it. Flavors and colors excite everyone's palates. Proteins may be the center of the plate, but produce is the center of attraction."

## IN PURSUIT OF FLAVOR

The road of optimal foodservice produce has taken several twists and turns. "For a long time it was important to have the right size product for foodservice," relays Baldor's Muzyk. "Then operators became brand-conscious, so we had to have the right size and right brand. Then there were a few years where price was a big consideration, so we had to have the right size and the right brand at the right price. It wasn't until a few years ago that people really started asking how the product tasted."

"Regarding flavor, we endeavor to get ripe products into our restaurants in order to

maximize their peak flavors," says Sharon Lykins, senior director of product innovation for Denny's.

Current trends in organic and local are credited for the return to flavor focus. "With the popularity of homegrown, local and organic produce, the flavor and freshness component is coming into play more and more," states Joel Panagakos, sales ambassador with J. Kings Foodservice in Holtsville, NY.

"Consumers are becoming more informed and realize what fresh foods are supposed to taste like, and they're going local to obtain those great flavors," says Baldor's Muzyk. "By accident, this whole movement of local is



**As flavor becomes more important, Brix testing has been implemented. However, many experts point out that sugar content is not necessarily the best measurement of flavor.**



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bringing flavor back.”

As flavor becomes more important, Brix testing has been implemented in certain circumstances. “We started asking our growers to test the product to ensure taste quality,” reports Baldor’s Muzyk. “It is important to put our name on something that tastes good. This is especially true for the grab-n-go items.”

“We find it helpful to test the sugar content in all fruit, particularly berries, grapes and melons,” shares J. Kings’ Panagakos. “We

publish the results weekly so our clients’ chefs can make purchasing decisions.”

Some Avendra customers have given all their purchasing departments refractometers and set standards on certain fruits — even some vegetables. “They’re testing the product as it’s delivered in the door. If it doesn’t meet the requirements, they refuse it,” reports Cerand. “The challenge is that you can’t always control what Mother Nature does, and sometimes during the year, you just can’t get the

Brix you need. It’s a balancing act, and communication with our customers is crucial.”

Brix testing does have its limitations. “Brix is a measurement for sugar,” states Lloyd Ligier, vice president business development for Pro\*Act LLC in Monterey, CA. “Sugar is not necessarily a measurement for flavor. A produce item can be sweet, but not have flavor.”

Baldor’s Muzyk adds, “Growers are realizing they can get a premium for product if

## New Undertakings

Developments in innovative varieties, old standards, and unique newcomers promise aid in the quest for flavor.

**N**ew products are in continual development to help move along the noble quest to bring consistent flavor back to the plate. “The produce industry has been experimenting with new varieties of fruit and vegetables trying to gain better appearance, shelf stability and flavor for a while now,” says Joel Panagakos, sales ambassador with J. Kings Foodservice in Holtsville NY. “Examples of successes are strawberries, tree-ripened summer fruit, and varietal lettuces.”

“In foodservice, we are constantly looking for new and exciting items,” says Edward Carpenito, produce manager at Performance Foodservice/AFI in Elizabeth, NJ. “The other day, Duda Farms sent us a case of celery sticks — sounds pretty boring right? Well it turns out they weren’t celery sticks but celery straws for drinks!”

Pro\*Act was instrumental in having one of its major growers develop a new variety of green onions for a customer. “If the critical mass is there, this can be accomplished,” says Lloyd Ligier, vice president business development for Pro\*Act LLC in Monterey, CA. “Foodservice demands new, cost-effective items to differentiate themselves. Together, this need for differentiation creates new varieties. Micro greens are a good example.”

One valiant illustration is the return to heirloom varieties. “We’re seeing more and more heirloom and artisan-style varieties that match wonderful flavor with visibly pleasing presentation,” says Peter Grannis, director of produce for Maines Paper and Food Service, Inc., in Conklin, NY. “We have seen this with lettuces, tomatoes, spinach

and more.”

“There is interesting movement in heirloom varieties of certain products,” agrees Jerry Cerand, director and category strategy leader for produce, seafood and dairy in the strategic supply chain management group at Avendra in Rockville, MD. “Growers are working with these old varieties, bringing them back. Foodservice especially appreciates these different flavors.”

“We’re seeing a huge influx of heirlooms, which have a wonderful flavor profile,” says Michael Muzyk, president at Baldor Specialty Foods, Inc., in the Bronx, NY.

Nutritional benefits also affect consumption. “Together flavor and health are major forces,” says Baldor’s Muzyk. “I think the single largest explosion of a vegetable is kale.

“The trend of nutrient-dense produce is amazing,” adds Maines’ Grannis. “We’re seeing a lot of kales, chards and greens being used in different blends.”

According to Markon’s York, “The superfoods — led by the poster-children, kales, Brussels sprouts, mustard/turnip/collard greens — continue to grow in popularity. We are seeing adoption in the Midwest and more casual dining, which is a sign they are gaining broader adoption.”

“New blends of all sorts, baby kales with or without arugula, are popular alternatives to conventional salads,” York adds. “Hearts and hearts (a new blend our company introduced that combines spring mix with the inner heart leaves of romaine and green leaf) has sold very well. These are also examples of the continued migration to prepared or lightly prepped products away

from commodity items.”

The ability to insert locally grown products into the distribution chain is also helping provide flavor spurts. “Locally grown New York State fruit has become popular in the late summer/early fall,” says J. Kings’ Panagakos. “Examples include apricots, specialty plums, and donut peaches. In fall, all the varieties of local apples have become extremely popular.”

An increasing focus on flavor, in addition to appearance, is evident in greenhouse production. “We’re seeing flavor emphasis in greenhouses,” says Baldor’s Muzyk. “For a long time, greenhouse tomato focus was on the appearance; now we’re seeing a greater emphasis on taste.”

“I think tomatoes are making great progress with flavor,” agrees Rich Dachman, vice president of produce for Sysco in Houston, TX. “There are certain items like tomatoes, cucumbers and peppers making new strides in flavor, heavily driven by hot house products. Lettuce mixes and varieties are expanding beyond spring mix as well as giving the consumer choices.”

Opposite the heirloom trend, are completely new items and colors. “Cross-breeding of different products like plumcots offers something new to the market,” says Avendra’s Cerand.

“Business got more exciting with multi-colored cauliflowers in purple, copper and green,” reports Performance’s Carpenito. “A purple or a yellow carrot really grabs kids’ interest! The mini marble potatoes in all colors roasted with oregano, basil, salt and pepper provide an exciting and tasty side. People are excited about vegetables.” **pb**



**“Some restaurants have negotiated a price and take what they’ve contracted. They’re usually lean, mean and driving cost out of the equation.”**

— Michael Muzyk,  
Baldor Specialty Foods, Inc.

they Brix. However, it does often come down to supply and demand. When there is abundant supply, and price is dropping, they Brix it to try to get a higher price. But Brix testing isn’t foolproof. Just because you test a percentage of the field doesn’t mean the whole field is at that level.”

### THE FLEXIBILITY ADVANTAGE

Foodservice operators may actually have greater flexibility over retail in balancing flavor and appearance. “Foodservice has a bit of an advantage over retail because of the preparation step,” explains Avendra’s Cerand. “Since product is cleaned and sorted ahead of time, there may be more flexibility in sourcing product with some appearance defects because the prep step is culling out the bad appearance. However, you can’t cull out bad flavor.”

“Very few products at the foodservice level are served in their raw, natural state,” adds Pro\*Act’s Ligier. “Most items are peeled, diced, sliced, and so forth. There may be little difference in the appearance of the finished product.”

The flexibility in foodservice to determine the application of a specific item is another advantage. “The flavor versus appearance balance depends on application,” says Avendra’s Cerand. “An operator may need a whole strawberry for a certain dish. However, there is flexibility in that a chef has prerogative to change the application to fit the appearance of the product.”

Despite all the options, sometimes the decision does come down to appearance over all else. “The most flavorful banana doesn’t look good, and a buffet wants a nice yellow banana,” says Baldor’s Muzyk.

Avendra works hard at balancing flavor and appearance criteria for its amenity fruit programs for hotel customers. “We want to ensure that the fruits for those programs are the best we can get in flavor and appearance,” reports Cerand. “It has to look great, and the guests must be wowed when they take that first bite.”

The type of operation also may affect the

flexibility of utilizing seasonal product and pursuing optimum flavor. “A QSR, or casual dining chain, must base a menu off what’s available all year long,” says Avendra’s Cerand. “White tablecloth and smaller restaurants can take advantage of the local supply and changing seasonality because they have more flexibility. Some restaurants are getting around this by having a ‘Best of the Day’ dish which opens up options for the chef.”

“It’s not a one-size-fits-all,” concurs Baldor’s

Muzyk. “Some restaurants have negotiated a price and take what they’ve contracted. They’re usually lean, mean and driving cost out of the equation. With that comes very little flexibility with flavor. They’re not following seasonal trends. This works for some operations because it fits their business model.”

This is especially true in the fast food arena, where food cost is continually examined, and distributors are expected to work on slimmer margins. According to Tim York,



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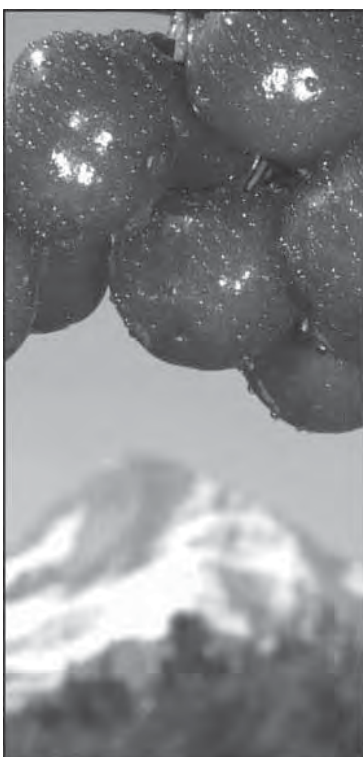
president of Markon, many QSR distributors already are reducing costs, employees and looking for leaner times ahead.

“Expect to see overhead reductions and cutbacks across the industry,” predicts York.

“There was a good article recently in *Restaurant Business* about the challenges that McDonald’s and Wendy’s have in offering price-competitive options. You know it’s a new world when Mickey D’s is not perceived

as a low cost option.”

Muzyk observes that the other end of the spectrum — the four-star, white-tablecloth operations — are interested in purchasing a handful of ingredients picked at peak perfec-



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tion. “They’re willing to work with short availability, change the menu frequently, and pay for it because their customer is willing to pay for it.”

### OPTIMIZING MENU CHOICES

Incorporating fresh options into menus is a growing priority. “We have been serving in-season, fresh fruits for several years now by incorporating them into our overall menu, in addition to limited-time options,” reports Lykins from Denny’s. “For example, we make our pico de gallo fresh from scratch every day and use fresh avocado in every restaurant. We also incorporate fresh spinach into our menu, and we are proactively seeking additional produce options that we can make available to guests.”

Working closely with suppliers and distributors will help operators best refine their options. “Some chefs are flexible and prefer local, and other operations need consistent availability year-round that requires more global sourcing,” says Sysco’s Dachman. “We should strive to serve products at their seasonal peak whenever possible. We work with customers to be sure they are

**“We work closely with our purchasing group to understand which fruits are in season, and we aim to bring those in-season options to our restaurants around that time.”**

— Gene Harris,  
Denny’s Corporation

putting products on their menu that coincide with the relevant season, and we offer availability guides for them as a useful tool.”

“We work closely with our growers and industry resources to give our customers the best information possible about seasonality and what to plan out on their menus,” says Maines’ Grannis. “We use calendars and other marketing materials. Also, being so reliant on nature, we try to have contingency plans where substitutions are ready in case of the unexpected — for example, changing the Bosc pear out for Gala apples on the bed of Tatsoi.”

“We work closely with our purchasing group to understand which fruits are in season, and we aim to bring those in-season options to our restaurants around that time,” says Harris from Denny’s. “This ensures that guests can enjoy the most ripe, flavorful ingredients in their menu dishes.

Education on the part of both operators and their customers will help guarantee satisfaction and optimal usage. “We provide our customers with a year-round product availability chart for them to use in the construction of menus,” says J. Kings’ Panagakos.

Baldor’s Muzyk provides an example to illustrate this point further, “Say you put a banquet menu out for 52 weeks a year and there are blueberries on the menu. A bride comes in to discuss the menu and do a tasting in June, but the wedding is in February. In June, the blueberries are from New Jersey, but in February they’re from New Zealand. The flavor profile just won’t be the same. In that case, we should be steering the customer to what is good in February. Operators should look at different options with similar flavor profiles.”

Maines’ Grannis adds, “We have incred-



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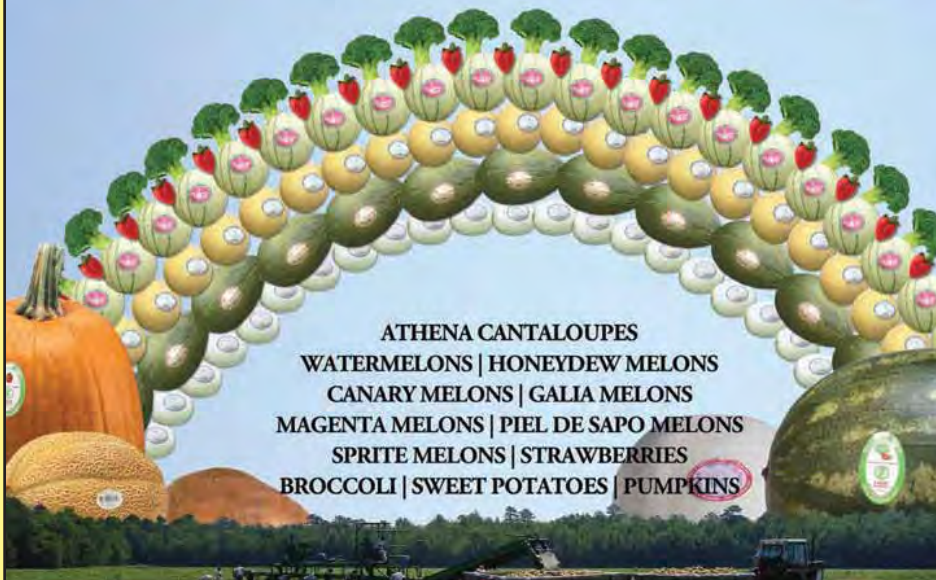
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### **IS LOCAL PRODUCE A FLAVOR SOLUTION?**

For many years, flavor has been sacrificed for availability and appearance. "Sacrificing appearance for taste will always be a stumbling block," says Baldor's Muzyk.

"Customers eat with their eyes first, and chefs are not willing to walk away from appearance. The only commodity we've seen as an exception to this is the Ugly Ripe tomato, but we had to do a lot of education about it."

Progress in the area of availability has not always helped flavor. "We say we want availability all year long, but in many cases, we're delivering a bad experience with it," argues Avendra's Cerand. "Now we're seeing a movement of buying seasonal. It's important to work with what nature delivers at the appropriate time. Eating produce in season means getting that flavor experience."

Baldor's Muzyk agrees, "We in the U.S. just don't have room for season anymore. We want all products 365 days a year, but very few items work that way as far as optimum

flavor goes. Berries traveling for weeks aren't high in sugar and don't have the flavor because the product wasn't built to be flavorful. It was built to extend shelf-life."

"For a long time, produce has been developed to travel well," says Avendra's Cerand. "Now we're seeing a movement with some growers to breed flavor back into products that have what it takes to travel well."

Local supply has risen as a kind of white knight to the flavor issue. "You pick a head of iceberg lettuce in a field in California, eat it, and it's full of flavor," says Avendra's Cerand. "However, each day it's in the supply chain, it loses flavor; so if someone is growing iceberg locally, and can get it to market within a day of harvest, it delivers a fresher flavor experience."

"We are seeing foodservice looking beyond the idea that local is a fad," says Markon's York. "Distributors are really working on ways to demonstrate engagement in local/regional products, and do it without sacrificing quality, food safety, or business efficiencies."

Nevertheless, this local solution presents its own challenges in the areas of availability, volume and food safety considerations. Food-service distributors and suppliers are working to provide solutions, especially on the food safety front. "Pro\*Act will not source any local produce in any of our 72 distribution centers unless the farm has been certified for GAP," reports Ligier.

"We are a source of information and training for our local growers to raise their level of food safety," says Maine's Grannis. "Local is an extremely important sourcing criteria among our college customers. They rely on us to ensure they serve a safe, high quality product. It is a challenge we embrace."

Providers throughout the nation and globe are also undertaking the flavor quest. "Our major suppliers go to great lengths to ship product at the highest level of quality and flavor," says Sysco's Dachman.

### **CIRCUMVENT HIGH COSTS**

While some wonder if better flavor means higher cost, following seasonality can actually lead to lower cost. Avendra's Cerand explains, "Produce is a true supply-and-demand industry. When something is in season, it generally means there is high supply — probably at peak flavor and at lowest cost. If you buy seasonally, the effect of cost is fairly limited because you're buying when supply is the greatest. Likewise, local can be lower in cost overall because it's not traveling a long way."

"Use your fresh produce distributor to provide information on the periods of highest



production, therefore the lowest price, for the products you want to incorporate into your menu,” suggests Pro\*Act’s Ligier.

Nevertheless, operations that need year-round supply of the same item do not fit this model. “When you put something on the menu, like cantaloupe, where certain times of year prices can go pretty high, it’s a challenge,” states Avendra’s Cerand. “You’re going to have to manage through the highs and lows of the season. This is where you source operators who have set menus for the year and are trying to negotiate a fixed yearly cost. Sometimes that’s the best way for them to go to market.”

Distributors help manage cost and availability. “We contract planting, growing, harvest pre-cooling, delivery and pricing,” says Performance’s Carpenito. “We have everything grown for us to our exact specs. We have strict quality control, individual temperature-controlled rooms, an unbroken cold chain and insurance. We carry all stages of ripeness and shades and grades. We carry all sizes of all fresh produce, and we do it extremely well.”

Operators are encouraged to look at the full value picture. “Without good consistent food, an operation finds it very difficult to succeed,” J. Kings’ Panagakos points out. “By balancing payroll with the addition of time-saving value-added items, operations can save on labor and use a few of the important more expensive items.”

“If all you talk about is price, you can expect to get lower quality,” says Avendra’s Cerand. “There has to be a managed relationship and a balance on what your expectations are from a flavor, appearance and cost perspective. It comes down to the customer’s reputation and integrity. If you’re getting great product from a flavor and appearance perspective, the cost is easier to deal with. It’s about total value — you get what you pay for.”

“We have found when operations focus more on the quality and yield of the produce than the invoice price, they are better able to manage their food costs,” reports Maines’ Grannis. “Is a \$16 box of lettuce, full of seeder and rust, really saving you money over an \$18 box that weighs 48 pounds and has been sourced and transported directly from the grower with the cold chain effectively managed?”

Fitting produce to the application can also help keep cost down while still maintaining optimal flavor. “We help our customers cut costs by using various sizes or grades more readily available that fit the application,” says Sysco’s Dachman. “A good example is using a #2 grade avocado for guacamole. The only defect is scarring on the skin — which the consumer will never see. This is a win for the grower by finding a home for off-grade fruit and a win for our customer by receiving a lower cost over #1 fruit that looks better but tastes the same.”

Produce represents a high impact yet

lower cost alternative to proteins. “One thing to consider right now is that the price of protein is increasing, so we’re seeing a push to fill the plate with produce,” advises Avendra’s Cerand. “But you must be sure to fill it with good quality, tasty product and not just anything.”

“Produce is more center-of-the-plate now than ever,” agrees Sysco’s Dachman. “Operations are grilling fruits and veggies and mixing combinations together previously not imagined. Many fruits are being tied into green salads, particularly berries.”

## PARTNERSHIP IN THE MISSION

Utilizing the right supplier and maintaining communication helps achieve balance. “We are proud to source fresh produce from our regional distributor partners,” says Harris from Denny’s. “Many of them source from local and regional growers when possible, and also maintain good agricultural practices. We do everything feasible to source good quality products from approved suppliers and distributors, and we work closely alongside them to deliver the best products — even when weather challenges arise or there is short shelf life.”

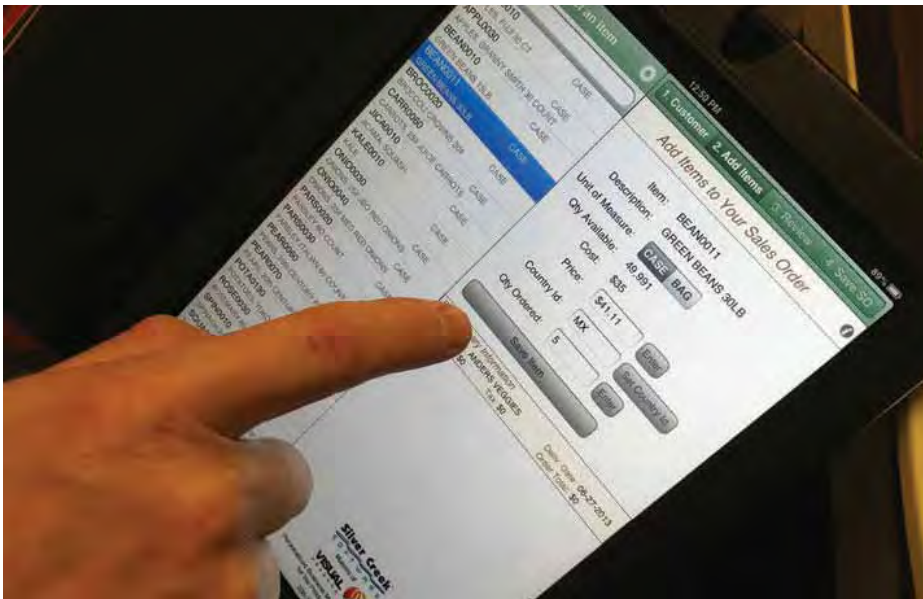
“We contract as a global company to get the best price for the best quality,” reports Performance’s Carpenito. “That doesn’t mean the cheapest. If you get the cheapest, neither you nor your customers are receiving the best.”

“Ultimately, it comes down to communication,” adds Baldor’s Muzyk. “If you’re just taking everybody’s price sheets and not talking, you’re doing your customers a real disservice. You have to get on the phone, talk to the suppliers/distributors, do your homework, and stay on the cutting edge. We’re at our best when my sales staff is communicating with the customer.”

Open and frequent communication with suppliers will help operators improve guest experience. “It’s really important for operations to keep their menus fresh,” says Maines’ Grannis. “Partnering with their produce distributor to know what is in peak season, and what’s available locally, is a great help. Our corporate chefs and specialists work closely with our customers to help them use the highest quality products at peak flavor.”

“Partnering with a good supplier is important,” says Baldor’s Muzyk. “Go visit the distributor, see where your product is coming from. Does the distributor take the same care you take in your restaurant? The reliability of your distributor is directly proportional to the quality of the product you’re getting.” **pb**





**It behooves the industry to use the convenient and efficient technology made for advanced productivity.**

ABOVE PHOTO COURTESY OF SILVERCREEK SOFTWARE. PHOTO ON RIGHT COURTESY OF PROWARE SERVICES LLC

# Software Helps Produce Companies Take The Wheel

The latest software is designed to enhance efficiencies in the produce industry, but it is up to those in the segment to implement the technology, which can serve as a central driver of business. **BY LISA WHITE**

**E**ven with today's more affordable and easily implemented software, the produce industry still lags behind other segments when it comes to utilizing new technology. "In non-food industries, companies spend about 3 percent of revenues on information technology (IT), while in the food and produce industries, that number is about 1 percent," says Angela Nardone, chief innovation officer of N2N Global, based in Longwood, FL and Oxnard, CA. "Part of the reason is the food industry doesn't view technology as an enabler or driver of business, but instead considers it a necessary evil."

With the advent of stricter food safety initiatives, and the continued innovation of software geared for the produce industry, many say the tides are about to turn.

"Software has enabled the industry, especially with the usage, design and implementation of GS1, a leading organization of global standards, and GTIN (or Global Trade Item Number)," says Charles Shafae, president of dProduce Man Software based in Half Moon Bay, CA. "Also, it has dramatically improved the

establishment of lot numbers, scanning ID, GS1 and GTIN, allowing easier food safety through traceability of produce."

**Accessibility For Productivity**

It has only been in the past 20 or 30 years that data has been collected electronically in the produce industry and consolidated into spreadsheets. For the past decade, software has become heavily utilized for these reports. In the past couple of years, produce companies sought to take these reports a step further.

"When information becomes actionable, we call this big data," Nardone says. "This involves taking a lot of data points and creating actionable information from everything that's collected." Implementing this data benefits the executives as well as the harvest and production managers.

"There are different disciplines within software, one with reporting and one with data collection," Nardone says. "We need them to come together and, for most companies, this is a task for the client."

For the data to be useful, it has to provide a conclusion, which takes time and organiza-

tion unless it is electronically organized.

According to technology suppliers, any part of the industry that uses a Warehouse Management System (WMS) is impacted by software development, especially wholesalers and distributors that supply restaurants, grocery stores, and institutions (such as schools).

Just four years ago, a company would be required to have a network of desktop computers and an in-house server to take advantage of the newest software programs. Software and hardware had to be synchronized, and an IT professional had to install the software in each machine. It was an expensive proposition that not many companies were willing to spend the time or the money to explore.

Now, there are clouds, which are banks of physical and virtual servers offsite that function as back up, so a company is never down.

"Today, you are not limited to desktops or laptops in the office," says dProduce's Shafae. "The software is available on the cloud, and any device can access it, including a smartphone, iPad, PDA, Mac or PC, as long as there's an Internet connection."

As a result, the cost of technology has gone down and will keep going down. Rather than each company having its own IT infrastructure, everything is being done online, extending a single cost.

Today's software also has different components based on the needs of the user. One thing that most programs have in common is adaptability to smartphones (a cellular telephone that includes more than the phone feature; in general, it has an operating system that allows a user to perform functions once reserved for a personal computer) and tablets (one-piece mobile computer).

There are a number of newer apps (applications) designed to increase efficiencies in the produce industry.

For example, Woodridge, IL-based Produce Pro offers a number of apps designed for produce sales forces. Its Check Out program assists produce sales people in understanding costs and pricing.

"This is a CRM (customer relations management) tool that can be used out in the field," says Courtney Heim, Produce Pro's sales representative.

Released in May, the company's newest app is Driver, which provides electronic informa-

tion on the road, such as electronic signatures, delivery details and GPS tracking.

"Traceability requirements have made it necessary to use a software solution for recording product codes," Heim says. "Even smaller distribution companies will need to track G10s and utilize scanning devices to track product. Doing this with pen and paper costs time and money."

### Big Benefits

Today's software geared for the produce industry offers a number of cost- and labor-saving benefits.

"For tracking and harvesting, software can

provide true costs by taking into account a number of variables, including chemicals, labor and application to crops," Heim says. "If a company has a packinghouse, software can help provide a better allocation for the packer's inventory by providing grower reports and settlements."

Companies that still utilize spreadsheets and consolidate this information manually can use software as a streamlined solution.

"The more information a company can provide a grower, the more likely they will do business with that firm," Heim says. "The more communication there is between the farmer and the packer, the more streamlined and cost-effective the operation will be."

The latest software can provide more insight into pickers as well, especially in terms of traceability.

"With many fresh-cut and foodservice companies splitting full cases or dividing product into fruit cups, there needs to be another layer of tracing produce in the warehouse," Heim says. "Walmart and Sam's Club will require detailed labeling on all of their products by November 1."

Because the aspects of the industry that alter food are more heavily regulated, processors have benefitted the most from the newest software innovations.

"Although integrated reporting is more of a practice due to regulatory authority requirements, it is still a benefit for growers," N2N Global's Nardone says. She explains that in the past five years, as some processors saw benefits from better reporting, they became leaders at the forefront of the industry.

The FDA's Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) has many conditions that will force the use of electronic records. For example, there are a number of requirements for importers bringing in products from foreign-owned entities, and software can help meet these regulatory prerequisites.

Reporting is one element and a benefit offered by today's software, but an even more

**"Traceability requirements have made it necessary to use a software solution for recording product codes. Even smaller distribution companies will need to track G10s and utilize scanning devices to track product. Doing this with pen and paper costs time and money."**

— Courtney Heim, Produce Pro

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## HEADWARE FUELING SOFTWARE

The creators of smartphones and tablets are partnering with software manufacturers to produce integrated solutions that are easy to install, simple to use and, best of all, affordable.

"We've stayed on top of industry hardware, making sure we understand where the industry is headed," says Courtney Heim, sales representative at Woodridge, IL-based Produce Pro.

New hardware tends to fuel the development of new software. "For example, there is new scanner technology now available, but to utilize these benefits, a company has to update its software, as well," says John Carpenter, president of Silver Creek Software, based in Boise, ID.

With the advent of cloud computing (which are subscription-based or pay-per-use services that offer IT capabilities),

companies now have a way to increase capacity or add functions without investing in new infrastructure, training new personnel, or licensing new software.

"Any hardware that can connect to the Internet can be used in achieving your objective," says Charles Shafae, president of dProduce Man Software, Half Moon Bay, CA.

"The great thing about utilizing mobile devices is the ability to not be tied to a desk in order to collect information," says Angela Nardone, chief innovation officer at N2N Global, which has offices in Longwood, FL and Oxnard, CA. "No one wants to order special hardware to run software. Today's tools make technology cheaper for companies, because they can leverage their personal technology investment for the benefit of their employer." **pb**

significant factor is where data is collected. A decade ago, smartphones weren't even on most company's radar as an information consolidation tool. Today, these small devices have made current technology more mobile.

"The utilization of mobile and data collection technology, like RF, RFID and 3D bar codes have been game-changers in technology," Nardone says. "The Produce Traceability Initiative (PTI) members understand the significance of data-collection, but when it's integrated with supply chain management, and not just traceability, it is something very special."

By implementing WMS, companies have reduced labor costs in addition to increased accuracy in inventory management and delivery of products.

"The new software has dramatically helped in PTI," says dProduce's Shafae. "By implementing paperless document processing known as Electronic Data Interchange (EDI), it has increased efficiency and speed in processing documents and effectively boosted profitability."

Since the most important challenge facing the software industry right now is PTI and food safety, software companies like dProduce Man are working with clients to improve communication with suppliers.

"By communicating PTI milestone requirements, together we can improve traceability and food safety for our clients as well as their customers," Shafae says. "The challenge here is to keep costs as low as possible so

more companies can afford it and jump on the food-safety bandwagon."

Cloud computing is one big step in the process of minimizing the cost and increasing

**"By communicating PTI milestone requirements, together we can improve traceability and food safety ..."**

— Charles Shafae, dProduce Man Software

profitability in accomplishing this goal.

dProduce Man Online is the company's first online accounting and management software for produce distributors, wholesalers, brokers and processors.

The integrated online software is customizable with several modules, including order entry, accounts receivable/payable, purchase order and general ledger. It manages lot tracking, grower accounting, traceability, inventory control and other accounting tasks. It also offers automated order entry, up-to-the-minute cost/price changes, and inventory control processing for barcoding, price lists and ware-



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**“Technology also will continue to get cheaper, especially software — which is a big win for the produce industry.”**

— Angela Nardone, N2N Global

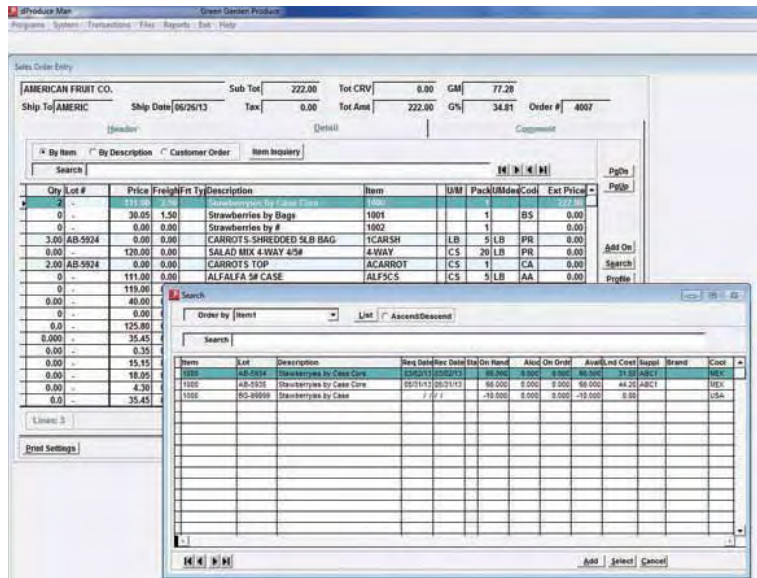


IMAGE COURTESY OF DPRODUCE MAN SOFTWARE

house management.

The program allows users to create, print or e-mail orders directly from dProduce Man Online. Another feature lets a company link its website to the software, allowing orders to be placed online.

dProduce Man Online is PACA-compliant with country of origin. Invoices can be printed in both dollars and other currencies, such as Euros.

Silver Creek Software in Boise, ID, offers software that provides companies with the ability to track produce through the supply

channel, tracing the history of each item.

“Software delivers a clear picture to consumers about where produce has gone in its journey,” says John Carpenter, president of Silver Creek Software. “We are also developing software to offer signature capture on smartphones and to provide updated information back to the warehouse.”

Fresno, CA-based Orange Enterprises, Inc.,

has integrated its newest mobile technology into payroll accounting software, providing users with a paperless and wireless labor tracking program.

“The PET Tiger program manages all aspects of labor and productivity in an operation, creates its own badges, and works in conjunction with a variety of devices to carry out the data collection and transmission processes,” says Udi Sosnik, marketing director of Orange Enterprises. “Each user has a unique configuration for collecting data from multiple types of devices into one central database. Payroll data is sent to any accounting system or service.”

The software’s HR module allows users to create, print and manage hiring reports like the I-9 and W-4, and a bonus module facilitates the creation of bonus pay for supervisors and employees. The program manages delivery drivers’ pay as well as records and verifies safety and training data. A mapping module visually shows, on a map the status of a company’s labor force. Product label traceability also can be managed with the program.

In the years ahead, the company’s focus will be on large data and how to make this relevant and actionable for companies. IT investments will help businesses acquire usable data to benefit their operations.

As companies seek more efficient ways for acquiring data, software programs will become enhanced and unanimously applied in the produce segment.

“In terms of the supply chain, we will see technology create economic advancements and improvements in businesses,” Nardone says. “Technology also will continue to get cheaper, especially software — which is a big win for the produce industry.”

pb



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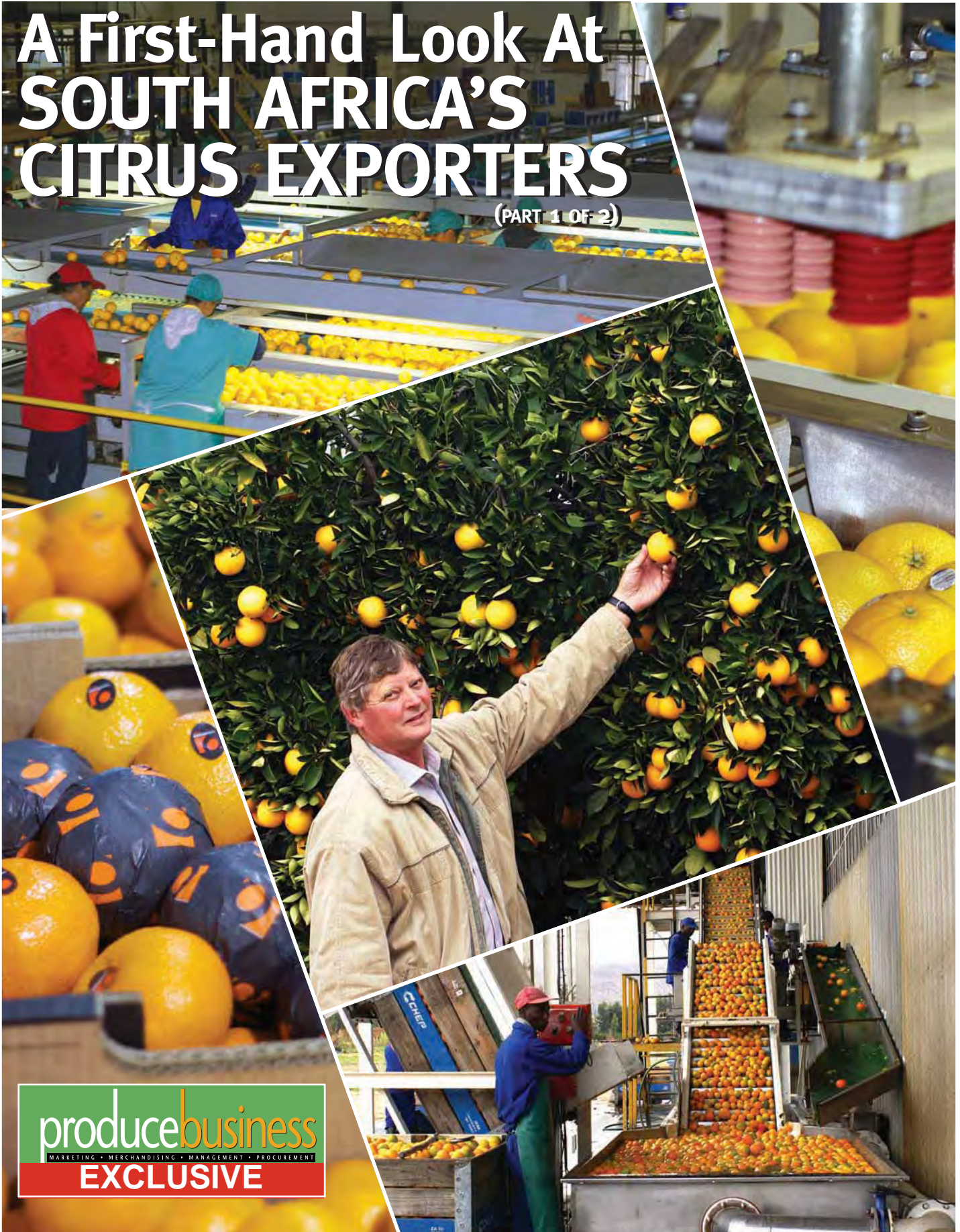


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# A First-Hand Look At SOUTH AFRICA'S CITRUS EXPORTERS

(PART 1 OF 2)



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CENTER PHOTO OF GERT KOTZE, CO-CHAIR AT WESTERN CAPE CITRUS PRODUCERS FORUM (WCCPF) AND MANAGING DIRECTOR OF CEDARPACK.





# Consortium Of Citrus Growers Aim To Grow Exports To U.S.

WRITTEN BY MIRA SLOTT PHOTOGRAPHY BY JULIA SELTZER

**S**outh Africa's progressive citrus growers' consortium faces a pivotal crossroad in its future survival and growth, and U.S. retailers would be well served in influencing its outcome.

Hyper-focused on the U.S. summer citrus market — a window decidedly complementing California supply from mid-June through October — the Western Cape Citrus Producers Forum (WCCPF) is taking aggressive actions to control its destiny as the cornerstone in its drive to the next tier, according to Johan Mouton, the newly appointed chairman of WCCPF and managing director of Mouton Citrus, a family grower/exporter located in Citrusdal, a landmark growing hub.

U.S. retailers meeting passionate producers in the country's fertile and historic citrus growing regions, during the robust harvest season, are struck by the enormity of the untapped retail sales potential. Touring high-tech packing house operations, visitors observe workers hand-sorting the premium quality fruit for U.S. customers, which include Wal-Mart and Sam's Club, Costco, Whole Foods Market, Kroger, Safeway, Trader Joe's, Publix, Winn Dixie, and several Ahold USA banners among the mix. Some of the larger retail chains source the fruit in combination with a direct program as well as via importers.

While South Africa is the second largest citrus producer in the world next to Spain,



Gerrit Van Der Merwe, Jr. and his father, Gerrit Van Der Merwe, from ALG show an example of the company's customized packaging.

only 3 percent (3 to 4 million boxes) of its annual citrus crop currently ships to the U.S. WCCPF members recognize the great scale of the U.S. market, and they are eager to ship more.

"The U.S. product is really the cream of the crop," says Stiaan Engelbrecht, a director of WCCPF and managing director of Everseason, an export company he founded. "There is a gap to be filled, untapped potential, and I think we should be able to grow substantially. It is such a high value, but a difficult market to supply. Because of the long stretch of time to deliver to the U.S. market, we need supermarkets to buy into the program. The cost to us is double — with no margin for making mistakes," he explains during PRODUCE BUSINESS' recent visit to South Africa.

As South American countries have gained competitive access, WCCPF has been forced to re-strategize and differen-

tiate. "The U.S. market is our lifeline," says Gert Kotze, co-chair of WCCPF and managing director of Cedarpack [pictured on page 35]. "The cost for us requires a highly disciplined approach, but the return is enough to generate a sustainable, productive market. If not, my farm and many others won't be here anymore."

"Challenges and opportunities must be viewed in the context of the citrus industry's pioneering and significant role in South Africa's complex and far-reaching post-Apartheid development plan," according to Gerrit van der Merwe, a director of WCCPF and owner of ALG Farms — a deep-rooted, vertically integrated family business. Touring the expanse of his operations, he points out the oldest farm in the area founded by his family in 1750. "My house is older than your country," he adds, warmly opening the door to his American guests.

## EVERYONE PULLING IN THE SAME DIRECTION

WCCPF is ramping up its quest to increase awareness with U.S. retailers and consumers about its summer citrus program, as well as its transformative Harvest of Hope economic empowerment mandate, according to Gabri van Eeden, a founding director of WCCPF and managing director of Goede Hoop, one of the largest packing houses in South Africa. Harvest of Hope envelopes WCCPF's core business principles at a time when consumers' shopping behaviors are increasingly premised on corporate social sustainability.



Newly appointed chairman of WCCPF, Johan Mouton (far right) stands with his family. Mouton Citrus is a grower/exporter located in Citrusdal.





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## SOUTH AFRICAN CITRUS EXPORTS

[Editor's Note: Part II of this series will explore U.S. retail partnerships and marketing strategies linked to Harvest of Hope — a multi-faceted program that gives disadvantaged workers land ownership and company shares, in addition to supporting skill development, education, childcare and healthcare. It has been viewed as a shining

model of success and one that can be transferred to other commodities, industries and regions.]

"When a Kroger executive came to visit us in South Africa, the executive, like many others, said he knew of the nature and ideal growing climate here. It was not until he witnessed it first-hand that he could truly

comprehend its enormity and understand our program to differentiate supply for the U.S. market," says Engelbrecht.

Stringent USDA-APHIS protocols include product inspections both inside South Africa and upon arrival in the U.S. Solid infrastructure and fluid transport departing every 10 days allow for consistent, just-in-

## SHIFTING UNDER PRESSURE: ALL FOR ONE AND ONE FOR ALL

BY MIRA SLOTT

**T**he 250-plus member Western Cape Citrus Producers Forum (WCCPF) was established in 1999 after gaining access to penetrate the U.S. market, but its first attempts were enveloped in problems.

"Summer citrus, as a category, wasn't known to retailers. We shipped the wrong quality and the wrong sizes during the wrong timeframes. There were too many exporters. Fruit sat idle in the wrong hands, and we lost a lot of money," says Gert Kotze, co-chair of WCCPF, managing director of Cedarpack.

"We went to the U.S. and saw Australian citrus selling for twice the amount of money," admits Kotze. "We now had a benchmark, quality product, and a coordinated, disciplined approach to the market.

"Australia had multiple export channels but only a single importer in the U.S.," adds Piet Smit, vice chairman of the Citrus Growers Association, a director at WCCPF, and producer at Cedarpack. "We decided to form an alliance to target this very specific U.S. market. We put our resources together for economies of scale and to achieve the necessary vessel volumes for shipping. We reduced the number of importers, and we sourced directly with retailers like Wal-Mart," explains Smit.

"Our U.S. market strategy is based on an aligned pathway to the consumer," says Johan Mouton, chairman of WCCPF and managing director at Mouton Citrus. "Forming an alliance allowed us to take ownership of our business down the supply chain."

"The big challenge was the fragmented supply chain and breaking through the silos to get product to market," adds Johan's son Boet Mouton, director of business development at Mouton Citrus.

"Our strategy centers on preferred suppliers and a premium market. It is very costly for us to maintain this disciplined



Piet Smit is a director at WCCPF and producer at Cedarpack.

approach. Ability to successfully comply to protocols only works if you have supply chain volume efficiencies, the best product, the best service, and the best providers," says Johan. "When it comes to government access and protocol, it's better to negotiate together."

"What started to have legs in 2000/2001 suddenly took off and grew exponentially, but peaked in 2006," says Johan. Chile and Peru were offered access to the U.S. citrus market. Chile had a larger traditional flow in the U.S. with grapes and salmon, both on the West Coast and the East Coast.

Oranges were still a major competitive advantage. "Massive growth took off with easy peel seedless," explains Boet. "Remember, we only export in the East, so this was a much more targeted area. Chile grew easy peel very aggressively, and it became too costly for Australia."

Boet speculates that the increased exposure across the country lifts awareness for the category overall. "We will keep our focus. We're continuously trying to position with new varieties, and we have been on the forefront there," Boet adds.

Topography, climate and resourcefulness permit flexibility in this regard,

according to Gerard Stone, a director at WCCPF as well as grower and director for Everseason, based in Citrusdal, South Africa. "We grow at all different elevations with so many differentials to time harvests through the season," says Stone, noting that diversity within growing regions helps to extend the season and offer U.S. retailers more options.

"The U.S. is a dynamic market, and nothing is cast in concrete. The market will change year to year, and we have to continually adapt to competition from other markets," says Kotze.

"About five years ago, Chile gained access to the U.S. for easy peel clementines/mandarins, and four years ago for navels," Kotze explains. "Chile is a well-seasoned trading partner with the U.S., sending everything they can in all sizes and quality, with the ability to go East and West — putting the summer citrus category under pressure."

South African producers felt the heat. "The second year Chile entered the U.S. market, we only sent half the quantity of easy peels," says Kotze. The market became saturated. Furthermore, Chilean exports have about seven to 10 days of travel to the market. "It's a 28-day period for us from harvest to arrival in the United States, with our travel time 24 days."

"We have focused on reliability and consistency of supply by examining quality, external color, cleanliness and internal brix/acid ratios in order to accommodate U.S. consumer preferences," Kotze says.

Kotze also notes that retail flavor profiles vary greatly. "The UK market is a little tangy, the Japanese market is a bag of sugar, and the U.S. wants balance and consistency. Quest one: product must be within parameters, and we'll only send it if it meets all the standards. That's what has driven U.S. market growth."

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## SOUTH AFRICAN CITRUS EXPORTS



Jaco Burger, a director at WCCPF and co-owner of Market Demand.

time deliveries. “The most difficult challenge is tackling logistics to supply the market while meeting the demands, restrictions and protocols,” says Engelbrecht. “If we don’t get a certain volume for shipping, it’s too expensive. A minimum of 380,000 pallets is considered breaking even for us. With exchange rates, we would need 430,000 pallets; for perspective, if we ship 3 million boxes, we lose 3 million Rand [South African currency].”

“I think retailers understand the complexities, but what are they willing to do to support it? At the end of the day, this is a business with the best deal and arrangement considering the economic factors,” says Engelbrecht. “We have a little edge on Chile, but we can’t rest on our laurels.”

“At WCCPF, people took a leap of faith. Everyone is pulling in the same direction — highly structured to hit a specific standard, superior eating quality, the right sizes, and laser attention to detail,” says Jaco Burger, a director at WCCPF and co-owner of Market Demand, a vertically integrated firm in the Paarl region. “We need to distinguish ourselves in this oversupplied commodity business,” says Burger. “Easy peels are the

future,” he contends, noting the extensive efforts to develop new varieties.

As a young director in a sea of veterans, “My role at WCCPF is getting people to collaborate on standards to enable long-term success for everyone here. One bad orange can hurt the entire industry,” says Burger.

The other essential component is more first-hand interaction with U.S. supermarket executives to build successful, profitable partnerships. “We invite retailers to visit South Africa to take a closer look at our orchards and packing operations and see how things really work.”

“Coming into an incredibly competitive market, the South African growers have done an admirable job standing together — on a voluntary basis — to coordinate and maintain a very high standard,” says Marc Solomon, senior vice president at Capespan North America, one of the largest importers of South African citrus to North America, headquartered in St. Laurent, Canada. “Retailers have seen the consistent, good quality fruit from South Africa for a while and are willing to pay a premium for it.”

Solomon splits his time between the office in Gloucester City, NJ, and South

Africa, where he manages Capespan’s North America interests along with his private farming operations.

“South African growers could treat each other as competitors and undercut one another, but they take a higher road. In Chile, the farmers produce really good fruit, but the lack of coordination results in inconsistencies. Retailers often don’t know what quality they will get when they open a box,” claims Solomon.

In the big picture, the citrus business between South Africa and the U.S. is an example of how the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), which offers tangible incentives to African countries to open their economies and have free markets, has been important to South African growers, workers and to U.S. consumers. The AGOA also conducts business with the U.S. without tariffs or fees. There is concern that the AGOA needs to be renewed in the next year. “We’re working on all ends of the spectrum to make that happen,” says Solomon.

“We need to expand what we’re doing with U.S. retailers, and go further into the country,” says Suhanra Conradie, CEO of WCCPF. Access to other ports in the U.S.



## SUSTAINABLE MATING GAME

**R**etailers want to know that citrus growers are implementing aggressive phyto-sanitary measures that don’t involve toxic chemical spraying but keep citrus product pest free. Even in the heart of South Africa, producers are coming up with advanced scientific methods that are safe, chemical-free and enhance the quality of fruit, according to Sampie Groenewald, general manager of X Sterile Insect Technique (XSIT).

XSIT was started by Citrus Research International (CRI), a government venture between South Africa and the USDA, to commercially eradicate the insidious false codling moth (FCM) in an innovative and environmentally friendly way.

SIT is the process where masses of FCM are raised, sterilized and released across thousands of citrus-growing hectares to mate with live insects in the orchards with no resultant offspring, thus significantly lowering the wild population.

“It’s a green way to go, slowly and surely reducing the amount of chemicals applied,” Groenewald explains. “The chemicals we use are also organic and do not effect the fruit in





Everseason's Stiaan Engelbrecht shows off the packaging for his Nina citrus pack — named after his daughter.

could be quite impactful. "If we have direct access to other ports in the United States, it will be cheaper, more efficient, and more affordable for consumers," says Conradie.

Because product is perishable, and cold chain requirements are so long, gaining compliance to unload through different ports would be ideal. However, this access would involve bilateral agreements between the USDA and DAFF [Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries — South Africa's equivalent to USDA]. In exploring options for growth, one thing is paramount, "South African citrus growers know we have to be in the U.S., and the only way is the U.S. way; we either comply with demands and regulations or we're not in the market," says Conradie.

"Ships are unloaded every 10 days at the Port of Philadelphia in Gloucester City, NJ," explains Solomon. Efforts are underway to expand further into Western markets, either by unloading to other ports or trucking to other parts of the country. Texas is one place that the WCCPF is qualifying, but there is still lots of red tape.

**BUILDING BRAND & SHELF SPACE**

"We have a solid product," says

Conradie. "The infrastructure and cohesive shipping, open collaborations on operations, and flow of information with importers and retailers are strong. All steps are being taken; we just need shelf space to promote our fruit and more visibility at retail to build on what we have," Conradie continues.

"Growing from within is important. We already have senior retail partners on board, but we need more commitment toward South African citrus to expand to the next level," says Conradie. "The retail buyers often don't know South African citrus or even recognize that we have citrus," claims Conradie, regarding the importance of investing in marketing and promotional campaigns.

"We need to redirect our approach, brand what we have, make it unique, and capture the U.S. consumer," says Lisa Packer, founding principal at Root Strategies, a public relations/marketing firm based in Wayne, PA, representing WCCPF.

"Our logo represents all elements of South Africa, but one of the most prominent is the lion, which is uniquely South African and symbolizes the pride of our land," says Packer. "King Citrus, our new friendly lion mascot, will be touring a variety of iconic and well recognized U.S. locations such as Times Square and the United Nations in New York, along with the White House and the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C. The publicity will marry the iconic U.S. landmarks with South African summer citrus. The King Citrus mascot will also be distributing collateral and recipes along his travels.

"We're trying to draw consumers to South African citrus so they will add it to their shopping lists and incorporate it in

their menus. An orange is an orange, in terms of taste, but South African citrus is top grade quality. We are developing recipes based on regional tastes, rather than introducing South African specific cuisine," explains Packer.

"Since South African citrus will never be local, we're mixing citrus into local recipes. We'll be in New England and New Hampshire advertising cold water fish dishes, such as planked halibut with an orange avocado salsa and a citrus lobster roll," says Packer.

Packer is excited about a new promotion coming up this year with DeMoulas Market Basket, a 70-plus-store chain, headquartered in Tewksbury, MA. Working with Capespan North America, South African growers will be in-store to meet consumers. A chef will also be present to cook up recipes that incorporate South African citrus with a twist on familiar flavor profiles.

"Another avenue is to intrigue consumers by introducing them to the stories of South African citrus producers," explains Packer. "As corporate social responsibility and sustainability practices become more important to consumers, our goal is to build partnerships with retailers such as Whole Foods Market, which have been at the forefront of linking Fair Trade practices to their product offerings."

"It's a Cinderella story in many ways," says WCCPF's Conradie. "This program has enabled our country to take its rightful place in the world. We're creating a model that allows our industry and other commodities to generate consortiums and collaborate with different countries, which produces jobs throughout the supply chain and presents benefits to everyone." **pb**

anyway. There is an ironic synergistic effect: creating this disruption in mating with this technique where we want to encourage mating for sterilization," Groenewald points out.

The results, since initial testing in 2006, have been excellent. "We are currently covering 85 percent of the area," shares Groenewald. "We would like 100 percent, but smaller growers haven't been able to afford the program. It's pure economics, but without a comprehensive approach to eradicate the problem, there's a chance of

regeneration, similar to what can occur with cockroaches."

At the same time, there is no chance of resistance. "We bring in new genes from the field to incorporate into the process, should there be any change in genealogy. The false codling moth is very adaptive and is attracted to other commodities, such as avocados and table grapes, where XSIT is in joint trial projects," Groenewald notes. "We produce 30 million sterile codling moths, and in the summer, the life of the moth is just five days, but it can do a lot of damage

in that short lifespan."

Overseeing the process in action, Hein Stoffberg, the logistics manager responsible for monitoring all releases, coordinates with the pilot, Lawrence Robinson, whose plane is loaded with 1 million moths — enough for spraying 1,000 hectares. On this particular day, Stiaan Engelbrecht, a director of WCCPF and managing director at Everseason, joins PRODUCE BUSINESS on site to provide insight on the program's value. "This is our savior for the U.S. market and worth the large investment." **pb**



## GlobalTrade Symposium

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Over 100 varieties of peaches are grown in New Jersey.

# Demand For ‘Local’ Increases New Jersey Stone Fruit Sales

The Garden State’s stone fruit deal carves a niche market in Northeastern retail business. **BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD**

**N**ew Jersey is well known for its tomatoes and blueberries. Less recognized on a national scope, yet equally valuable, are its peaches. Last season, some 92 growers encompassing 5,500 acres in primarily five southern New Jersey counties produced an average-sized 60-million pound peach crop with a total wholesale production value of \$39.6 million.

This ranks New Jersey fourth nationally in peach production behind California, South Carolina and Georgia, according to an August 10, 2012-released report by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service. The Garden State’s peaches are shipped all over the eastern United States and Canada to farmers markets, specialty produce stores, restaurants and retail grocers.

“Supermarket shoppers in New Jersey and neighboring states are well aware of, and specifically look for, the Jersey peach,” says Jay Schneider, produce and floral director at Acme Markets, a 114-unit chain headquartered in

Malvern, PA, with stores in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware and Maryland. “We bring Jersey peaches in as soon as they are available. The Jersey peach has a great local tradition in this marketplace along with it being a great tasting piece of fruit.”

## CENTURIES-OLD INDUSTRY

The great taste of New Jersey’s peaches is the product of industry know-how that dates back to the 1600s. The peach was the first fruit in the state to receive commercial attention. In 1683, peaches were shipped to New York by the wagonloads from New Jersey orchards, according to the undated report, *A History of the New Jersey Peach*, written by Ernest Christ, Rutgers Cooperative Extension Professor Emeritus in New Brunswick, NJ.

Jerome L. Frecon, professor emeritus at Rutgers University and horticultural consultant for the Clayton, NJ-based NJ Peach Promotion Council, explains, “A lot of New Jersey families have been entrenched in peach production for generations. This has given them the infrastructure and knowledge

to produce a high-quality crop. Sandy soils that allow for adequate drainage, an abundant water supply, and winters where there are plenty of chill hours without being too harsh, allow maximum production of quality fruit.”

One of the New Jersey peach industry’s chief challenges is competition from other states. California’s Central Valley starts harvest before New Jersey’s traditional first mid-July start and runs later than the end of September, thus putting a large volume of fruit in the market during New Jersey’s season. Georgia’s peach crop is usually just finishing up or out of the market when New Jersey starts, yet there is a significant volume of South Carolina fruit sold throughout the East Coast into the beginning of August.

Bill Nardelli, Sr., president of Cedarville, NJ-headquartered Nardelli Bros. Inc., a 100-plus-year-old company that grows and markets between 60 to 80 crops including peaches and nectarines, says, “We do have a freight advantage over fruit coming out of California. Plus, a lot of local retailers like to promote an ‘Eastern’ peach.”

Then, there is what Frecon calls the “iron curtain” of Labor Day. “Retailers, especially the large national ones, don’t want to feature New Jersey peaches in September. They have either made commitments to California for this time or they switch to apples. This has created a problem. In the past, we’ve harvested up to 40 percent of our crop in September. Now, work is underway to develop early and mid-season varieties.”

Small independents, such as Pennington Quality Market, a single-store in Pennington, NJ, carve their niche by offering New Jersey peaches the entire season. “We start with peaches in July and carry them until the season ends in September,” says Mike Oliver, produce manager at the Pennington Quality Market.

On the opportune side, New Jersey peaches and other stone fruit are produced and packed within 250 miles of 45 million people.

Acme Market’s Schneider says, “Due to our proximity, logistics are not a challenge for us, but an advantage. We are able to get deliveries seven days a week of fresh picked fruit.”

Pennington Quality Market’s Oliver agrees. “I get peaches picked in the morning and on our shelves in the afternoon. We buy our fruit from Pineland Farms in Hammonton, NJ. They truck it to a farmers market in Trenton, NJ, and since we’re just 15 minutes away, they deliver to us too. Customers want fruit grown as close to home as possible because it’s perfectly ripe and tastes really good.”

Bob Von Rohr, director of customer relations for Glassboro, NJ-based Sunny Valley International, which represents four family-owned farms that grow approximately 15 million pounds of stone fruit and packs under the “Jersey Fruit” and “Just Picked” labels, says, “Since most of our stone fruit is shipped to customers within a one- to two-day ride, they are left on the tree longer to obtain a higher maturity level, or high sugar/acid ratio, thus ensuring a better eating experience for the consumer. In addition, every farm that harvests New Jersey peaches for the wholesale market uses hydro-cooling to maintain quality and flavor.

Riper fruit may or may not command a premium at retail.

Acme Market’s Schneider says, “I think Jersey peaches stand on their own for taste and local roots in the area. Customers already



PHOTOS COURTESY OF WAKEFERN FOOD CORP.



equate the fruit as tree ripe due to it being locally grown.”

### SEASONAL AVAILABILITY AND VARIETIES

Over 100 varieties of peaches are grown in New Jersey. Ninety percent of these are yellow-fleshed varieties, and 4 percent are white-fleshed, according to the New Jersey Peach Promotion Council. Yellow- and white-fleshed nectarines comprise 6 percent of the state’s stone fruit crop, and donut or flat peaches comprise less than 1 percent.

“Yellow peaches are expected to start mid-July and run through the middle of September,” says Sunny Valley’s Von Rohr. “Early yellow peach varieties are Flamin’ Fury, Sunbrite and Desiree. These are followed by Redhaven, John Boy, Salem, Starfire and Bellaire. Midseason peach varieties include Allstar, Harrow Beauty, August Prince, Contender, Loring and Blake, while Encore, Autumnnglo, Big Red and Parade are late season varieties.”

Growers such as Santo John Maccherone (owner of Circle M Farms in Salem County, NJ, a fourth generation family farm with 150 acres of stone fruit orchards) have been testing new varieties developed at the Rutgers New

Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, such as the yellow-fleshed low-acid Gloria, to replace the Cresthaven peach variety. “We have two test blocks, and the Gloria has great color and flavor. It harvests in August.”

White flesh peaches are available from mid-July through the end of August. Varieties include Lady Kim, Sugar May, White Lady, Klondike, Sugar Giant, Lady Nancy and Snow Giant peaches.

“New Jersey nectarine varieties are sought-after due to their high red color and excellent eating quality,” says Sunny Valley’s Von Rohr. “They are available for a short window, from the last week in July though most of August. Varieties start with Eastern Glo followed by Harblaze, Honey Blaze, Summer Beauty, Sunglo, Red Gold and Fantasia.

“The new Avalon variety of yellow-fresh nectarine arrives early or mid-July,” says Rutgers’ Frecon. “Early nectarine varieties tend to be small, and the chains want large fruit whether it is peaches or nectarines. The Avalon is a good-sized piece of fruit.”

Growers aggressively bloom thin to assure large fruit size. “That’s because bigger tends to be better when it comes to retail sales,” says Acme Market’s Schneider. “We spec a 2.75-inch diameter peach.”

“The norm used to be 2.25-inch diameter,” says Nardelli Bros.’ Nardelli. “Not anymore. Now the chains want at least 2.5- or 2.75-inches. That’s because the general thinking is that small fruit isn’t ripe. That’s a shame because small ripe fruit actually have more



sugars for its size. In other words, there's some really flavorful small fruit out there."

The customary pack in New Jersey is a half-bushel, or 25-pound, volume fill box. Other pack sizes are two-layer Panta-Pak, single-layer tray packs, 4- and 6-pound club packs, gift boxes, totes and clamshells. There are also 3-pound bags for small fruit.

"Since New Jersey's peaches and nectarines are sold 100 percent to the fresh market, breeders and growers are looking to diversify their product mix to entice retailers to carry more SKUs and thus devote more display space to the state's stone fruit," Rutgers Frecon explains. "There's no market for second grade fruit, juice or fresh-cut options for smaller fruit. That's why growers in recent years have added the flat or donut peaches. That way, retailers can carry up to five SKUs — yellow- and white-fleshed peaches, yellow- and white-fleshed nectarines and flat peaches. There's the possibility of even more SKUs when you get into different types of packaging."

According to Pennington Quality Market's Oliver, "We carry at least three to four SKUs of New Jersey stone fruit in season and more if we can get them."

"We've planted four varieties of black plums this season," says Circle M's Maccherone. "We'll see how they do."

#### UNIQUE MARKETING AND MERCHANDISING EFFORTS

The central marketing support for New Jersey-grown stone fruit comes from the Trenton, NJ-headquartered New Jersey Department of Agriculture's (NJDA) the "Jersey Fresh" advertising, promotional and quality grading program.

Sunny Valley's Von Rohr says, "The NJDA does an outstanding job with supporting growers and promoting the New Jersey peach. For example, they place timely consumer ads in print media, in the New Jersey Metro area, and orchestrate targeted promotions for peak production periods as well as promote August as New Jersey's official 'Peach Month.' In addition, they send weekly crop updates and forecasts to accompany ordering and planning promotions."

The NJDA offers free point-of-sale materials with the Jersey Fresh logo. These include price cards, brightly colored 2-foot by 3-foot banners that read: "Born to be Keen, Jersey Fresh Peaches," and consumer-oriented brochures with storage and nutrition information.

"This summer marks the fifth season that the New Jersey Peach Promotion Council, which represents most of the state's peach

growers and all of the state's peach wholesalers, will host its promotional "Peach Parties" at farmers markets, supermarkets and restaurants," says Council spokesperson, Pegi Adam. "We started with 18 parties in 2009 and did 31 last year. We invite media, our New Jersey Peach Queen, and chefs from local restaurants to prepare peach dishes and sample the fruit. We have face painting, balloons and peach tattoo giveaways for the kids. We also distribute some very nice recipe brochures with nutrition information for the

adults. We're trying to get supermarkets more involved with our Peach Parties."

ShopRite was one retailer that hosted a Peach Party. Last year, the 240-plus store chain headquartered in Keasbey, NJ, hosted a Saturday farmers market at one of its locations. The promotion featured the New Jersey Peach Queen, New Jersey peach farmers grilling peaches, corn sampling, peach giveaways and other activities.

"In the past few years, we have had the New Jersey Peach Queen visit select stores

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“Bigger tends to be better when it comes to retail sales,” says Jay Schneider of Acme Markets. “We spec a 2.75-inch diameter peach.”

along with local radio remotes. We run the peaches at a special low retail, coupled with the Queen promoting the local peaches,” says Acme Market’s Schneider.

The New Jersey Peach Promotion Council also conducts print advertising, online

marketing and social media, in addition to publishing a Wholesale Peach Buyers’ Guide. This year, the Council will host a Peach Pie contest in six Peach Party venues throughout the state. Two winners will be chosen from six finalists live

on morning news shows in Philadelphia and New York City. Finally, retailers creatively show merchandise and actively promote New Jersey peaches. Acme Market’s Schneider says, “We will have a 4- to 6-foot breakout locally grown display that will showcase the fruit.”

Similarly, ShopRite’s in-store farm stand is “a great way to draw attention to and highlight locally grown produce such as peaches,” says Santina Stankevich, media relations for the Wakefern Food Corp., in Edison, NJ. “We work directly with local farmers, growers and Departments of Agriculture to source locally grown fruits as well as vegetables for ShopRite stores across six states — New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Delaware and Maryland.”

New Jersey stone fruit is displayed in two or more 4-foot by 4-foot bins during the height of the season at Pennington Quality Market. “We’ll tie in peach glazes and pie crusts in the produce department and have our bakery make fresh peach pies for sale. In addition, we actively cut and sample the fruit for customers as well as advertise the peaches for as low as 99-cents per pound. Our customers want local peaches, and we make it easy for them.” **pb**

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# Where Do Suppliers Envision The Specialty Produce Category In The Year 2020?



With the influx of ethnic-inspired cuisines and the movement of convenience eating, specialty foods have a bright future.

**KAREN B. CAPLAN**  
CEO and President  
Frieda's Inc.  
Los Angeles, CA

First of all, the specialty produce category in conventional retail outlets will only be a component of the overall specialty produce arena that encapsulates many channels of distribution. Due to the popularity of online grocers (Amazon Fresh, Fresh Direct, and the like), consumers will be able to order most any specialty item they want and have it arrive the next day (or sooner).

The proliferation of CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture), or home delivery of local or regional produce, will be booming. To differentiate themselves, local produce delivery



companies will offer more and more specialty produce — bringing even more attention to the specialty category.

In conventional supermarkets, perishable departments will continue to grow, and specialty produce will be seen as an even more important part of “the mix” in produce. Without a wide variety of hard-to-find ingredients

in stores, consumers will go online, or down the street.

Company C-level executives will constantly measure customer satisfaction, and variety will be evaluated and focused on as a point of difference.

Corner produce stands, farmers markets (and patisseries, charcuteries, etc.) will all be

proliferating. Shoppers want a personal connection when they buy their food. They also want to support their local neighborhoods, so these corner produce stands will be able to offer “the best produce selection” for their neighborhood, which of course will promote even more diversity of product offerings.

The “micro” markets will facilitate the expansion of the “micro grower.” Small growers, with special varieties (of citrus or tomatoes, for example), will find niche markets for their products. More specialty items will be able to come to market, labeled with their ranch names, and the names of their farmers. Just think of the expansion as the current “local program” on steroids.

By definition, specialty items will always be the fringe items. If it grows too large in volume, then it is no longer a specialty. So items that are considered specialty in 2013 — will most likely



be “mainstream” in 2020.

In summary, I am extremely optimistic about the future of the specialty produce category! According to the National Academy of Sciences, there are between 20,000 and 80,000 different edible species on the planet. Currently, we commercially grow only about 200; so there will be no shortage of new products to introduce!

**ROBERT SCHUELLER**  
Director of Public Relations  
Melissa's/World Variety Produce  
Los Angeles, CA

The focus with new specialty items is driven by convenience. We will see a number of newer



fruits and veggies populate the U.S. — such as finger limes, mangosteens, dragon fruit, etc.

A typical supermarket's produce department carries about 350 produce or produce-related items. We figure that the department carries about 15 to 20 percent of specialty produce items. When people have an enjoyable experience dining out, they want to duplicate that experience at home. Most often, that is how people get acquainted with a particular type of produce item, so it's important for the industry to expand its specialty produce.

Technology is also important for the food industry. In Produce, it allows for the freshest product delivery to the final customer. The Internet will continue to support food knowledge and recipes.

All in all, the specialty produce industry presents huge opportunity for retailers and foodservice professionals to explore and diversify consumers' tastes in the U.S. marketplace.

We have a very positive and exciting outlook here at Melissa's/World Variety Produce Inc., the largest distributors of specialty produce in the U.S. with over 1,200 items that are carried seasonally and throughout the year.

**CHARLIE EAGLE**  
Vice President, Business Development  
Southern Specialties  
Pompano Beach, FL

When I entered the specialty produce arena in 1979 (growing fresh herbs), fresh tomato consumption was probably about 10 pounds per year, per person. Today it has nearly doubled. Those tomatoes were mostly green-gassed product. Currently the category includes heirloom tomatoes, teardrops, multi-colored varieties, Romas and more.



In this same manner, we can expect to see growth in other specialty categories. Southern Specialties is constantly trialing seed varieties, products and growing methods that yield better

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Compared to products like lettuce, potatoes, onions and tomatoes, Southern Specialties' crops will still be considered specialty. What will change is the relative volume of consumption.

As consumers are exposed to the great flavors, textures and nutritional benefits of our French beans, sugar snaps, asparagus and other vegetables and fruits, we will see continued growth in those product lines. Of course, there will be new additions. These may be new products or variations on existing products.

We will see retailers and foodservice operators move away from identifying the produce items as "specialties." They will become more mainstream, available and even better. Also, pricing will continue to be approachable.

Tropical fruits and vegetables will also trend toward being more accessible and commonplace. Expect growth in mangos, papayas and Latin-cooking vegetables to skyrocket. These are great fruits that have huge appeal, vibrant color, delicious flavors and exciting health benefits.

We will see offshore production continue to be an important facet of the produce industry. Fields and packing facilities in most countries are certified for a high level of food safety and quality assurance. Ideal weather conditions, less expensive acreage, and an accessible labor pool of skilled farm workers are needed to grow specialty items that require intensive handwork. Logistics will continue to improve, enabling offshore product to reach store shelves quicker and with better control of the cold chain.

Expect more offerings in the value-added sector, as well. Gen X'ers and Millennials will continue to make meal decisions on the spot and look for quick solutions for tonight's dinner. Microwave cooking, steam-in-bag, pre-cooked and marinated products will all be part of the regular menu.

**RONNIE COHEN**  
Vice President of Sales  
Vision Import Group  
River Edge, NJ

The specialty produce category in 2020 will surely look much different than it does now. If we look at any retail specialty area, you will see them become more mainstream in seven years. After reviewing the topic with my sales team, we came up with a few specific predictions:

Mangos will have multiple varieties on the retail shelf at the same time and also have fruit from other hemispheres. The category will look similar to what we see now for summer fruits (e.g., stone fruit and its vari-



eties). Also, as the diversity of our population grows, so will the specialty items category. Along with the changes of the population will come unique foods and recipes. Stores will have new ways to differentiate themselves with these new sought-out items.

Many of the items presently categorized will become mainstream as our population continues to diversify. Constant online development will make information, with regard to identifying new items, accessible, and advancements in logistics worldwide will make them attainable.

Currently, fruit grown in small lots, usually organic and targeted to a very specific customer base at high prices, is a specialty. The influx of people from all over the world is creating a global marketplace for food items and supply sources, and the logistics to send items to the public are constantly evolving.

For example, quinoa (a grain from South America, high in protein and low in fat) was discovered by people searching for an alternative protein source to animals. Its popularity exploded such that the export price became high, and now the local population cannot afford to buy it for daily use.

Specialty items seem to have two different definitions: one is product that is only available for a short period of time and is sought after by consumers, the other is an item that the "average" consumer is not familiar with, but the product is readily available. These products often start from one ethnicity and then spread into mainstream as their cuisine and population grows.

Along with communities becoming more diverse, communication is becoming faster and easier; more opportunities to share and blend new foods and/or cuisines is probable.

We would like to see retailers consistently feature new items at the peak of their season. Each month showcase a new fruit and/or vegetable along with education regarding its origins, health information, and of course, the best way to cut and cook the item.

With these approaches, we can continue to make produce fresh and exciting to the end user.

**pb**





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GRIMMWAY FARMS PETITE CARROT PASTA WITH  
ARTICHOKE HEARTS AND BRUSSELS SPROUTS  
IN A DELICATE CREAM SAUCE

### MANN PACKING COMPANY, INC.

MANN'S ARCADIAN HARVEST™ RUBY SALAD WITH  
POACHED EGG, LARDONS & BRIOCHE CROUTONS

### NATURIPE FARMS LLC

NATURIPE® FARMS AVOCADO PINEAPPLE BLUEBERRY SALAD







## AVOCADO AND PICO DE GALLO SNACK

SERVES: 8 TO 10    PREP TIME: 5 MINUTES    TOTAL TIME: 10 MINUTES

### Ingredients

- Whole wheat baguette sliced 1 in. thick (Can also use large multi-grain crackers, saltines or pita chips)
- 8 oz Del Monte® fresh cut Pico de Gallo
- 8 oz Del Monte® Fresh Hass Avocado Pulp
- 1 Lime
- Salt and Pepper
- Extra Virgin Olive Oil

### Directions

Cut baguette into slices about 1 inch thick and drizzle with olive oil. Toast slices and place on a plate. Spread Del Monte® Fresh Hass Avocado Pulp on bread and top with a spoonful of Pico de Gallo. Squeeze lime juice over slices and add salt and pepper to taste. Enjoy as a quick, fresh snack or an easy appetizer.



### TIPS AND TECHNIQUES

Our Del Monte® fresh cut Pico de Gallo and Fresh Hass Avocado Pulp are best kept refrigerated at a temperature of 33-39°F. This will help maximize freshness and keep the fresh produce at its peak of ripeness.

### UNIQUE ATTRIBUTES

Del Monte® fresh cut Pico de Gallo is made with 100 percent all natural, fresh ingredients that include red bell pepper, tomato, red onion, jalapeño, and cilantro. It is cut and prepared at one of our nine strategically located fresh cut facilities reducing safety issues and prep time for retailers and restaurants.

Del Monte® Fresh Hass Avocado Pulp is made with Hass avocados and has no additives or preservatives. It can be served as a

healthy dip, act as a great spread substitute, or provide a recipe with a great ingredient base. With an extended shelf life, our Hass Avocado Pulp reduces waste and prep time.

Del Monte Fresh Produce is committed to maintaining the highest food safety standards to ensure that we provide safe and wholesome products to all of our customers. We practice HACCP-based programs, making sure that our quality and food safety standards always exceed the most stringent requirements in the industry. It all comes back to food safety as we provide vertically integrated products and utilize tight incoming inspections at facilities. Our strong distribution capabilities and quality assurance programs ensure consistent and safe products for our customers.

### PRODUCT AVAILABILITY GUIDE

Del Monte® Fresh Hass Avocado Pulp is available year-round and is found nationwide in select stores.

Del Monte® fresh cut Pico de Gallo is available year-round with ingredients that come from different countries throughout the year. It is available in a variety of sizes and is found in many retail, mass merchandise, and convenience store outlets nationwide.

### BUYING PRACTICES

Retailers and restaurant operators should purchase the freshest product available. Buying Del Monte® fresh cut products as frequently as possible throughout the week will help keep inventory fresh. It is also important to practice "first in first out" as far as usage. Planning ahead for any declines in business based on seasonal availability, weather conditions, and other factors should also be noted.



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## Your Sides

These days, many of your restaurant's patrons crave healthy side options with their entrees. Del Monte Fresh has the perfect solution with our Fresh Cut Fruits and Vegetables. Our pre-cut, packaged fruits and veggies allow you to save valuable time in the kitchen and reduce waste. So cut yourself a break. Let Del Monte Fresh do the work for you.







## GRIMMWAY FARMS PETITE CARROT PASTA WITH ARTICHOKE HEARTS AND BRUSSELS SPROUTS IN A DELICATE CREAM SAUCE

SERVES: 4 TO 6

### Ingredients

- 24 oz of Grimmway Petite Carrots
- 2 cups of artichoke hearts halved
- 2 cups of brussels sprouts halved
- 1 lb of short cut pasta — penne rigate, gemelli or any spiral cut pasta — it holds the sauce
- 32 oz low sodium and fat free chicken stock plus 2 cups of water
- 4 oz of diced pancetta
- 2 T of parsley chopped fine
- 2 T minced garlic
- extra virgin olive oil

- 3 T Butter
- 2 cups of heavy cream
- ¾ cup of Parmigano Reggiano

### Instructions

Boil pasta in chicken stock and water until *al dente*, drain and set aside.

Roast Brussels sprouts with light coating of extra virgin olive oil and salt and pepper at 350 degrees on a 1" baking sheet until cooked and slightly golden – toss for even cooking. Remove from pan and set aside.

Steam carrots in large shallow saute pan in water with a pinch

of sea salt for 7 minutes until almost cooked through but still *al dente*. Drain and set aside.

Saute artichokes in large pan with enough olive oil to coat pan. Add salt and pepper to taste. Cook until tender and slightly golden.

Set aside.

Pre-heat small pan on high heat. Add pancetta and continue to stir until browned.

Set aside.

In large pan add butter and garlic and cook on medium heat quickly so garlic does not burn.

Add heavy cream and stir

constantly until slightly reduced. Add parsley and cheese. Continue stirring constantly. Take off of heat and add pasta, Grimmway Petite Carrots, Brussels sprouts, artichokes and pancetta.

Combine thoroughly.

Top with a little extra Parsley and Cheese.

Boun Appetito!

### STORAGE AND 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 and bananas).
- Whitening of peeled baby carrots is due to natural dryness; a quick ice water bath will freshen and restore color.



### GRIMMWAY FARMS

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## MANN'S ARCADIAN HARVEST™ RUBY SALAD WITH POACHED EGG, LARDONS & BRIOCHE CROUTONS

SERVES: 4

### Ingredients

- 6 cups Mann's Arcadian Harvest Ruby
- 4 fresh eggs, poached
- 1 small finely chopped red onion or shallot (¼ cup)
- 7 ounces bacon lardons brioche croutons (see recipe below)
- mustard vinaigrette (see recipe below)

### Preparation

Prepare the brioche croutons and mustard vinaigrette; set aside.

In a large frying pan over medium heat, fry the sliced bacon lardons until crispy. Remove bacon pieces and place into a microwavable bowl. Set aside.

For eggs, poach according to general instructions for poached eggs. Adjust the time up or down for runnier or firmer yolks. Cook 3 to 5 minutes, depending on firmness desired. Lift each perfectly poached egg from the water with a slotted spoon, but hold it over the skillet briefly to let any water clinging to the egg drain off. Drain well before serving. Keep the poached eggs warm by covering with aluminum foil or a plate.

To serve, divide the salad greens among four individual serving plates. Sprinkle with

chopped onion. In the microwave, reheat the lardons for a few seconds. Remove from microwave and divide over the top each individual salad. Place brioche croutons over the top of each salad. Lay a poached egg on top of the salad and croutons and drizzle a little mustard vinaigrette over the top. Decorate with slices of tomatoes and serve with fresh crusty bread.

Serve the remaining mustard vinaigrette in a small bowl. Serve immediately.

### BRIOCHE CROUTONS

- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 4 thick slices (about ½-inch) of brioche style bread

Preheat oven to 325 degrees F.

In a small saucepan over medium heat, heat olive oil. Add the garlic and cook 3 to 5 minutes or until it begins to color lightly; remove the garlic and discard. Remove from heat.



Brush the garlic oil on both sides of the bread slices. Cut the bread slices into large cubes. Arrange brioche cubes in a single layer on a baking sheet. Bake 10 minutes; turn bread slices over and bake for an additional 10 minutes. Remove from oven and set aside.

### MUSTARD VINAIGRETTE

- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- Coarse salt to taste
- Freshly ground black pepper to taste
- A little hot water
- ¼ cup chopped parsley leaves

In a small bowl or jar, whisk together the olive oil, vinegar, mustard, salt, and pepper. Add additional vinegar or mustard depending on taste. Whisk in a little hot water. Add the parsley; set aside.

*\*Developed by Chef Kevin Hincks for Mann Packing Company, Inc. 2013.*



### TIPS AND TECHNIQUES

- Let the lettuce flavors shine with minimal dressing.
- Best paired with classic vinaigrettes vs. heavy cream based dressings.
- Yields 30% more than spring mix.
- Use in place of butter lettuce recipes

### UNIQUE ATTRIBUTES

First of a kind to FOODSERVICE. An exclusive salad blend with unique colors, flavors and textures: Mann's Scarlet Butter Salanova® lettuce is delicate and velvety in texture with sensational flavor and beautiful red and green color. The Ruby sweet crisp frisée lettuce give wonderful texture and crispness, but with a sweet, not bitter taste. And the green leaf lettuce adds volume and contrast to this only one of a kind blend. All fully mature, petite whole leaves, which are more robust than baby lettuces. Single cut, once at the base, eliminating pinking normally seen in chopped lettuces.



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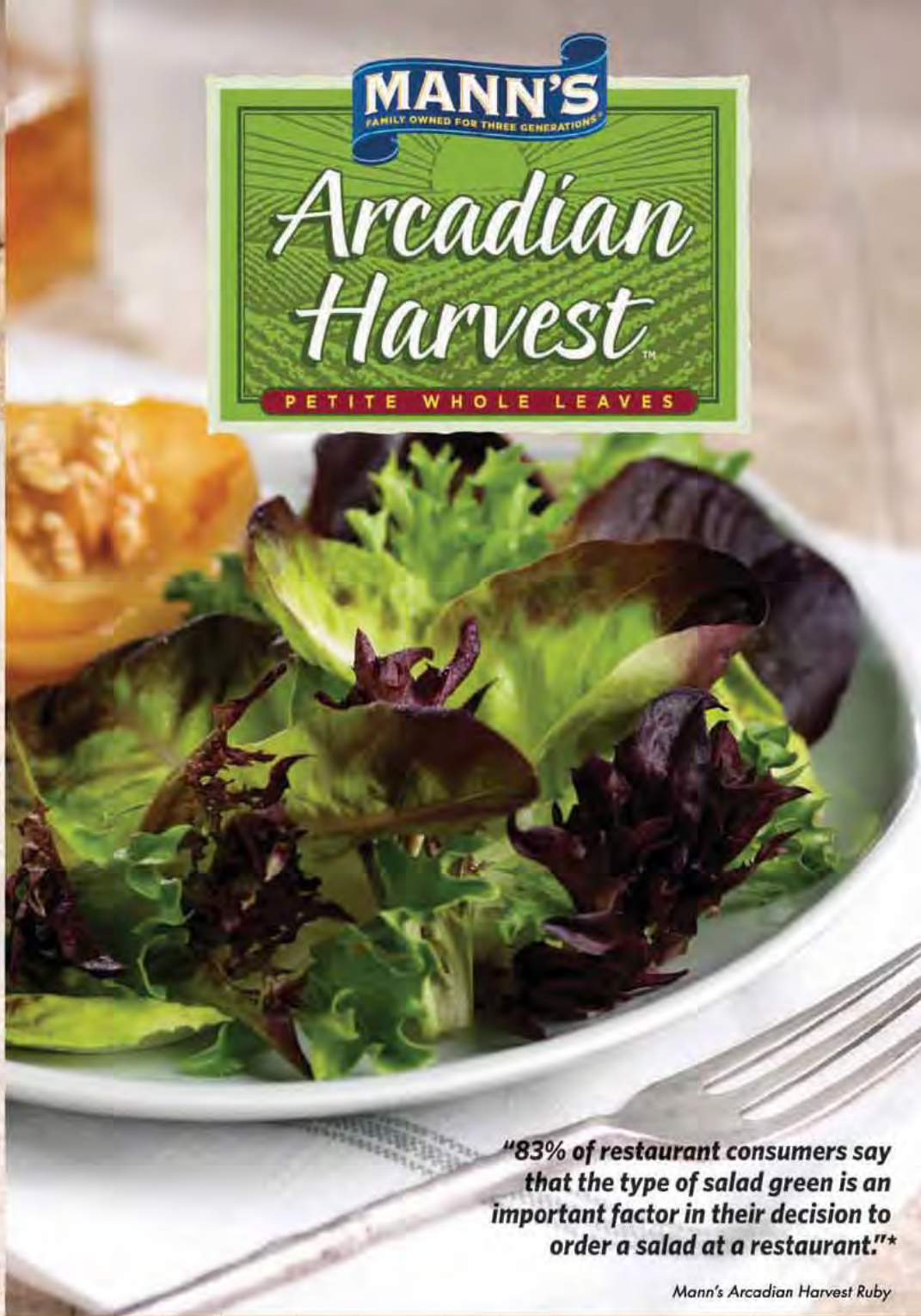
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\*Technomic, The Lettuce Revolution, 2013



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## NATURIPE® FARMS AVOCADO PINEAPPLE BLUEBERRY SALAD

SERVES: 6    PREP TIME: 25 MINUTES    COOK TIME: 10 MINUTES    TOTAL TIME: 35 MINUTES

### Description

This is a perfect salad to serve with grilled entrees. Naturipe® ready-to-serve blueberries, avocados and grilled pineapple combined with mixed greens, red onions and a citrus vinaigrette for a colorful and refreshing salad.

### Ingredients

- ¾ cup diced grilled pineapple
- ¼ cup orange juice
- 1 Tbsp. lime juice
- 1 Tbsp. orange zest
- 1 tsp. lime zest
- ½ cups vegetable oil
- 6 cups mixed lettuces and greens
- ¾ cup diced ripe, Avocado
- 1 cup Naturipe® ready-to-serve Blueberries
- ¼ cup thinly sliced red onion

### Instructions

Grill fresh pineapple slices until lightly caramelized and showing grill marks on both sides. Remove from grill and dice. Measure and reserve any extra for another use.

Combine juices and zest in a bowl. Whisk vigorously while slowly drizzling in the oil until completely combined.

Reserve a small amount of dressing. In a large bowl, toss the mixed lettuces and greens with the remaining dressing. Divide greens evenly onto serving plates.

Using the same bowl, combine the diced grilled pineapple, avocado, Naturipe® blueberries, red onions and reserved dressing; toss to coat. Disperse the mixture evenly over the greens and serve immediately.

### UNIQUE ATTRIBUTES

Given the multitude of uses, it is no surprise that Naturipe berries are making their way onto menus where the use of a fresh berry was previously uncommon. Quick-service and fast casual dining segments are showing interest in berries to add freshness, great taste and health to their menus.

- Fresh berries are now found as a colorful topping on top-selling entrée salads in quick-service restaurants.
- Blueberries are also newly available as a nutritious mix-in for on-the-go oatmeal at national quick-service restaurants and coffee chains.
- The latest parent-pleasing trend in fast-casual restaurants is serving a kid-sized assortment of sweet fresh berries to child guests upon seating.

Using blueberries is now easier than ever with Naturipe's new RTE extended shelf life blueberries. This unique harvest-to-package system lengthens the shelf life of pre-

washed fresh blueberries for up to three weeks (when properly refrigerated). This process ensures all blueberries are triple-inspected, washed and placed in modified-atmosphere packaging, producing a high-quality blueberry that is ready to serve. This new FRESH line allows more restaurants to offer fresh, health favorable berries — previously thought impossible.

### PROMOTION

Restaurants and foodservice operators can capitalize on the health benefits of berries in promoting dishes to customers:

- Blueberries offer great taste and convenience along with disease-fighting health benefits.
- One cup of fresh or frozen blueberries is only 70 calories and delivers 4 grams of fiber and 24% of the daily required vitamin C.
- They are also a top source of disease-fighting antioxidants.
- Berries, including blueberries, raspberries, blackberries and strawberries, give the biggest antioxidant bang for the buck compared with other fruits.

### TIPS

- Fresh berries add color, flavor and texture to any menu item. Fresh berries will help:
- Increase profits
  - Lower food costs

- Simplify BOH operations
  - Increase perceived value of menu items
  - Offer healthy, desirable menu choices
  - Stay current with new menu trends
  - Satisfy customer demand
- Add berries to your menu year-round. Blueberries are easy to use. There's no cutting, peeling or pitting. Just give them a quick rinse and they're ready.



The versatility of blueberries goes far beyond snacking as they can be incorporated into any meal. Blueberries can go sweet or savory — experiment to combine them with different flavor profiles.



### NATURIPE FARMS LLC

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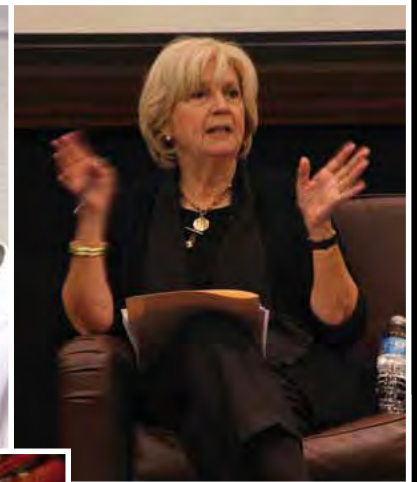
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# New York's Produce Market

## A Beacon of Light and Hope

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The new One World Trade Center towers over 1,776 feet and serves as an icon of freedom. New York's produce trade also serves as a beacon of opportunity for the individuals working to supply the region's 50 million consumers.



# HUNTS POINT: THE HEARTBEAT OF THE PRODUCE INDUSTRY IN THE METRO NEW YORK REGION



A place pulsing with frenetic energy and tremendous spirit.

BY MICHAEL FEMIA

**L**ynchpin of New York's produce trade, the Hunts Point Produce Market is a place where retail and food-service buyers can procure any produce item from anywhere at any time. The Market is also a key outlet for regional farmers to distribute local produce, for larger growers to balance out

their supply channels, and it is a place of opportunity for many budding businesses.

People unfamiliar with the Hunts Point Produce Market may be surprised at how many successful businesses are literally fueled by the products they buy from this sprawling 113-acre distribution center in the South Bronx. Home to 40-plus wholesalers and service providers catering to

New York's diverse restaurant and retail trade — many owned by first and second-generation immigrants — Hunts Point is a place of aspiration for dreams that can be turned into reality with a little luck and a lot of hard work.

The scale of the Hunts Point Produce Market reaches far beyond the confines of New York City and is unlike any market in





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*Photos courtesy of Mark Seetin, US Apple Association*



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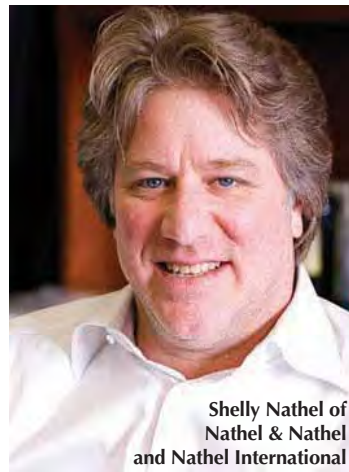
Joel Fierman of Fierman Produce Exchange



Harris Mercier of Fierman Produce Exchange



Dana Taback of Fierman Produce Exchange



Shelly Nathel of Nathel & Nathel and Nathel International



Joe and Billy Fierman of Fierman Produce Exchange



Myra Gordon of The Hunts Point Market Cooperative Association and Lori Hirsch DeMarco of LBD Produce

the country. The numbers alone give a sense of the enormous potential for business: 8 million appetites in the five boroughs of New York City alone, plus a broader metropolitan area of over 50 million consumers and countless tourists and business visitors demand every imaginable type of fresh produce.

“The Hunts Point Produce Market serves over 10,000 restaurants, 2,500 green grocers, ‘shorts’ for all the major chains, and it helps feed over 30 million people within a 75-mile circumference,”

says Mario Andreani, general manager for Katzman Produce.

Because the Market is a source of supply for export shipments, smaller secondary wholesalers and processors of all sorts — even for shippers to supplement orders when supply is tight — one understands the magnitude of why the Market is so important to the entire industry and the City’s economy.

The Market impressively supplies the bulk of produce at every level of the food business, from the mango in a cab driver’s

lunch bag, to the specialty items on the \$295 *prix fixe* menu that the business-people in the backseat are en route to feast upon once they arrive at one of New York’s upscale restaurants.

Lights and landmarks aside, New York City is home to the state’s most affluent and most economically challenged neighborhoods as well as host to a multitude of cultures. However, the common threads uniting residents from all walks are not as apparent. Perhaps the most ubiquitous, but overlooked, example is fresh produce





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A buyer on the Market with Top Banana's Darek Kuras



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Howard Ginsberg of A. J. Trucco, Inc.



Josh Fierman of Fierman Produce Exchange



Toni Settani of Fierman Produce Exchange



Tony Biondo of A.J. Trucco, Inc.



John Stewart of A.J. Trucco, Inc.



Joel and Pamela Fierman of Fierman Produce Exchange



Peter Levantino of Guinta's Meat Farms



Alexander Familante and Sal Vacca of A. J. Trucco, Inc.

from the Hunts Point Terminal Market.

"At Hunts Point, we have all the quality and variety in the world to choose from," says Joel Fierman, principal of Fierman Produce Exchange, Inc. "The customer base here ranges from the food coop in your apartment building to some of the biggest supermarket chains in the Tri-State area. The market services anybody looking for great produce."

Over the course of a single day, customers of all types pass through the Market. "There's a customer for every package out there," says Marc Rubin, pres-

ident of Rubin Brothers Produce Corp. "From 8 p.m. until around 2 a.m., it's the better package trade: usually brokers and purveyors that buy for better appearance and represent high quality stores. They need to know that the product will sell well at a regular retail price. From 4 a.m. to 6 a.m., there are retail buyers still looking for a good package. They're willing to shop a little harder and fight on price."

Marc's son Cary Rubin, vice president/sales, adds: "Whatever we have that's distressed is separated, and there's a certain customer base that comes in to

look through it. Late in the morning, there are more customers looking to buy off-package items for cheap, but it's (by no means) only poorer product being bought during those hours. There are products sold less expensively throughout the market simply because they have to go. Our items don't live forever."

This comment is echoed by Myra Gordon, executive director of the Hunts Point Cooperative Market, "You can get any tier of product quality you want here, from a premium product to a No. 3 product that has been consigned into the



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Robt. T. Cochran & Co. Team

market because it is less-than-perfect. Whatever a retailer is willing to take the time to shop for, the product can be found. Customers willing to do that can make a living here.”

It also should be noted that this broad range means that growers can also make a living at the Market. Unlike large retailers that buy only specific sizes, grades and varieties, the wholesale community at the Hunts Point Produce Market serves as a

marketing partner for farmers in the north-east, across the country, and around the world. The merchants of the Market work with growers to help them sell what they need to sell, not just what large chains look to buy.

**SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE**

With one of the most high priced real estate markets in the country, the City is hardly a haven for large-format supermar-

kets. With a few exceptions, such as the 60,000-plus sq. ft. Whole Foods Markets in Tribeca and on Columbus Circle, independents and mid-sized chains dominate the retail landscape and comprise the majority of the customer base at the Market.

“We are New York’s small business distribution center — the other side of the coin to the major supermarket world,” says Matthew D’Arrigo, one of the co-owners, along with his two brothers, Paul and



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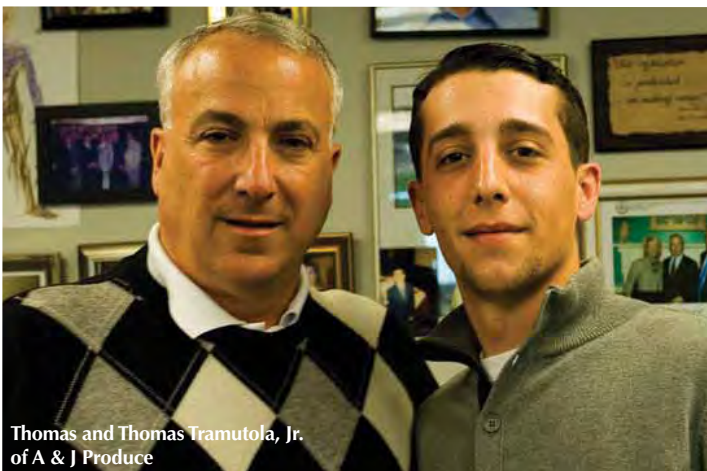
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of Jerry Porricelli Produce



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Paul and Evan Kazan of  
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Paul and Chris Armata and  
John Acompora of E. Armata

Michael, of D'Arrigo Bros. Co. of New York, Inc. "Combine the movement of JFK airport with the principles of the stock market under the same roof, and that's what the Market does for produce. We're a natural market with a bunch of companies working together and against each other at the same time. Together, we serve tens of thousands of outlets that rely on us for most or all of the produce they purchase."

This is the case for two successful independent retailers who use the Hunts Point Produce Market predominantly for their fresh produce. Both Levent Ali of Straight

From The Market [featured on page 140], and Moe Issa of Brooklyn Fare [featured on page 143] make several trips a week to restock their produce departments. Relying on the diversity of products offered in one place, as well as the warehousing and consolidation benefits, this is the most feasible arrangement for stores their size.

With every purchase, customers like Ali and Issa are also indirectly leasing infrastructure and expertise — the same caliber that's available to the nation's largest retailers. The price of each item pays for

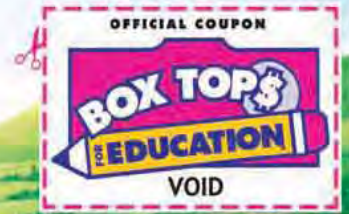
coordination with growers, transnational or international logistics, cold storage and quality assurance, among other benefits of a distribution center. A smaller operator couldn't manage these challenges in-house. In other words, buying from the Market helps level the playing field.

According to Jeff Young, buyer at A & J Produce Corp, "What makes the Hunts Point Produce Market special is that we have consistent supplies of products 52 weeks out of the year. If A & J doesn't have it — and we most likely will since we are one of the larger houses — someone in the





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Mario Andreani and his nephew Anthony Andreani of Katzman Produce



Neil Mahadeo, Lenore Rios, Paul Manfre and Jason Gelbaum of Top Katz



Vito Cangialosi of A.J. Trucco, Inc.



Dena Solis of S. Katzman Produce



Jim Renella of J. Renella Produce



Sal Biondo, Buyer from Market Basket



Yvonne Calzadilla & Helen Gonzalez of Coosemans New York



Matthew D'Arrigo of D'Arrigo Bros. of NY, Inc.



Evan Kazan of Target Interstate

Market has that product. That's the draw of the Hunts Point Produce Market. You have 40 firms, each dealing with different suppliers."

At Katzman, the firm not only has expanded its supply base, it has also reached outside of the country to bring in product. "In 2010, Katzman imported 40 containers directly from South America. Not using any brokers or middlemen, we now import over 600 containers a year! This allows us to add pricing stability on

some of the most hard-to-find products for our customers," explains Andreani.

Because of the ever-increasing volume, the physical element of bringing in produce to the Market is demanding. "Produce is bulky, perishable, and relatively cheap. You need a lot of space to store it," reminds D'Arrigo. However, in New York, space is a luxury, and for retailers, part of making every square foot count often involves coping with limited cold storage.

At the Market, customers can purchase by the box or by the pallet, enabling them to carry a range of products without buying more than they can sell or store. "Mom-and-pops can't go direct because they can't push the volumes," says Ciro Porricelli, who (along with his sister, Angela) owns Jerry Porricelli Produce. "Instead, they come into the Market themselves, look at the product, and know that they're going home with the best they can find."

At Coosemans New York, one of many

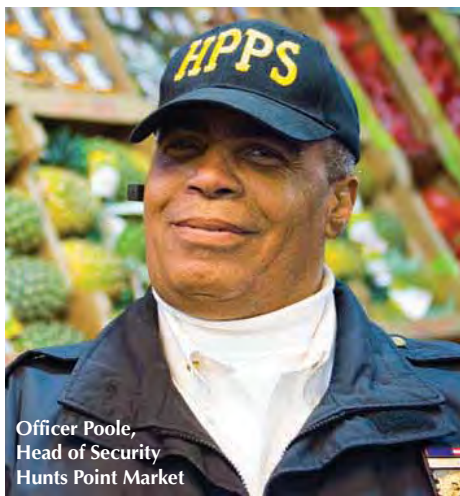


Coosemans companies scattered throughout 27 cities in the U.S. and Canada, Rene Gosselin, operations manager, says, "We serve a variety of customers, who usually pick up their own orders, or through intermediaries, or through buyers who purchase on behalf of their customers. Of course, we deal with the bigger companies, such as Fairway, directly, but the bulk of our customers are the smaller operators who are constant business."

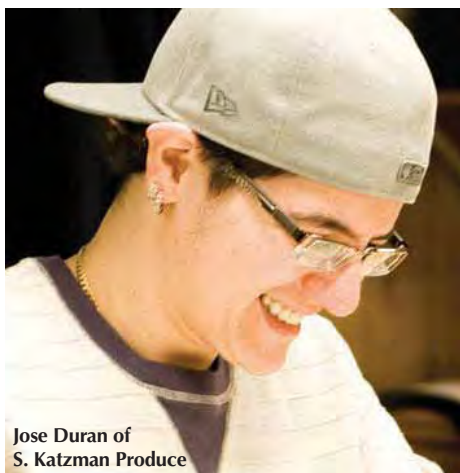
Gosselin explains that with the smaller companies, "it's a little more simplified and easier to find who you need to deal with. In other words, the guy who does the buying might be the same guy who pays the bills and drives the truck. It's a more personal deal with the smaller customer."

Ira Nathel, principal at Nathel & Nathel, adds that, "Here they can pick and choose what they want from the houses on the Market. They often find that in the long run, the pricing is the same or cheaper than FOB."

"One customer of ours has around 10 stores in New York and New Jersey, and buys all of its produce from the Market. Customers like that view us as a partner,"



Officer Pool,  
Head of Security  
Hunts Point Market



Jose Duran of  
S. Katzman Produce

shares Peter Pelosi, buyer at A & J Produce Corp. "Mid-sized chain stores don't always have warehouses, and generally don't have a lot of backroom space, so they come to the Market every day. Also, if a product isn't available, or another product is plentiful, or a particular item very flavorful, these customers can easily find variety. It's a fast moving city, and it helps to be able to operate like that."

Opting to receive deliveries from the Market can help customers defer capital investment in a vehicle and free up

resources for other challenges. "Taking deliveries from the Market means that customers don't have to buy a truck, hire a driver, pay for insurance, fuel or parking tickets, or have to worry about timing," states Stefanie Katzman of S. Katzman Produce, Inc. "We take all of that hassle out of the mix for them, and it's a service many are willing to pay for."

Day to day, customers can benefit by taking advantage of variable market pricing. "If the Market is glutted on that particular item, and you can buy it for \$18

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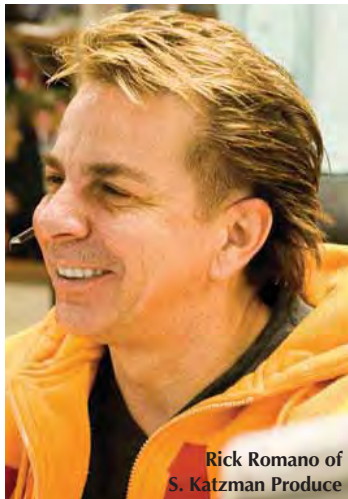




Pete Napolitano  
of S. Katzman Produce



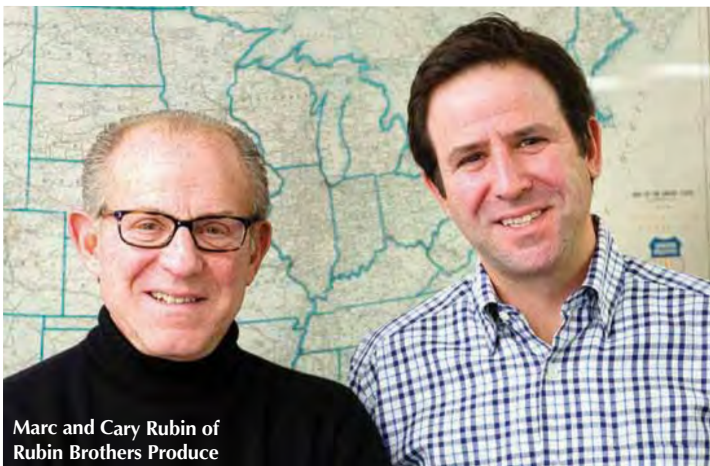
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Jack Cilurzo of  
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Marc and Cary Rubin of  
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Joe Randone of Fierman Produce Exchange  
and Peter Levantino- Giunta's Meat Farms

when elsewhere it would be \$19 to \$21, that's money in your pocket," says Fierman's Joel Fierman. "If I were a merchant and had this Market to shop in, I would be here every day. I believe it's that much of a goldmine for retailers. If they have the ability to take advantage of the market and don't, they're leaving a lot of money on the table."

**PAYING THE PRICE**

Price depends on the time of year, and at the Market, price changes depending on the time of day too. "Naturally, Friday at the end of the day is always the best value," says Charlie DiMaggio, president of FresCo, LLC, now celebrating its second year on the Market. "A box of figs, for example, might be worth \$20, but it'll be worth nothing when we reopen on Sunday night. Other items that are hardier, you might be able to carry through the weekend. Sometimes it's a matter of getting fresh product in on a weekday — what you already have must be sold, because it is standing in the way of another sale."

It helps that the independents and

smaller chains who shop the market can be agile responding to variations in supply. "Our customers aren't locked into prices that will hold for weeks or months on end," says Denise Goodman, vice president and secretary of M & R Tomato Distributors, Inc. "Some big chains hold onto prices, but ours fluctuate, and our customers can adjust accordingly — meaning faster turnover and fresher product for consumers."

According to A & J's Young, "Cherries at the beginning of the season can start in the \$100 range, but if there is a good crop, the price usually comes down pretty quickly, by \$10 or \$20 a week." Young says that it is important for retailers to visit the Market frequently and buy what can be sold in the stores quickly. It is better for retailers not to get stuck with product at a high price when more and more supplies are coming to the Market each week at a lower price. Plus frequent buying assures consumers are always getting the freshest produce." It's a pure supply-and-demand situation," adds Young. "In a scarce supply, you're going to pay high for merchandise, but it's in stock."

At A.J. Trucco, Inc., a wholesaler, direct importer and national distributor on the Hunts Point Produce Market, president Sal Vacca says, "Customers have to know that you're trying to help them, not trying to get them to buy products that won't sell. It's customer service, but it's even a little bit selfish, because to do well in business, you need your customers to do well. We have beautiful relationships with our customers."

**BALANCING ACT**

For customers, especially smaller businesses, viewing the Market as a partner can mitigate economic barriers, ultimately helping them grow. Although this effect helps explain why customers buy from the Market, it doesn't illustrate why they deal with one company over another. Beyond the entrance gate on Food Center Drive, there are over three-dozen houses to choose from. Money is on everyone's mind, but choosing where to shop is often influenced by a combination of product specs, price and trust.

Within the produce industry, company taglines often promise the "freshest" items and the "finest service." To some, it may





Roni Okun of Morris Okun Inc.  
with a portrait of her father

seem tedious to encounter various phrasings of those ad-infinitum virtues, but it's refreshing to witness the many ways in which they're put into practice. At the Hunts Point Produce Market, service manifests in every conceivable form — as it must to supply what is likely the most diverse customer base in the world.

Along every step of the supply chain, constant monitoring and orchestration are required to supply items suited to everyone who buys from the Market. Ultimately, growers, wholesalers, customers, and everyone between all make a living off of the same boxes of produce.

The wholesaler's role of satisfying everyone is a delicate balancing act, hinged largely on the ability to forecast what customers will absorb at a good price. "Some of our customers are small retailers, and others are big wholesalers. We've had to learn to be the eyes for all of them," says Paul Armata, secretary/treasurer of E. Armata, Inc.

As more and more produce items become year-round commodities, retailers rely on the merchants of the Hunts Point Produce Market to keep them informed. For example, A & J Produce's Young explains, "We used to only have pomegranates during the California season, but now customers expect them 12 months out of the year. In the past two to three years, pomegranates have also been coming in from Chile, which had never been allowed before. Now customers want them every day — it has become a staple — and we're in the process of

making that supply seamless by offering them year round."

"Our niche is in specialty items — not your regular carrots and potatoes," says Gosselin of Coosemans New York. "Large companies come in here, but you also have the chef who comes in and wants to pick out the product for his restaurant. He comes in personally to inspect the product himself before purchasing it, rather than dealing with a delivery service. Our customers are diverse, and all have unique

requirements. It's really a customer service operation."

Companies on the Market might primarily target one customer segment or another, but all are flexible with whom they serve. Shelly Nathel, co-owner of Nathel & Nathel, explains, "For a lot of our retailers, it's quality first, price second; but we can't just sit back and only sell to the people who want the best of the best, because they might only be 30 percent to

*Continues on page 82*

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# HUNTS POINT PRODUCE MARKET VENTURES INTO TELEVISION



'Big City Produce NYC' is a 30-minute series that profiles, explores and celebrates the Hunts Point Produce Market. **BY MICHAEL FEMIA**

The unprecedented effort by the Hunts Point Produce Market to engage consumers with its own television miniseries, *Big City Produce NYC*, is expected to reach over 2.4 million homes. Over the course of six episodes, which began in May on Verizon's FiOS TV Network and on Time Warner Cable's 54 Metro New York On Demand channels — as well as online at [HuntsPointProduceMKT.com](http://HuntsPointProduceMKT.com) — the show illustrates the vibrancy of business on the Market and the many ways in which it impacts New Yorkers and other consumers throughout the area.

According to the Market's press announcement, this unique and



innovative marketing outreach tool marks the first time a produce market anywhere in the world has created its own television series to help with branding and customer engagement.

*Big City Produce NYC* explores news topics and what's fresh in the produce alley. It also tours some of NYC metro area's most established retailers and kitchens showcasing owners and chefs who buy from the Hunts Point Produce Market to create their renowned culinary dishes.

Professionally produced in a homespun fashion against the backdrop of beautiful produce displays, four young hosts introduce special segments that encapsulate the overall reach of the Market. From profiles of specific produce items, with factoids and





Q&As interspersed, to in-depth interviews with medical professionals on how produce impacts health and wellness, many segments address produce in a broader lifestyle scope.

The heart of the series is the rare look at the Hunts Point Produce Market and the people who operate the 40 companies within it. A glimpse of the lives and daily routines of veteran wholesalers and salespeople on the docks gives viewers an appreciation of the raw happenings behind the products that are sold to over 23 million customers of Hunts Point.

"There are lots of messages to get across with this series," says Joel Fierman, president of Fierman Produce Exchange in the Bronx, NY, and co-chairman of the Market's Public Relations Committee. "We want people to know that the Market is right here in the South Bronx, and that it distributes millions of packages annually, in New York City and throughout the Tri-State Area. A lot of this series is about educating people on how the Market works. We also want people to know that it has the ability to give back to the community in a number of ways, and that it provides a lot of good jobs."

Interviews with city officials on the impact of the Hunts Point Produce Market, in terms of fighting obesity and providing unionized work

for the community of the South Bronx, bring the Market's economic importance into focus. In addition, volunteers and workers for various charities, such as City Harvest and The Little Sisters of the Poor, are interviewed for their perspectives on the generous philanthropy of the Market's merchants.

In an industry with such an expansive reach, there are plenty of topics to cover. As Fierman explains, "Several different aspects of the Market are incorporated into the show. For example, we feature well known restaurants and institutions that use produce from here and look at the Market's ability to give back to the community. Another portion explains how business works on the Market, and highlights salesmen and merchants."

From within the industry, Hunts Point Produce Market has already earned praise as a pioneer in television outreach on this scale. "This is our first foray into something like this, and nothing like it has ever been done before anywhere in the produce industry," reminds Fierman. "So far, all of the feedback from people in the industry has been positive."

"The Market has made a substantial investment in doing this, and we're hoping that as it progresses, more and more people will take interest in the show," says Fierman.

"There has been a lot of buzz about it already. People care about eating fresh, and have more interest than ever in knowing where their produce comes from."

### DON'T TOUCH THAT DIAL!

Instead of clicking to another channel during commercial breaks, viewers can get more information on produce and the people on the Market who sell it to them. The Hunts Point Produce Market also created its own commercials, with some of the 40 operators and their salespeople taking on the role as pitchman or woman.

One commercial has Denise Goodman of M & R Tomato talking about tomatoes; another has Chris Armata of E. Armata Produce touting the benefits of citrus; another has Ronnie Potash of Nathel & Nathel educating consumers about grapes. The commercials aim to highlight the quality of produce sold on the Market, but they also give viewers a feel for the type of people that run the businesses there.

Ultimately, consumers gain a better understanding of why the Hunts Point Produce Market is important to their supply of fresh produce, and why the Market plays a vital role in New York's economy.

pb





Leo Fernandez and Bob Ferla of Fierman Produce Exchange



Steve and Stefanie Katzman of S. Katzman Produce



Nakeia Grier, Christine Sherman, Christin Sherman of Morris Okun



Yvonne Sepulveda and her daughter Amanda Douglas of Morris Okun



Eric Mitchnick, Nicholas Armata, Rich Communale and of E. Armata



Lori Hirsch DeMarco, Myra Gordon and Sal Vacca

*Continued from page 79*

40 percent of our customers. Even though our main goal is to always have the best product available, we also carry merchandise for buyers who don't want to spend a premium. We have to take care of everyone. That's a complicated balance that takes years to learn."

With customers coming in search of

every grade of product, from pristine to what needs to be consumed that day, companies often carry several varieties of the same commodity to satisfy everyone. Citing tomatoes as an example, M & R's Goodman explains, "When New Jersey has a beautiful crop, some customers will still want gassed green tomatoes in a 25-pound box. Some restaurants won't use

hothouse tomatoes because they say the high water content makes them difficult to cook with. The products that aren't shaped or colored perfectly can still be used. If it's going to be chopped up, it doesn't matter what it looks like. Knowing what to buy means knowing your customer base."

"I don't try to overthink this business," says Paul Manfre, general manager of





Lisa Vogel and Denise Goodman of M&R Tomato Distributors



Michael Tambor of M&R Tomato

in McAllen, TX, and Nogales, AZ, helps because we have our own people looking at the stuff. If I make a mistake, they'll find it and tell me," explains Manfre.

"The beauty of the Market is that customers always have choices," says DiMaggio of FresCo. "You need every kind of customer on the Market, no matter how big or small they are. You need the guy who buys a good box or a good pallet as much as you need the guys who buy something less than perfect."

**WHAT CUSTOMERS EXPECT**

For various reasons, large and small buyers have gravitated toward receiving deliveries. Firms on the Market have stepped up their truck fleets accordingly, some with routes spanning the Eastern Seaboard from Southern New England to Baltimore. From a customer's perspective, taking a delivery is a convenience, but it's also a significant extension of trust.

"The continued growth of any company in the market is mostly



Levant Ali of Straight From The Market

buying and sales at Top Katz LLC. "I give customers what they want. We have some retailers who want the absolute most beautiful product at the lowest possible price all the time — dirt-cheap diamonds, but they have to be diamonds. They don't care whether there has been hail or snow. Others are more concerned with price, so we find a way to get them their price."

"One customer only likes cucumbers of a certain size, so I'll make sure I order those cucumbers for him. Having offices

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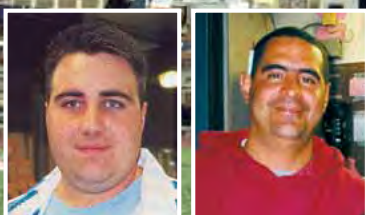
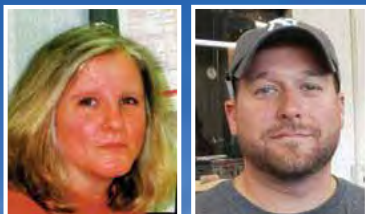
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Kenneth Jacobson, Chris Cutino, Mark Tannhauser and Tom Cignarella of Morris Okun

dependent on their ability to deliver," says Katzman's Andreani. "We currently have a fleet of 20 trucks and trailers on the road. Deliveries have enabled us to continue to service customers who were buying from brokers, and, although it cuts into our margins, it allows us to compete with brokers and to control our customers' expectations and level of customer service. The better you service your part-

ners, the more they rely on you." Taking on the role of the eyes and ears of their customers, merchants are tasked with making sure that every order is filled to specifications before it leaves the Market. In a frenetic marketplace hinged on the weather and the ability of shippers to make timely deliveries, often from across the continent, this isn't invariably simple. Shelly Nathel explains that in tough

cases, margins might be trimmed, or even foregone, in order to deliver what customers expect. "This is the produce industry, and we know it's not always perfect. If we don't receive a product on time, or if by chance it isn't good enough for a high-end customer, we'll buy it on the Market. Of course, we'd prefer to always ship our own product, but it's most important to take good care of our



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The Team at Nathel & Nathel

customers — even if we've quoted them \$16 a box and we had to pay \$18 to buy it on the Market to give them the quality they expect from us. When we send a delivery out, our name is on the line."

Stefanie Katzman also reports that in-Market trading is common, and often geared toward filling deliveries. "Houses trade with each other on a daily basis. If we're short, we'll do our very best to find the product. If we don't deliver something,

it's because absolutely nobody has a box to deliver. We have one employee whose job is to call around the Market and buy shorts for delivery customers. That's how he spends the first six hours of his night. If we need to, we'll even call down to the Philly market."

"It all comes back to customer service," Katzman insists. "If we say no too many times, they'll start calling someone else first. Our customers are no-nonsense kind of



Lisa Sposato of City Harvest

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Dennis Cohen of E. Armata



people with plenty of headaches already. They don't need boxes of garbage on their doorstep creating more problems. Who wouldn't keep coming back if you make their life easier and help them look good?"

According to Coosemans' Gosselin, many customers of the Market now are asking for verification of food safety procedures. "Food safety is on the forefront more and more these days with protection of the chain from growing to transport," says



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Gosselin, adding that Coosemans was the first company to have HACCP certification on the Hunts Point Produce Market.

"Many of our customers want a follow-through of procedures — assurance that the land and water aren't contaminated, that product is kept refrigerated, etc., throughout transport and delivery," adds Gosselin. "I can certify that product is protected once it's here, but I don't always know how it was treated before it arrived."

"Since 2007, Coosemans New York has

been audited every year," says Gosselin. "During the audit, we have a discussion of what we do; we familiarize the auditor with our business because it's usually a different auditor each year. In addition to examining our facilities, they go through our manuals to make sure we're maintaining a proper checklist. From there, the auditor writes up corrections and sends us a report that we have to follow up on."

One company that remains an anomaly among the merchants selling dozens, even

hundreds of items and making deliveries, is J. Renella Produce Inc., which sells only Renella brand watermelon. "My customers don't want anything but the best, so that's what we give them," says Jim Renella, president, who single-handedly runs his business with two porters. "Sometimes you get problems with weather changes, but we still only refuse maybe two loads a year out of 350 or more. I don't need inspectors because my shippers already know what I'll take."

**PERSONALITY BUSINESS**

For merchants, on-site sales offer opportunities to build relationships and rapport with customers. Ira Nathel explains, "A lot of customers walk into the store every day and see a salesman who knows exactly what they need. They'll say, 'I held you two pallets of eggplant because I know they're your kind. When you get your truck here, we'll get you right out because I know you have to get moving.' Customers can get that level of personal care here."

Although less bustling than the Market's early years, the street-trade (buyers walking from house to house in search of the best deals) has persisted. Many smaller customers do business this way. They might spend less money than their larger counterparts, but that doesn't mean they command less respect.

"We try to make everybody who comes here feel welcome whether they're buying a box or a pallet," says Craig Augone, head of sales at Juniors Produce, Inc. "After all, they're spending their money here. We have a lot of loyal customers because of that, which is pretty tough to do. A lot of guys will go elsewhere for a quarter. Someday, a lot of these smaller guys will grow, and they'll remember that they were treated well."

Smaller buyers often represent younger businesses founded by entrepreneurs who have been in the produce business before. According to Gosselin of Coosemans New York, "They're familiar with the business because they might have worked for one of the houses or outside of the Market and decided to venture in and say, 'Hey, I know a lot of people, and I could make a living buying on their behalf.'"

Gosselin's advice to new buyers: "You have to be knowledgeable about what you're buying, because you have to turn around and sell it. If you pay too much for

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it, then you won't be able to sell it because the next guy is going to be selling it cheaper.

Augone continues, "There are a lot of different characters and personalities here. Some torture us on price, but it's part of the business, and we understand that. My Korean customers are some of the most interesting to me. They can be ruthless in business here, but when we meet them outside, they're so thankful."

"You can be great at buying produce, but this is a personality business," reminds Paul Armata. "We're not brain surgeons,

but we know how to take care of people. When I get in each morning I spend the first three hours on the street. I fight with people, we laugh, and at the end of the day we have repeat business. Our customers come back because we treat them with respect."

One long-time observer of business on the Hunts Point Produce Market is Richard Cochran, president of Robert T. Cochran & Co. Inc., holder of the second oldest PACA license in the industry. "You could spend a whole day here," says Cochran, whose



Ralph Communale of E. Armata



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great-grandfather started the company on the Washington Street Market, which was the original Manhattan produce market replaced by Hunts Point Produce Market in 1967. "Just to walk around the Market might take two hours, not including the time it takes to buy and load. A lot of customers don't want to do that anymore, so instead we sell over the phone and bring it right to them."

Cochran mentions a customer in New Jersey who he hasn't seen in 12 years. "They still buy from us, and we still talk a





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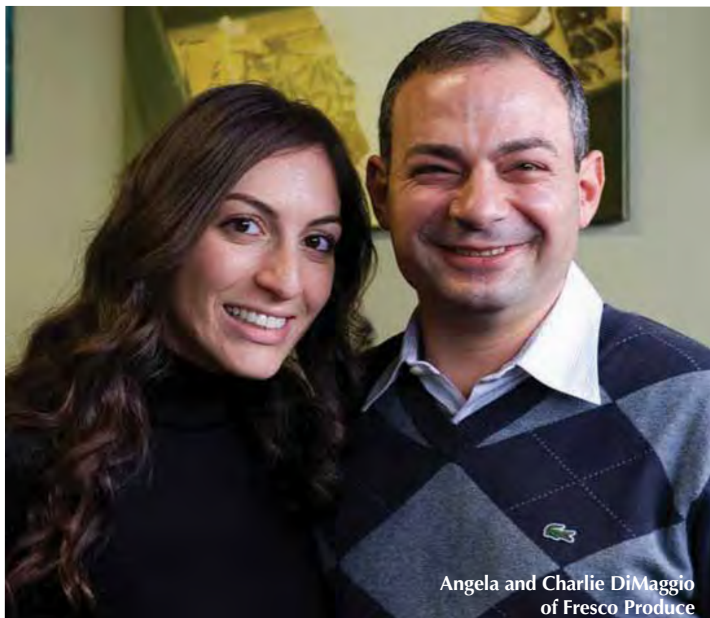


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To a casual observer, the Market's operations might appear routine. Each night, workers inspect and unload trucks as they

arrive with fresh inventory from around the globe. In an overnight flurry, most of it is whisked away on dollies and pallet jacks. Cash is counted, coolers are swept, and the cycle repeats. Nonetheless, such a bird's-eye view belies the true liveliness and complexity of the Market and its significance to New York's small business landscape. **pb**

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# BALDOR'S *BITE* FOOD SHOW PUTS PRODUCE IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Baldor brings customers and culinary experts together with its first food show. **BY MICHAEL FEMIA**

**E**arlier this year, Baldor suffered the tragic loss of the company's founder, Kevin Murphy. With the steadfast support, Murphy's son, T.J., now serves as chief executive officer, and has worked proudly to maintain a strong trajectory for the company.

Assessing Kevin's legacy, Baldor president Michael Muzyk notes, "We're a 20-year-old company that has seen solid growth. To see this even in a difficult economy speaks volumes to Kevin's wisdom and tenacity." He adds, "If you look at the first 100 employees hired, 93 are still here. It's a business owner's dream and a luxury to have that kind of loyalty. When employees feel taken care of to that degree, they believe in the leadership. They feel proud when a truck drives by and their friend or sibling says, 'You work for that company? I see those trucks everywhere!'"

"While reflecting upon Kevin's dreams, the goals he set for the company, and the work ethic he created here, we continue to polish the Baldor brand every day. You can never replace a Kevin Murphy. You can only try to improve what you're doing to fill that void — and we are. We mourn a great man, but we will go on," says Muzyk.

This April, Baldor took a significant step by hosting its first food show called Bite. With the goal of creating a richer atmosphere for customer engagement, the event showcased over 70 of Baldor's suppliers and brought in



world-class culinary talent for a daylong assortment of talks, tastings and exhibitions. Over the course of the show, some 1,500 targeted members of the industry attended.

"We've been thinking about this for many years. The whole idea was to create something more than a food show," says Alan Butzbach, marketing and specialty director at Baldor. "Food shows are getting very expensive — you can't showcase a full product line because you're limited to a small spot, and the customers aren't a captured audience. They're coming to see a lot of other people. You're lucky to get 5 to 10 minutes of face-time."

Early in the planning process, suppliers, including several major produce companies, jumped at the chance to exhibit at Bite. "With this event, we were able guarantee our vendors

a chance to interact with our customers and potential customers," says T.J. "Their response was great, and it gave us the sense that we made the right decision in doing this."

A mix of fun and informative programming added to Bite's draw, with highlights ranging from a top-chef panel discussion on industry trends to the playful 'Naked Pastry' exhibition where James Beard Award-winning pastry chefs adorned underwear-clad models with edible decorations. During the last leg of the event, chefs from over a dozen local restaurants assembled a grand tasting for attendees highlighting items from Baldor's product line.

The event was largely a chance for dialogue between Baldor's customers and suppliers. "We heard from a lot of vendors that they had never been to a show with consumers who were so informed," reports Butzbach. "We deal with a lot of high-end restaurants that are very much in touch with what they're asking for. For our customers, it's very important to fully understand what the product is, how it's grown, and how it's taken care of."

"Baldor prides itself on knowing who we deal with and understanding painstaking trials and tribulations that the growers, manufacturers and everyone goes through to get these products to market in perfect shape," Butzbach says. "For a lot of companies in the produce industry, it's a family business, from local growers to the big guys. They all have great stories to share."

**pb**





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# GIVING BACK



With a market where product is so abundant — and so perishable — it seems only natural to give some away. But it is not just produce that is donated... **BY MICHAEL FEMIA**

**T**he Hunts Point Produce Market serves many of New York City's most underserved consumers and communities in a number of ways, some more measurable than others, but all frequently under-recognized. Far beyond the daily call of duty, the Market quietly gives extensively to an abundance of philanthropic causes.

"We're the gang that nobody knows," says Roni Okun, director of Morris Okun Inc. "I don't think people fully know what the Market does on a business level, a phil-

anthropic level, or a health level. Besides employing many people and supporting many causes in our community, we sell products that benefit your health!"

Indeed, the Market's business generates some of the most crucial benefits to the New York area. The Market employs over 10,000 people and moves more than \$2 billion worth of wholesale produce — all of which is resold by thousands of retailers and restaurants, supporting jobs and economic activity. When considering estimates that Hunts Point supplies 60 percent of the City's fresh produce, there is no debate that it is an irreplaceable contributor

to public health.

When it comes to functions of the Hunts Point Produce Market that go beyond profitable ventures, donating produce to worthy causes is only the beginning. Without solicitation, companies also lend trucks, time and financial support. It's relatively unsurprising that the market is seldom acknowledged for these efforts. If questioned, owners and employees might speak about their generosity, but otherwise don't actively seek credit. Supporting causes is often a continuance of family tradition, but also felt as an inherent responsibility that accompanies success in business.

"We've all given back," says Okun. "There will always be people in need, and if someone needs help, we say yes. That was my father's philosophy. That's the way





I was raised, and that's the way I brought up my family."

"Everyone on the market gives a lot, and they're very modest about it. It's never about seeking recognition," remarks Peter Pelosi, buyer at A&J Produce Corp. "Donations are not done out of a PR budget. It's done out of the operating budget. We give back to the community as much as we can."

### 9/11 THROUGH HURRICANE SANDY

In the darkest days of tragedy affecting the region, the entire cooperative banded together. "The Market has this tough image, but I can think of plenty of guys who, in a heartbeat, will race to help people," says Craig Augone, sales at Juniors Produce.

The smoke and ashes from the fallen Twin Towers in Lower Manhattan on

September 11, 2001, could be viewed from the rooftop of the Hunts Point Produce Market. On the Market below, cooperative members reacted immediately by sending trucks of produce and volunteers to assist people who worked in the kitchens feeding the fire fighters, EMTs and other volunteers.

"The morning after Hurricane Sandy, all of the first phone calls were between houses on the market trying to put together deliveries and figure out where there was the most need," recalls Stefanie Katzman, administrator at S. Katzman Produce.

"We contributed quite a bit of fruit after Sandy, and sent out one of our trucks," says Lori Hirsch DeMarco, president of LBD Produce.

For companies largely in the business of delivery, parting with a truck is significant on a number of levels. During Hurricane

Sandy, Nathel & Nathel donated a refrigerated truck so that blood could be transported to the victims and first responders. Myra Gordon, executive admin director of the Hunts Point Coop Association, explains, "Giving produce is one thing, but when you take a truck off the road, you're losing business on the product you haven't sold, and you're also sacrificing the ability to deliver to customers." Nonetheless, all of the merchants on The Hunt Point Produce Market banded together in dedicating their trucks, produce and assistance to aid the hurricane victims.

"Because of the challenge of refrigeration, we sent down things that weren't highly perishable and easy to eat: apples, oranges, pears, carrots, cucumbers," says Joel Fierman, president of Fierman Produce Exchange. "A lot went to Long Island and





the Sandy Hook Community in New Jersey.”

“In the end, everybody contributed something,” adds Tom Cignarella, president at Morris Okun. “As much as we’re all competitors, when there’s tragedy, we all

become family, and the next day we’re back to business as usual.”

### UNANIMOUS CONSENT TO GIVE

With a market where product is so abundant — and so perishable — it seems only natural to give some away. “The market is like the bottleneck of the world for produce,” says Matthew D’Arrigo, vice president of D’Arrigo Bros. Co. of New York. “It’s a perfect system for donation. That’s the Number One ongoing engagement with the community that everyone is onboard with.”

City Harvest is among the most widely supported causes — receiving nearly 4 million pounds of produce from the Market annually. “City Harvest has a lot of avenues for donation here, which is great,” says Cary Rubin, vice president of sales for Rubin Bros. Produce Corp. “We give what we can.” [Editor’s note: for more on City Harvest, see page 106.]

Schools are also a focal point for philanthropy. D’Arrigo adds, “We provide produce for lunches at the Hyde Leadership Charter School,” which is only a few blocks from the entrance to the Market. “Our company has also sponsored three salad bars for schools through the United Fresh Produce Association initiative.”

“It’s good to do, and it’s also good business to get people eating fresh vegetables,” reminds Steve Katzman, president of S. Katzman Produce. “Down the line, that helps the business, as kids grow up and have families of their own. You never know which child is going to grow up and save the world.”

S. Katzman Produce is one of several companies that focus heavily on children’s charities, donating to schools, Easter Seals disability services, and a number of youth athletic organizations.

Beyond fulfilling donation requests, a number of owners similarly support causes with long-held personal significance to them. For Denise Goodman, vice president



Michael D’Arrigo from D’Arrigo Bros. Co. of New York and Sister Elisabeth Anne from the Little Sisters of the Poor discuss the Market’s charitable efforts. For more details, read “Little Sisters of the Poor” on page 102.

and secretary for M&R Tomato Distributors, contributing to the New York Police Athletic League (PAL) is a way to express gratitude. “My father was very poor. He grew up in the Bronx as a kid on the streets,” says Goodman. “Then he got involved with the Police Athletic League and started playing ping pong. He won the city championship when he was a kid and ended up playing on the Marines’ team. We’ve always supported the PAL because they saved him.”

On the wall of her office hangs a framed \$50 personal check from a ping pong match between Goodman’s father and former tennis star Bobby Riggs. It reads, “The king of tennis out-hustled by the king of tomatoes!”

Some efforts aid communities elsewhere that serve an important role in making the Market tick. “We do a lot with the underprivileged in Arizona,” says Paul Manfre, general manager of buying/sales at TopKatz Brokers, LLC. The key engagement there is humanitarian assistance for undocumented migrants in the Nogales, AZ area.

“Donating is not always necessarily produce-related. It’s part of being a good neighbor,” says Rubin. “We’re always supporting events, donating sports equipment to schools in the Bronx, donating use of our trucks for the day for worthy causes. People ask, and if we can give, we give. The Market is very charitable. We support a number of charities, and if someone on the Market is doing something, we contribute.”

### CHARITY WITHIN THE MARKET

The giving nature of the Market is also

reflected in the way it treats its own. It’s sometimes said that in the same day, two businesspeople might fight each other for a quarter on a box, and later in the evening, fight over the dinner check. Hyperbole aside, this is to say that despite shrewd, even fierce competition, they look out for each other and support one another.

For Ciro Porricelli, vice president at Jerry Porricelli, it begins with small gestures. “If a porter or another merchant comes here and says he needs a watermelon or something for his home, I give it to him,” says Ciro. “That’s the way I live, and it’s the way I was brought up. My grandfather always told me that if someone’s in need — you’re in the produce business — you give.”

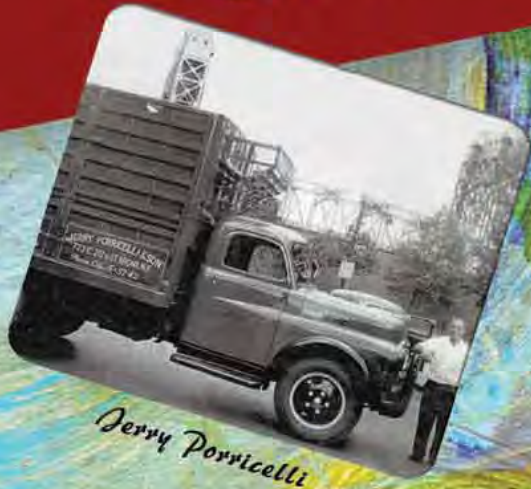
“I’m a firm believer in employing parents and even their children,” says Okun. “I don’t want parents worrying about their children on summer vacation. If they’re capable, we’ll find something for them to do. The kids earn money, and it feels worthwhile. Many of them still work here.”

In one extraordinary situation, Okun learned that one of her employees, Christine Sherman, was diagnosed with breast cancer, and Okun personally stepped in to cover her treatment. “Her insurance wasn’t covering the quality of care that she needed, so I paid for it and made sure she went to the finest doctors. She had her surgery and came out perfect.” Sherman vividly remembers Okun’s response to the news: “Roni looked at me and said, ‘No employee of mine is going to go through this alone. I’m not going to let that happen.’” Okun later shrugged her shoulders, adding, “That’s just the way things are done here.” **pb**





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# LITTLE SISTERS OF THE POOR

One of the best known faces on the market isn't a foreman, a salesperson, or a company owner. She is a Little Sister Of The Poor. **BY MICHAEL FEMIA**

**S**ister Elisabeth Anne has devoted her life to the work of the Little Sisters of The Poor, an international order of nuns providing long-term care and housing for elderly people of all denominations. Utilizing the Hunts Point Produce Market as its exclusive provider of fresh produce, Sister Elisabeth Anne walks all four platforms each week, collecting donations for the kitchen at The Queen of Peace Residence, tucked away in a quiet eastern Queens neighborhood.

"The kitchen gives me a list of everything they need each week. I go on Tuesdays and usually make 25 stops." A handful of boxes here and there quickly fills an entire cargo van destined for Queen of Peace. Sister Elisabeth Anne has been doing this for decades, since the days of the Washington Street Market. Many of today's company owners grew up working beside their parents, and have known Sister Elisabeth Anne for most of their lives. She has visited their homes, met their families, and prayed beside them in times of illness or misfortune.

Sister Elisabeth Anne



"I still remember the Little Sisters of the Poor from when I was a kid," says Ciro Porricelli, vice president of Jerry Porricelli Produce. "When they come here, whatever they need, they can have. My father did the same when he was in business. If I have string beans and they're \$40 a box, they can have them. Let the nuns have it for the welfare of the elderly people they care for. Someday, it could be my parents. It could be me. We're all going to grow old and need people to take care of us."

"My father has been involved with the Little Sisters of the Poor for over 30 years now. We have pictures of Sister Elisabeth Anne in our house," says Craig Augone, sales at Juniors Produce Inc. Augone jokes, "My father teases Sister Elisabeth Anne sometimes, but he has a big heart. He'd do anything for her. They've had a connection for a long time."

When she first started going to the Washington Street Market in the 1960s, Sister Elisabeth Anne accompanied another Little Sister on the visits. "I was very shy, and I had to pretend I wasn't scared, but I was scared to death. To ask for something for nothing — learning to be a beggar — was the hardest thing in the world for me."

Eventually Sister Elisabeth Anne became in charge of several kitchens for 13 years and learned the importance of fresh produce for the residents. She started going to the Hunts Point Produce Market in November of 1979.

"Today the market is very safe and secure. We've become friends and family. I'm not begging anymore, just asking for



help. It's wonderful."

In the kitchen at Queen of Peace, the chef and his team prepare all of the meals from scratch — even the soup stocks and salad dressings. Produce is used abundantly, and with only a few occasional exceptions, is fresh from the Hunts Point Produce Market. The meal plan is a labor of love that begins with Sister Elisabeth Anne's trips to the market, followed up with a trip to the residence's homes where the produce served shows how the market's generosity is finally rendered.

Over dinner at Queen of Peace, some residents need to be spoon-fed, while others help with meal chores and mingle around the sun-drenched dining room. After working in nursing homes, one couple looking forward to their 65th wedding anniversary this fall, mentioned

that they stopped wondering where they would grow old when they were welcomed at Queen of Peace.

"If you visit any of our homes throughout the world, you see that sense of belonging," says Sister Elisabeth Anne. "The residents are very happy; they feel at home; they feel loved. Family spirit prevails here."

Joe Palumbo is a managing member of Top Banana and a longtime supporter of the Little Sisters of the Poor. He also helped arrange for PRODUCE BUSINESS to tour the Queen of Peace Residence. Palumbo, who volunteers there with his wife and children, says, "Most people on the Market know Sister Elisabeth Anne and the nuns, but they don't know the place. I want people to see what the Little Sisters are all about and what they believe in. They could end up with a benefactor for life."

pb



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# CITY HARVEST TO THE RESCUE

In addition to rescuing donated fresh fruits and vegetables from the Hunts Point Produce Market and many of its retail customers, City Harvest supports produce consumption with a vast assemblage of programming for residents and retailers. **BY MICHAEL FEMIA**



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**C**ity Harvest is best known by its capacity to rescue healthy food for New Yorkers in need. In 2012, it delivered over 40 million pounds of rescued food, with fresh produce accounting for the majority, much of which is reliably picked up on the Hunts Point Produce Market.

Food collection in itself is a virtuous and complex endeavor, though not the entirety of City Harvest's mission. Rather, food rescue lies at the heart of a full circle approach aimed at improving dietary health in neighborhoods where poverty and food insecurity are most dire.

Within these target communities, City Harvest offers extensive programming, much of which is significantly geared toward promoting produce. For residents, there are hands-on culinary and nutrition education courses, as well as in-store consumer literacy seminars centered on healthy eating. Variations of each curriculum are administered to every age group, from school children to the elderly. In the past year, City Harvest has also initiated partnerships with dozens of small retailers in these same neighborhoods, providing support to enhance their produce departments.

In total, City Harvest confronts a slew of barriers to consumption. The scope and

scale of its efforts position it among the most entrenched and sophisticated non-profit allies in the produce industry.

#### RESCUING FOOD WITH A FOCUS ON FRESH

Lisa Sposato, associate director of food sourcing, reports, "This year we expect to rescue 44 million pounds of food. Sixty percent of what we rescue is fresh produce."

"Because of its perishability, produce is one of the most difficult commodities to rescue," says Rory Treat, senior manager of food sourcing, procurement and logistics. "But it's our focus, and it's a great service to the hungry. Our ability to manage complex logistics in a short timeframe allows us to rescue more produce and achieve faster turnover.

Supply is hinged on partnerships with donors along every step of the food chain, from grower-shippers to wholesalers to local retailers and food banks. Within the five boroughs, City Harvest rescues food from a multitude of local businesses. Last year, nearly 4 million pounds were taken in from the Hunts Point Produce Market,

"It's an honor for me to go to the Market because I know that it helps so many people," says City Harvest volunteer Elliott Weinstein, who is a retired real estate executive. "I'm there by 5 a.m. every Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. I walk the

platforms and stop into each house to see what they can't sell. When there's something good for donation, I ask them to hold it until our trucks can pick it up later that morning. We try to get the best possible products from the vendors. A lot of prices are very expensive right now, but they give because they know they're helping people in the five boroughs."

Sposato explains that "51 percent of food rescued by City Harvest is from businesses in the five boroughs, and farms in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. The other 49 percent comes through Feeding America — the mother of all food banks. Based on the number of people we serve, we're allotted a certain number of shares to bid on product from Feeding America."

Working through such a variety of channels is one of the most pronounced challenges involved in food rescue. As Treat explains, "When orchestrating donations from hundreds of vendors within a compressed timeframe, the standards for pick-up, shipping and delivery have to be clear to all parties prior to collection."

Treat reports that City Harvest receives most of its full loads through Feeding America, although to a lesser extent, larger donations are also arranged directly through growers, shippers and wholesalers.

From a local retailer standpoint, Sposato explains, "Most of the produce



has already made it onto shelves. Once we take it, we try to make everything as simple as possible for stores by supplying bags and training employees.”

Speaking to the quality of donated food, Sposato says, “What I love about City Harvest is that it’s very selective. If I wouldn’t eat something, we wouldn’t even think about giving it to someone. I tell all of our donors that, bottom line, the question to ask is, ‘Would I eat this?’ If not, it shouldn’t be donated. Just because people are hungry doesn’t mean they deserve really bad food.”

### FINDING A HOME FOR RESCUED FOOD, AND FAST

All of the food donated by local businesses is picked up and delivered to community food programs in the same day, while loads from shippers and manufacturers are routed to City Harvest’s distribution facility in Long Island City, Queens. From there, pallets are either sent straight to City Harvest’s Mobile Markets (essentially free greenmarkets for residents of public housing), or repacked and delivered to partner agencies.

Relationships with these organizations are geared for swiftly moving perishables. Sposato explains that, “Food banks require agencies to place orders and pick up with a small fee involved. We’re unique, in that we use a “push” system: all of our agencies have agreed to accept whatever we have. This allows us to turn over our produce quickly.”

Another alternative is the Mobile Market program, which distributes produce bimonthly at public housing sites in each of the five boroughs. The largest markets can draw 600 residents. Each runs with the help of volunteers; many live onsite. “They help spread the word about what’s on the market that day to their neighbors and arrive an hour before everyone else to set up,” says Tony Ortiz, senior manager of Mobile Market Logistics.

At each market, there are typically four items, all fresh produce. Ortiz explains, “Everyone goes down the line and volunteers to give them a certain amount based on the number of people in their household (which is indicated by a registration card issued by City Harvest). A family of

seven receives 45 to 60 pounds twice a month.” He adds, “We also have volunteer chefs doing cooking demonstrations and distributing recipes to people for ideas on how to use the items they take home that day.”

“When the market opens, we don’t rush anybody. We want them to feel like they’re shopping for themselves, not like they’re begging for food,” says Ortiz. “For us, it’s a top priority that they feel respected.”

Ortiz, who lives five blocks from the Bronx Mobile Market location, recalls, “Before I started doing this, I thought only homeless people needed food, but I see a lot of working people coming to the market to help feed their families.”

### HELPING SMALL RETAILERS SELL MORE PRODUCE

To boost produce consumption, City Harvest consults independent operators to improve the scope and quality of their offerings. In the process, insight is offered on everything from procurement to pricing and merchandising. Nearing the end of its first year, the program has around 30 participating retailers and aims to expand. **pb**

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# LOUIS J. ACOMPORA FOUNDATION

The Acompora family receives support from the produce industry. **BY MICHAEL FEMIA**

**E**very day, John Acompora wears a pin on his shirt bearing an angel. With it, he fastens over his heart a piece of the jersey that Louis wore before he tragically passed away in March 2000, during the first lacrosse game of his high school career.

Louis suffered *commotio cordis*, an acute disruption of heart rhythm triggered by chest trauma. In his case, the impact was from an otherwise unexceptional shot on goal that he lunged to block. Moments later, he was in cardiac arrest. Fraught teammates and spectators — John and his wife, Karen, among them — witnessed the failure of manual resuscitation attempts. Before paramedics made it to the field, Louis was gone.

John and Karen later learned that their son could have survived with immediate access to an automated external defibrillator (AED). They've since devoted much of their lives to an organization founded in Louis' name, doing everything in their power to prevent deaths from sudden cardiac arrest, and to promote heart health awareness. To say the least, their accomplishments thus far have been extraordinary.

One of the first pivotal milestones for the Louis J. Acompora Foundation was the passage of Louis' Law in May 2002, which mandates placement of AEDs in every school in New York. At the time, there was some controversy over whether it was sensible legislation, but John recalls how a meeting with Governor Pataki put him at ease. "He told Karen, 'Don't worry. The bill is on my desk, and it's going to be signed. I have four children, and my youngest is a lacrosse player.' At the time, Louis' Law was unprecedented. New York was the first state in the country to have such a law."

Since then, AEDs have been put in a

multitude of other public places. "Today it's also law for AEDs to be in every gym in New York State. They're on golf courses and in every police car on Long Island. We have no idea what the full ripple effect of Louis's Law has been, but we try to keep track of the saves in schools because that's related to Lou, and his name is attached to it. To date, there have been at least 74 saves. In the future, there will be AEDs all over, and if Lou's foundation can aid an emergency, God knows how many more lives can be saved."

Proudly recalling his son's big personality, John told us, "If you knew Lou, he was larger than life. You'd meet him and say, 'I don't like that kid. I love that kid!' That's just the way he was. He was doing everything you'd hope a kid would be — president of his class, captain of his lacrosse team, in the National Honor Society. When this happened to Lou, people who knew him were sad, but also angry, and wanted to do something about it."

For John and Karen, the foundation is part of daily life, and a way of honoring Louis. Both are now certified CPR and AED instructors and teach free classes for coaches — sometimes twice a week in the spring. They also organized an annual lacrosse tournament in Long Island and invested in the development of effective safety equipment for players. "My son was a goalie, wearing a brand new state-of-the-art chest protector. When we learned that there isn't a chest protector on the market that will



John Acompora of E. Armata

prevent *commotio cordis*, we invested hundreds of thousands of dollars into developing something that will."

The Acomporas have begun reaching beyond addressing *commotio cordis*, by urging early cardiac health screenings in children, particularly young athletes. "Louis had no preexisting conditions, but we learned that 1 in every 500 children are born with conditions that predispose them to sudden cardiac arrest. My wife, another mom who lost her child, and some doctors started an organization called Heart Screen New York. We visit schools and give children free heart examinations. We check for red flags in family and personal health history, measure blood pressure, conduct echocardiograms (EKG), and require cardiologists on site. We bought all of the equipment, and all of the doctors and nurses volunteer their time. A screening like this might cost \$700 - \$1,000, but we're able to do it for free thanks to the generosity





From left to right: Kevin Stinton (volunteer fireman), Kayla Parmley (rescuer), John Ronan (survivor), Marie O'Brien, RN (rescuer), Karen and John Acompora.

events organized by the Louis Acompora Foundation, often speaking about her experience. This May, she graduated from Fordham University.

"When we meet the parents, sometimes they don't know what to say at first. They've come very close to standing in our shoes, and thank God they're not, because of Louis. When I see somebody who has been saved because of him, I'm thrilled. I just wish it wasn't Lou who had to set the standard." **pb**

of many people."

"We've done five screenings so far, and unfortunately found a few kids each time who have potential issues. Still, in America, if a kid wants to go out for the middle school basketball team, we don't say, 'Wait. Let's go for a cardiogram first.' We should. In Italy, they've prescreened athletes for years, and their prevalence of childhood cardiac arrest is a fraction of ours."

The Acomporas run the foundation out of an office in the basement of their home. Everyone involved volunteers their time, including Karen, who left her job to work full time as president. "We're proud to be strictly non-profit. Every single penny we receive goes to the cause. This is just what we do for our son."

The Acomporas are unendingly grateful to have received tremendous support — financially and emotionally — from many members of the produce industry. John's longtime friends, Joe Palumbo (Top Banana and Produce, Inc.) sit on the foundation's board, and people elsewhere at Hunts Point and beyond have been eager to support the cause. "The produce industry has been incredibly generous to us. Every merchant in this market has supported the foundation in one way or another. Even competitors call me and say, 'Don't forget to tell us when the next benefit is, and please make sure we're involved.'"

"At the last benefit, we had a group of kids who are survivors. Thomas Tramutola from A&J said to me, 'Acky, I have to give you credit. We donate to so many things, and don't always get to see where the money goes, but every three years you bring the results for us to see.'"

Among the survivors is Leah Olverd, who was revived with an AED in her high school after suffering a sudden cardiac arrest during varsity volleyball tryouts. Over the years, she has attended several

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# HUNTS POINT EXECUTIVE LAUNCHES We Are Many Foundation

Breaking the silence associated with childhood sexual abuse.

BY JODEAN ROBBINS

**T**he produce industry carries a known reputation for its philanthropic and charitable contributions. The We Are Many Foundation, which seeks to aid victims and survivors of childhood sexual abuse and expand awareness related to this issue, is perhaps the most courageous with its message. The main goals of the foundation are to help heal, educate and break the silence concerning sexual abuse.

The foundation was formed over a year ago after founder Richard Bylott, CFO and treasurer of Nathel & Nathel on the Hunts Point Produce Market, had an eye-opening interchange. "I'm a survivor of childhood sexual abuse and have attended workshops and Weekends of Recovery with other survivors over several years," he explains. "At a particular event in 2010, I was approached by another survivor noting how healthy I looked and wondering how I did it. I left that day thinking about how good I felt, about how much I had healed, and questioning how I could give back. I decided that I had to start a foundation. My main inspiration was that nobody should live in stifled silence like I had for so many years."

Bylott maintains that education, awareness and speaking out are crucial steps toward healing. "When I went to Weekends of Recovery and found out there were others, that I'm not the only one, it helped me to heal," he shares. "Our meetings and communication resources are particularly valuable tools, so people can know they're not alone. Sharing information helps people recognize and begin the healing process."



Richard Bylott (center of photo) with the We Are Many Foundation which recently presented a check for \$2,500 to the Coalition Against Child Abuse and Neglect (CCAN) at The Safe Center Long Island supporting adult male victims of childhood sexual abuse.

The Foundation provides assistance to organizations that treat and support victims of childhood sexual abuse. "We also provide assistance to adults who have been sexually victimized in their youth through meetings and a helpline," says Bylott. "We educate society through various means that sexual victimization in children exists, and the effects are lifelong. We also teach society how to identify pedophiles and the necessary steps to take once they are identified."

The Foundation implements these activities via various fundraising measures. As part of its outreach campaign, the Foundation recently presented a check for \$2,500 to the Coalition Against Child Abuse and Neglect (CCAN) at The Safe Center Long Island supporting efforts to reach out and serve adult male victims of childhood sexual abuse. To raise additional funds and awareness, the Foundation will host a Five Mile Run with approximately 500 runners in Huntington, NY, this coming September.

Bylott and the Foundation have received significant public attention, including an appearance on The Oprah Winfrey Show in 2010, and recognized as "Mentor of the Year" by Long Island Elite organization at an event in July 2013.

Bylott is motivated by knowing his activities help others on the path to healing. He

explains, "After I was on the Oprah show, I received a call from someone in the produce industry who said he saw me. He then told me he also was a victim of childhood sexual abuse. I was humbled and amazed that he was breaking his silence with me. That was a major breakthrough in the start of his healing process."

The Foundation's strength lies in its focus on the individual survivor and creating awareness. "Society places a taboo on this [subject] and doesn't want to talk about it," says Bylott. "The myth is that it's the weird guy in the park with the raincoat. But it's not. It's usually the baseball coach, the piano teacher, the doctor, a person in trust. You look at someone like Jerry Sandusky [from the Pennsylvania State University case] — people knew what he was doing and did nothing about it."

Bylott continues, "Sadly, one out of six boys is sexually abused by the age of 14, and the statistics for women are higher. If we took sexual abuse out of our society today, there would be less men and women in prison, less people on the streets and lower suicide rates. People are in denial, but it's the silence that has to be broken. We need to reinforce that it's OK to say something."

For more information visit, [wearemanyfoundation.org](http://wearemanyfoundation.org).

pb



# NICHE ORIENTATION

## IN NEW YORK'S SURROUNDING OPERATIONS



Nicolas Mazzard of  
Koppert Cress

From the boutique tropicals, herb or tomato providers to the value-added and full line distributors, firms outside the Hunts Point Produce Market offer unique services for different cultures and cuisines. **BY JODEAN ROBBINS**

**C**ompanies in the New York City area are capitalizing in many ways on the unique and different demands of the marketplace by exploiting and developing niches in business. "There are different types of

business, and everyone has their role to play," says Ronnie Cohen, vice president of sales with Vision Import Group LLC in River Edge, NJ. "Niches offer opportunity for a business to really play to its strengths and provide value to its customers."

"Without niches, many of us would not

be in business," adds Jeff Ornstein, co-owner of Eli & Ali Organic and Specialty Produce in Brooklyn, NY. "The task of being everything to everyone just doesn't cut it, especially in New York."

"Creating a niche to stand out from the crowd was an integral part of our business development," says Lou Scagnelli, vice president at RBest Produce Inc., in Port Washington, NY. "Over the years, more and more niches have been created, causing a natural progression for the business to adapt to serve the needs of our





Eli & Ali's Organic  
and Specialty Produce Team

**“Years ago, it was a ‘turf’ mentality — everyone specialized in something. Then industry companies changed their orientation to handle multiple products. Now we’re seeing a melding of this mentality into a niche orientation again, but not necessarily by defining it only as a particular commodity.”**

— John Alva, Rockhedge Herb Farms

customer base.”

The definition of “niche” is evolving to mean something much more than just specializing in a particular product. “The marketplace finds, creates and copies faster than it ever has before,” says John Alva of Rockhedge Herb Farms, a grower/shipper/importer/packer of fresh herbs in Pleasant Valley, NY. “Years ago, it was a ‘turf’ mentality — everyone specialized in something. Then industry companies changed their orientation to handle multiple products. Now we’re seeing a melding of this mentality into a niche orientation again, but not necessarily by defining it only as a particular commodity.”

“Having a niche isn’t just about offering a specific item,” says Michael Ramos, marketing at New York Produce Inc. in Secaucus, NJ. “It’s delivering the complete package.”

“From our perspective, our niche of

understanding and knowing how to haul produce is very big,” says Rob Goldstein, president of Genpro in Rutherford, NJ. “You must have the depth of capacity to serve it as well as the technical capacity of understanding the produce commodities.”

Serving a niche now requires greater analysis of trends and customer needs. “Before, niches were narrowly defined but now it’s broader and more cosmopolitan,” says Edgar Millan, COO of Caraveo Papaya Inc. in Bronx, NY. “We see integration of various cultures and products into many different cuisines. This helps our business find new market segments to sell to.”

“As a marketer, you need to evaluate how trends occur and how markets change,” states Rafael Goldberg, CEO of Interrupcion Fair Trade in Brooklyn, NY. “We’re talking about ideas and values. Consumers are now rethinking their

assumptions about the food system, and they have more information and concerns than ever. We’re looking at consumption habits based not just on price or hunger-satisfaction but also on values.”

### **BUILDING A NICHE**

From tomatoes to tropicals to transportation, companies in the New York area are successfully claiming niches in the marketplace. Lucky’s Real Tomatoes focuses on a foodservice niche. “Lucky’s has had the distinct privilege of creating and then filling a very unique niche in the foodservice industry,” reports Lucky Lee, vice president of sales for Lucky’s in Brooklyn, NY. “We pioneered the concept of bringing freshly picked, ripe, flavorful tomatoes directly from the fields to the tables of the finest restaurants in New York over 30 years ago.”

Eli & Ali started out with the goal of supplying the finest field grown tomatoes. “The niche we serve is primarily retail-driven throughout the tri-state area,” states Ornstein. “Over the past 10 years, we have developed a loyal customer base especially for our organic program, which consists of tomatoes, peppers, avocados, and a whole spectrum of apples and fruits. Our focus is to deliver the highest quality — every box is checked and repacked before leaving our warehouse.”

Supreme Cuts in Mahwah, NJ, once





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Jeff Ornstein  
of Eli & Ali's



Teresa Tsirkin,  
Anna Chrostowska,  
Diego Fajardo,  
Lucky Lee of Lucky's  
Real Tomatoes

exclusively a trimmed green bean processor, has steadily expanded its fresh-cut product line. "Along the way, we earned a reputation as an innovator in the category," says Merle Axelrod, president. "The company was a first mover on trimmed Brussels sprouts and fresh-cut kernel corn, among other products and was also recognized for early adoption of convenient

steam fresh microwaveable packaging."

Maurice A. Auerbach Inc. in Secaucus, NJ has operated a focused business for over 50 years, but over time has broadened lines from garlic and shallots to a host of other complementary items. Bruce Klein, director of marketing, says, "A lot of our new items are requested by customers. We listen carefully to what customers

want. Niche businesses benefit the customer because we concentrate on particular items, procure them as best as possible, and know how to handle them."

Vision Imports strives to maintain its visionary approach to developing a distinctive tropicals business. "I consider our company a boutique operation," states Cohen. "Our top item is limes followed by



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mangos. Ten years ago, limes weren't even on the map. With the influx of the ethnic populations, usage is increasing."

New York Produce has a significant niche with Latino products. "We offer a full line of Latino products, including tropical produce and grocery items," says Ramos. "We sell a lot of cross-over items and foods that are complementary, such as coconuts and coconut water."

Caraveo specializes in papayas and particularly ripe fruit. "Papayas are a popular fruit with Latinos, but we have seen demand expand over time," explains Millan. "More and more of the general public now understand the benefits of the fruit and are buying more. Our emphasis on providing riper fruit to the marketplace has helped stimulate sales."

#### UNIQUE ANGLES TO CONSIDER

Interrupcion has concentrated on developing the burgeoning market for Fair Trade produce and sustainable growing practices. Goldberg explains, "The reaction we're seeing to our Taste Me, Do Good products has been tremendous.

**"Niche businesses benefit the customer because we concentrate on particular items, procure them as best as possible, and know how to handle them."**

— Bruce Klein, Maurice A. Auerbach Inc.

Interest and demand are growing. What started as the organic movement has now exploded to the whole sustainability movement. We see the evolution of that niche moving from organic to sustainability and beyond."

Rockhedge Herb Farms has developed a niche based on fast and fresh. It offers hydroponic herbs, potted herbs and a full line of other herbs and microgreens, reaching geographically from Maine to Virginia. "My niche is that I can cut, cool, fly, pack and deliver almost 24 hours from any country," says Alva.

Koppert Cress in Cutchogue, NY, is a greenhouse grower specializing in heirloom and rare varieties of plants, including herbs, fruits and flowers. "We look for varieties that have flavor and can serve a

particular need for our chef customers," says Nicolas Mazard, director of sales and marketing. "We source ancestral varieties from all over the world to come up with something very unique."

RBest sees its orientation as a full service organization beyond just selling produce. "Besides providing quality merchandise, we provide our clients with the support they need to grow their business," says Scagnelli. "Helping a store educate its employees to manage inventory, display product, and evaluate product lines has earned us the reputation of a company that cares for its clients."

Genpro has created a niche in the highly competitive transportation industry. "The way we see ourselves differentiates us as a provider," says Goldstein. "We align





ourselves with our customers and identify their needs, not just broker trucking. We focus on customer service, technology, and creating efficiencies and synergies."

When Target Interstate Systems of Bronx, NY, first started, it determined a niche with respect to service location. "At that time, most of the transportation brokers were at origination point," explains Paul Kazan, president. "We developed our niche by being at destination point. Our secondary forté was to get truckers replacement loads back to the growing areas. That was critical in helping us become the broker we are."

Target began building its niche by specializing in strawberries. "We had air-ride equipment that was not very common at the time," says Kazan. "That made sure the strawberries didn't get bounced, bruised and damaged. We also had the right truckers to handle items and give the product the special nuances it needed in care. That niche expanded to other items. Customers perceived that if we could handle strawberries, then we can naturally handle other products."

#### NO EASY TASK IN BUSINESS

Niche marketers are called to provide diligent services. "It's a matter of being active rather than passive," says Koppert Cress' Mazard. "For example, a distributor can say either I'll wait for the chef to come

to me and ask for what he wants or I'll help the chef find what he might want. If you wait for the chef to come to you, you're already behind."

Michela Calabrese, stakeholder director for Interruption, adds, "We look for buyers and retailers who express openness and are innovators themselves. In this current marketplace, if you're not stepping out of the box and taking some risk, you're not holding your own — you're actually declining. This marketplace calls for inno-

vation and creativity."

"The challenge is to ensure that you're an expert and go beyond being good or proficient," says Kazan. "Otherwise, it's not really a niche. You have to excel at it."

Developing a niche comes with its fair share of difficulties, but the key has been to create solutions to the challenges. "We are constantly challenged by new rules and regulations as well as higher competition and compressed margins," explains Genpro's Goldstein. "But, we adapt. We

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**“A distributor can say either I’ll wait for the chef to come to me and ask for what he wants or I’ll help the chef find what he might want. If you wait for the chef to come to you, you’re already behind.”**

— Nicolas Mazard, *Koppert Cress*

take advantage of the opportunity to have better service, greater knowledge, and invest in our people. We have evolved with the needs of the industry over the past 25 years, and we continue to evolve to meet future needs.”

“One challenge of the industry has been to meet the increasingly strict food

safety and quality standards along with the costs associated with it,” reports Auerbach’s Klein. “We developed our new facility with an eye to the future and to allow us to meet current and future requirements. We turned the challenge into a benefit for our company.”

Lucky’s Real Tomatoes developed a

foodservice program to distribute the Tasti-Lee tomato specifically to meet the needs of a niche in the industry. “This flavorful tomato is firm enough to be shipped nationwide, for both foodservice and retail,” says Lee. “It’s a challenge to pick a tomato that’s almost ripe and get it to the end user within a couple of days, especially when that customer might be a thousand miles away, but that’s what we’ve been doing for over three decades! We continually work to perfect our systems to provide a flavorful tomato year-round for foodservice and consumers.”

New York Produce found it necessary to invest in education to build its niche. “A big focus for us is our direct assistance to stores on the Latino products,” explains





other segments.”

“The small Latino niche helps grow overall sales,” says New York Produce’s Garcia. “Years ago, it didn’t seem like covering this segment was a big deal, but as stores have seen produce sales grow, they’ve recognized the importance of catering to the Latino segment. Latinos use many conventional items like tomatoes and limes. If you have the ethnic items they’re looking for like tomatillos, it will increase sales of traditional items as well.”

Persistence in finding new niches is often rewarded. Interrupcion’s development offices work in eight countries to continue looking for areas and products for development. “We’re also hard at work creating value for our customers through innovation on the supply side. A great example is our Taste Me Do Good Fair Trade organic blueberry deal out of Argentina. It was thought by many that it was impossible to do this item from October through December for the U.S.

Ramos. “We have a whole merchandising department that does re-sets. Education of supermarket personnel is crucial, and we focus on providing corporate demonstrations and shows. Stores will sell more if store personnel can relate to it.”

“We work with our customers to ensure they understand what they need to offer to meet the full needs of their shoppers on a consistent basis,” explains Julio Garcia, New York Produce’s director of produce. “If someone goes into a supermarket and finds only three of the five items they need to make a dish, they’re going to walk out without buying them.”

A continuing challenge comes in measuring the pulse of the future. “We don’t believe the brands of the past are necessarily the brands of the future,” says Interrupcion’s Goldberg. “We see the brands of the future will be those that represent the values and needs of the consumer of the future.”

“We always have to be thinking about the next thing people are going to want and not just relying on our successes,” adds Supreme Cuts’ Axelrod. “We’re always focused on innovation. A lot of people don’t like change, but good or bad, it’s going to happen. You have to be forward-thinking. We’re even looking at things that aren’t already in the produce department.”

“The challenge in demographics is to find out what the next wave of immigrants will be and where they are,” adds New York Produce’s Garcia. “Identifying the new niche within the ethnic niche holds significant opportunity.”

#### MOVING BEYOND THE NICHE

Taking advantage of niches can lead to more opportunities within the industry. “Niches are important because they provide a base market for particular products,” states Caraveo’s Millan. “From these segments, we can grow and move into

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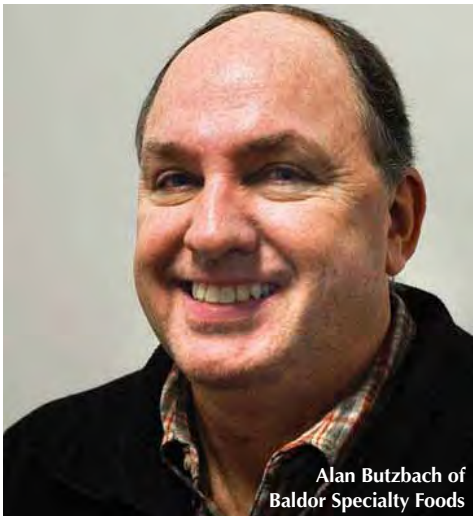
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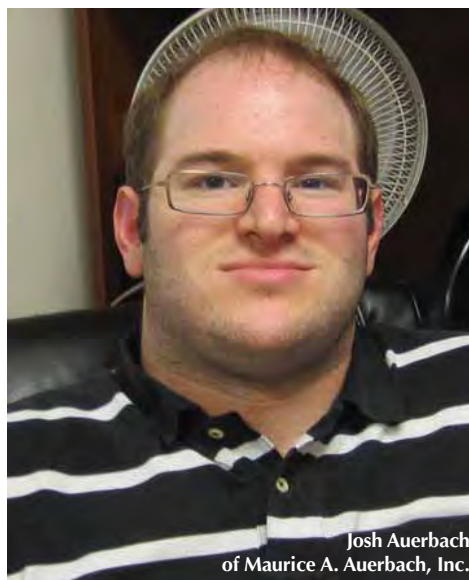
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Josh Auerbach of Maurice A. Auerbach, Inc.

market, covering a significant gap in availability — but we're doing it. Demand has been astronomical, and we are busy planning for the upcoming season."

"Our customers tell us they want different blends, so we're trying to be creative," says Supreme Cuts' Axelrod. "About a year ago, we came out with Harvest Medley: rutabaga, carrot, and butternut. We also came out with our sweet potato fries, and now we're thinking about jicama sticks. We try different things to see whether people will be interested."

Successful niche marketers are continually reviewing options. "We're always looking for ways to increase growth in the category both in conventional and value-added," says Vision's Cohen. "We especially want to get more creative with packaging — do something that adds a twist."

"Strategies must always evolve to be in step with the ever-changing trends, tastes,

economy and needs of the food industry," says Lee. "We prefer to be in the position of anticipating changes, not merely responding to them. Although we have our core bestselling Lucky Tomatoes, we also have a revolving selection of specialty varieties with different flavors, colors and sizes."

"As each category expands, we recognize our need to expand as well. We are actually in the process of building a new state-of-the-art eco-friendly distribution warehouse," says RBest's Scagnelli. "It will help us continue to meet our customers' needs well into the future."

### DRIVING GROWTH

Koppert Cress continues to seek out new items and introduce them to the market. "We launch at least six new items a year," says Mazard. "These are things people have never seen before. One of our newest this year is an herb called Green Apple Leaf. It tastes just like a green

apple. We also have Majii, a cactus leaf that absorbs any type of liquid you infuse the leaf with."

Vision looks to drive faster growth with mangos. "It's about looking for creative applications," says Cohen. "This year we're really pushing the Van Gogh mango, our Ataulfo variety. Branding helps us separate ourselves and our products from others. We want to relate our brand to quality."

The Vision Companies are focusing on geographical expansion as well. "Last year we expanded into operations in Texas," states Cohen. "We are in the process of opening an office in Florida to better serve our clients in the Southeast. We want to be continental and have full distribution to take advantage of all marketplaces in the U.S."

Sustainable and local continue to represent significant future niches. "People want local more than organic and



that represents a new niche within the herb category,” says Rockhedge’s Alva. “The key is to grow business slowly. Take the time and do it right.”

“We’re looking to incorporate domestic production into our programs,” reports Interrupcion’s Goldberg. “Our focus works for producers in Latin America or California similarly. In terms of Fair Trade and organic, we can utilize all the resources we already have put together and benefit our suppliers and market.”

Eli & Ali is teaming up with local growers in the New York and Pennsylvania regions this summer. “Most notably we’re working with Hepworth Farms to co-brand some of its products,” reports Ornstein. “We will also carry some organic items from multiple Amish growers from Pennsylvania. We’ve worked with these growers in the past, and they all have tremendous experience in growing organic produce over decades.”

The Eli & Ali-Hepworth collaboration is



Merle Axelrod  
of Supreme Cuts



Henry Kreinces  
of Vision Import Group

**“Technology and social media are today’s way of communicating about our products to the public. It’s no longer just enough to have a fantastic product; we need the IT skills to market it to our customers.”**

— Lucky Lee, Lucky’s Real Tomatoes

one of the first programs to combine local and organic on a regional basis. The label offers all organic zucchini, cucumbers, eggplant, peppers, mini bells, and a variety of tomatoes including beefsteak, heirloom, grape, cherry and raindrop. “The field-level inputs at Hepworth are as significant as in greenhouses,” states Peter Kroner, business development consultant and sales representative for Eli & Ali. “These are probably the finest organic growers in all New York State.”

“This development represents the first time an organic program has delivered locally to educate the consumer,” continues Kroner. “The program gives the grower the payback they deserve for putting their name on the label, and it shows the customer we support the local grower. It should really spark opportunities for our company and for our customers. There will be POS materials to demonstrate the farm connection to customers including pictures of the farm. This is a whole different idea of where to go in the future.”

### HARNESSING TECHNOLOGY

Savvy niche marketers utilize tech-

nology to expand their niche. “Consumers have more information than ever,” reports Interrupcion’s Calabrese. “They are connected and have questions. Technology is helping niches continue to grow, and we can take advantage of technology to connect to consumers and suppliers.”

“Technology and social media are today’s way of communicating about our products to the public,” says Lee. “It’s no longer just enough to have a fantastic product; we need the IT skills to market it to our customers.”

Koppert Cress uses technology on the growing and selling side. “We were one of the first greenhouses in the world to use LED lights to grow,” explains Mazard. “We also use the internet and social media to educate customers. If we don’t communicate to our customers what we do and why we do it, we won’t be successful. Though we use wholesalers and distributors to get our product into our customers’ hands, we use our own communications tools to talk directly to the customer and ensure our message reaches the final customer without being lost through the chain.”

One weakness in produce transportation is tracking trucks of owner/operators, and



Ronnie Cohen and Raul Millan  
of Vision Import Group





Colin Sharpe, Michela Calabrese, Rafael Goldberg and Brandon Rankin of Interruption Fair Trade



Paul and Randy Auerbach of Maurice A. Auerbach, Inc.



Rob Goldstein of Genpro

Target is addressing this with available technology. "Smartphone technology has helped us better communicate and have immediate access to information with owner/operators," says Kazan. "Drivers can go onto our website and see available loads, and customers can track trucks on the road without operators having to buy into an expensive tracking system."

"We have all our coolers monitored 24/7 by computers," says Klein. "Our state-of-the-art refrigeration system is all computer-controlled. These technologies allow us to best handle our multiple items in a highly food safe environment."

Technology presents a huge opportunity for connecting with consumers. "We have a tremendous amount of information that we try to share with customers and

consumers via Facebook, Twitter, and QR codes," Interruption's Calabrese says. "Technology can be a powerful tool, but it's all moot if you don't have something interesting to say. One great example is Interruption's banana video. It's wonderful for a consumer in Chicago or New York to see the grower of the banana they're eating talking about what a difference it makes in improving his life."

Caraveo has a consumer-oriented website and is looking at new shelf-life technology. "We're trying to educate consumers about papayas in terms of usage and benefits," says Millan. "New technology is on the horizon to extend shelf-life. Papayas already have a pretty long shelf life, but any advancement is interesting in terms of extending reach to customers."

However, as far as technology advances, relationships will remain an important component of doing niche business. "Many of our top customers have been with us over 25 years and this is not because of technology," states Lee. "It's because of the relationships we've developed over the last three decades. Going forward, it will be a lot of both!"

"The bigger picture is having a relationship," agrees Vision's Cohen. "Relationships with the grower and customer help us identify and take advantage of niches. Things are always changing. We must look for the opportunity in these changes."

"Close relationships help us understand how customers see things so we have a better idea of what we can offer them,"





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*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 74 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.*

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- Confirm unresponsiveness
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- 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**

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John Alva (second from left) and team of Rockhedge Herbs



Paul Kneeland of Kings Supermarkets and Peter Kroner of Eli & Ali's

**“It would be naïve to say that just having persistence is enough. We’ve found it’s a combination of challenging assumptions and supply expectations.”**

—Rafael Goldberg,  
*Interrupcion Fair Trade*

says Supreme Cuts’ Axelrod. “A lot of the issues we think about, and focus on, are the same things our customers do. We have to offer more to our existing customers and make it more than just ordering beans.”

### TAKING RISKS FOR SUCCESS

At times, niche marketers have to behave like rebels, challenging the norm and taking risks. “We’re going into markets populated with fierce competitors, so it’s no small challenge,” says Interrupcion’s Goldberg. “In some ways what we’re doing is disruptive to the norm in the marketplace. We look at other innovations that have shaken things up by making a significant change in the marketplace, and we hope we’re up to the same challenge.”

Goldberg continues, “It would be naïve to say that just having persistence is enough. We’ve found it’s a combination of

challenging assumptions and supply expectations. We work to convince the market that from a service, quality and value perspective, we have something to offer. We launched Fair Trade bananas in an industry where we were considered crazy to do it. Now it’s thriving.”

“When we launched Koppert Cress, people were telling us that we were too expensive,” adds Mazard. “But our vision was to become the leader in culinary innovation. When we started, people didn’t understand our positioning simply because it takes time to build up a reputation. Now, every year we grow stronger and stronger.”

Antiquated models of brokering transportation were confronted by Genpro. Goldstein shares, “We’ve tried to think outside the box and keep the employee–employer relationship. We’ve gone against the grain, but it’s working and we’ve been

able to stay consistent with our value-proposition and have a successful service.”

Taking a risk on niche innovators may yield great results for customers. “When we started bringing papayas into the U.S., people told us to bring green because it lasts longer,” reports Caraveo’s Millan. “We tried to change the standard and show that a papaya with color on the shelf sells better. Now we see more and more supermarkets trying to develop a system to be able to handle and display a riper papaya as they’re seeing sales results.”

“I have one customer that was buying from five or six different herb companies,” states Rockhedge’s Alva. “They told me herbs were 1 percent of their business yet 50 percent of their problems. I convinced them to take a risk with us. Now he says he doesn’t hear about herb problems anymore. I’ve helped him grow and he’s helped me grow.”

**pb**



# *In Memoriam*

## *Kevin Murphy*

*April 20, 1954 - January 31, 2013*



CEO / Owner of Baldor

*"A true visionary with a life philosophy of hard work and caring for people that was felt by all whom he touched"*

Kevin S. Murphy, 58, passed away on January 31, 2013 at the New York Presbyterian Hospital in Manhattan.

Kevin is survived by his mother Marilyn Murphy, brothers: Thomas D. Murphy Jr., Patrick Murphy, sister: Sharon Triolo and his son TJ Murphy and daughter-in-law Christine Murphy. He was born on April 20, 1954 in Wayne, NJ to Marilyn and Thomas D. Murphy. He attended Wayne High School and worked as a printer for Drum Litho after graduating.

Kevin's food career started at Balducci's in Greenwich Village in the 1980's when he married Ria Balducci, daughter of owner Andrew Balducci. He was trained in every department, learning the food business from the ground up. He expanded and finally took over Balducci's small wholesale division called "Baldor" in 1991. He moved his new company to a tiny warehouse in Long Island City, Queens and ran the operation with one van and a couple of delivery trucks. Baldor grew incrementally from there. The next move was to a larger facility in Maspeth, Queens where more staff and trucks were added.

In 2000, he took over a large facility on Barry Street in the Bronx, minutes away from the Hunts Point Market. In 2007 an opportunity arose to take over an abandoned city-owned warehouse in the South Bronx. It covers over 188,000 square feet and sits on 7 acres in the Hunts Point peninsula. Kevin gutted the building, redesigned it and added dozens of trucks to service the tri-state area with fine specialty foods. In 2006 Baldor Boston opened its doors in Chelsea, Massachusetts. Baldor Boston is currently moving into a larger newly constructed building slated to open in March of 2013. In 2012 Baldor opened a branch just outside of Washington, D.C. Today Baldor delivers throughout most of New England, all of the tri-state area and the mid-Atlantic region. As of today, Baldor employs over 800 employees and operates a fleet of over 200 delivery trucks.

Kevin's vision and ambition changed the trajectory of the lives and the families of more people than will ever be known. God bless him – he was and will remain an inspiring person that will be greatly missed.





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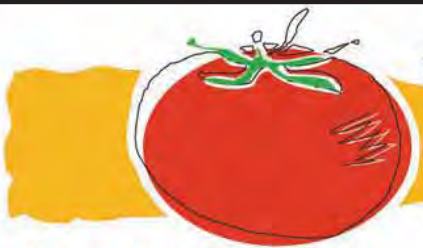
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# DIRT CANDY

Chef Amanda Cohen celebrates vegetables with obscure cuisine. BY MICHAEL FEMIA

**W**ith her unmistakably original collection of flavor-forward vegetable dishes (think Portobello mousse, or eggplant tiramisu), Chef Amanda Cohen has won praise from vegetarians and steadfast carnivores alike — at times racking up a three-month waiting list for dinner at her East Village restaurant, aptly named Dirt Candy.

Cohen, who deliberately identifies herself as a vegetable chef rather than a vegetarian chef, says, “Dirt Candy is all about eating vegetables because they taste good — period. My plate isn’t your medicine cabinet, and there are no politics here. I don’t care what you ate for the meal before this one, or what you’re going to eat at the meal after. I just want you to come here and see how much fun vegetables can be.”

Cohen is fast becoming a leader in reshaping how people think about everyday produce items. Dirt Candy was the first vegetarian restaurant in the past 17 years to have received a 2-star review from the *New York Times*. Nearly every fresh ingredient on its menu can be found in a typical supermarket. This is a magnificent reminder that creative preparation of even the most familiar ingredients can provoke a great deal of excitement.

“People keep talking about vegetables moving to the center of the plate, and I think that’s happening more and more, but it’s a slow process. After five years of Dirt Candy being open, vegetables still don’t get a whole lot of respect.” She explains, “I think a lot of people just haven’t given vegetables a fighting chance. People are usually open to them being good, but they’ve been disappointed too many times. Many customers say, ‘I love meat, but this is really good.’ Or, ‘I was worried I’d be hungry afterwards, but now I’m stuffed!’”

Countering unflattering notions of vegetables, particularly that eating them is a sort of health chore, Cohen invests a great deal of energy into making certain that each dish is a fun and enlightening rediscovery of day-to-day items. In her words, “Each dish should be a blind date between the customer and a vegetable they’ve met before but never quite seen in this light. When someone leaves Dirt Candy, I want them to be thinking, ‘I’ve always seen zucchini around, but I never knew she could be so bewitching! Now I’ll have to give her a call.’”



## THE BRAIN BEHIND THE INNOVATION

To accomplish that notion, Cohen explains, "I have to start by really tasting a vegetable, figuring out how much of its taste is from its texture, and what it really tastes like when divorced from that familiar setting. I try more than just the traditional parts — a lot of flavor is often thrown away. Broccoli stalks have a nutty taste, turnip greens can become pesto ... I use so many parts of a vegetable in a single dish because the real taste of a lot of vegetables is very subtle. They don't rely on fat to carry flavor, and many have high water content, so it can be tough to coax their flavors out. Overkill is usually the best solution. To really play up the taste of, say, cucumber, I'd need to have cucumber all over the plate in as many different forms as possible."

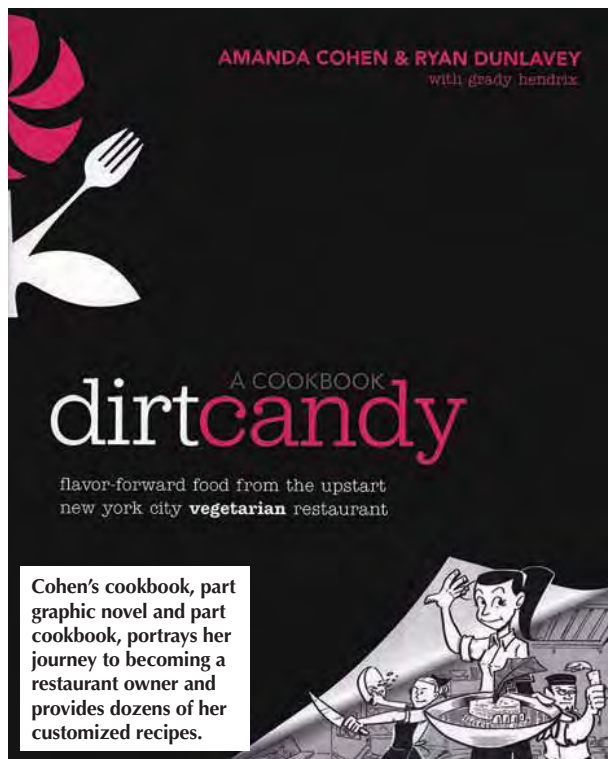
"One thing that has been really important to me from the beginning was that all of Dirt Candy's desserts focus on vegetables. I've been making vegetable desserts for close to five years now. It's fun — really, really fun." Recounting the genesis of one of her signature desserts, eggplant tiramisu served with rosemary cotton candy, Cohen offers another glimpse into her innovation process. "Because eggplant is a soft vegetable with a little sweetness, I thought making it a dessert would be easy, but I couldn't find its taste."

"When you eat eggplant Parmesan, you taste sauce and cheese. With baba ghanoush, it's the char from roasting the eggplant and the tahini. But trying it raw gave me nothing. After I finally realized I'd have to serve it grilled to get any flavor out of it, I had to figure out how much I'd need to use. It took weeks of experimentation, making the tiramisu over and over again. I finally realized that I needed about one pound of eggplant for every piece. Even then, it's a subtle flavor."

"This whole process takes weeks, sometimes months, of making every stage of the dish over and over and over again and tasting version after version. It takes a long time, but to me, it's always worth the wait. Doing something original isn't easy!"

### COOKBOOK / BLOG / LADY CHEF

In August 2012, Cohen published her first cookbook, marrying her recipe collection with a graphic novel that offers a refreshingly candid look into the guts of the restaurant business. Designed to familiarize



TOP PHOTO: COHEN'S PORTOBELLO MUSHROOM MOUSSE  
BOTTOM PHOTO: COHEN'S PARSNIP DISH

outpouring of characteristic wit and unabashed sincerity. Entries have covered, among other things, the formulation of new menu additions, bits

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# COMODO INVITES MORE THAN COMFORT TO THE DINNER TABLE



PHOTOS COURTESY OF COMODO

An in-home supper club becomes a NYC-indie darling. **BY MICHAEL FEMIA**

**O**ne of New York's latest restaurants emerged, quite remarkably, out of an in-home supper club. Fittingly named Comodo ("comfortable" in Spanish), it's now regarded as one of the most pleasant dining spots in the city.

Co-founder Felipe Donnelly developed a tireless penchant for cooking early in life, but ended up working in advertising, where he met his wife, Tamy. In 2010, the couple made a resolution to host weekly dinners in their Lower Manhattan apartment, each

time with new guests and fresh recipes. Before long, they became somewhat of an underground sensation, welcoming guests who discovered them through web coverage and social media.

The glowing tone of meal accounts published on their blog, *Worth Kitchen*, long foretold a career change from advertising to restaurateur, but as with many tales of entrepreneurship, the transition from dreams to reality didn't happen quite as envisioned. Having pleasantly curious strangers over for dinner seemed like an innocuous source of fulfillment, but New

York's Health Department thought otherwise. Eventually the supper club was deemed an unpermitted foodservice establishment, and was ordered to shut down.

By that point, the couple had reaped far too much happiness to throw in the towel. "It had always been one of those 'someday...' thoughts that I'd open a restaurant," says Donnelly, "but it was put into hyperdrive in April 2011. I knew that if I didn't take the risk at that moment, I might never have the opportunity again, and I'd regret it for the rest of my life."

Day jobs were ultimately left behind to embark on a crash course in restaurant management. "I needed to prepare myself as much as possible for running a kitchen



on a daily basis,” recalls Donnelly. “While I was hired as a consultant to help develop the menu at a restaurant in the East Village, we opened our own catering business. I threw myself into the business to understand how everything worked and how much energy is involved.” Almost exactly a year later, the keys to Comodo were in-hand.

Along the way, Donnelly reconnected with childhood classmate, Carolina Santos-Neves, who was writing for *Bon Appétit* and *Gourmet* magazines’ love-child, Epicurious.com and finishing her training at the Natural Gourmet Institute in Manhattan. Today, she is Comodo’s chef de cuisine and a partner in the business. “Sometimes egos butt heads in the kitchen,” notes Donnelly, “but it’s the opposite here — especially when it comes to menu development.”

“We complement each other very well,” adds Santos-Neves. “I’d say our collaborative dishes have been the most popular.”

“The restaurant is based on the experience of making dinner at home,” reminds Donnelly. “When you have a meal at home, it comes with everything. Vegetables aren’t just a side. They’re part of the dish. That’s an important part of the way we build our menu.”

Latin flavors meld with a wide assortment of produce used throughout the menu. For instance, the chipotle-rubbed cod is served with a red rice, lentil, and date pilaf, pea puree, and sautéed garlic scapes. Other dishes have more subtle Latin twists, such as the cauliflower gratin with aji aioli. “We’re always trying to make the menu a bit more Latin American. Felipe has lived in Colombia, Mexico, Brazil, and Spain. I’ve lived in Mexico, and my dad is Brazilian,” notes Santos-Neves.

Santos-Neves is also a big fan of Brussels sprouts, and she features them in a couple dishes, including one of her signature salads: shredded Brussels sprouts served warm with an avocado-based Caesar-style dressing. “I give complete credit to Carolina there,” says Donnelly. “It’s one of the best salads we’ve had.”

Donnelly and Santos-Neves keep an eye out for Latin specialty items. Most core items are ordered indirectly from Baldor Specialty Foods of New York, NY, by way of ChefMod, LLC (a purchasing collective for foodservice operators in New York, NY), but Comodo also makes a strong effort to work directly with small farmers in the region.



Comodo Business Partners (left to right) Felipe Donnelly, Tamy Rofe, Mac Osborne, Carolina Santos-Neves

“One of the tougher things for me to find out was that it’s easy to say I’m going to be local, but very difficult to execute,” says Donnelly. “We started with the Union Square farmers market as our Number One stop. We’d use a bicycle with a big cart loaded with produce — it was a great advertisement! We haven’t stopped using the farmers market but expanding that mindset requires a lot more time than we have to give right now.”

Nonetheless, Comodo purchases weekly through two small growers in the region: Primordia Mushroom Farm in Lenhartsville, PA, and Northshire Farm in West Winfield, NY. “We’ve established a great relationship with Northshire Farm. We challenge each other,” says Donnelly. “One week, they were pushing jalapenos down my throat. They wanted to give me a case,

and I don’t usually use more than 25 a week. I asked if they could smoke them, and two weeks later, I had a box of freshly smoked chipotles.”

“We’ve also asked them for certain ingredients. This summer they’re growing *ajil amarillo* (Peruvian yellow peppers) for us,” says Donnelly. “While we had dinners at our apartment, the Chief Dining Officer of Open Table came one night when we had a ceviche with *ajil amarillo* sauce. She decided to try and grow them at her home in Long Island. A year later, she brought us a huge bag full. They were smaller than in Peru, but the flavor was like nothing I’d had. So I bought the seeds, and I brought them to our farmer. He got so excited about being the only one to have them at the farmers market that he went out and bought four times more seed.”

For Comodo, exceptional ingredients and creative fare brighten a dining experience that’s true to its origins and its name. “One night I went to dinner at Felipe and Tamy’s apartment, and before I knew it, it was 11 p.m. on a Wednesday; not once did I look at my watch,” recalls Santos-Neves. Ultimately, Comodo is a conveyance of that kind of night. “Nobody is just another customer. We treat patrons like they’re friends. That’s our nature.”

pb

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# STRAIGHT FROM THE MARKET



Levent Ali, owner of Straight From The Market

An independent market thrives on the Upper East Side all for the love of produce. **BY MICHAEL FEMIA**

**B**efore opening his now thriving Upper East Side grocery, Straight From The Market, Levent Ali was one of the most academically groomed street peddlers in New York City produce history. Turkish born, and educated in England and the United States, Ali earned a masters degree in public administration and turned down admission to Oxford to sell fruit on the street. Any eager entrepreneur could relate to his reasoning: he longed to work for himself.

Friends already operating fruit carts guided Ali's not-so-archetypal entry into the produce industry by introducing him to the mechanics of procurement and street sales. Eager to learn more, he also spent time thoroughly familiarizing himself with the Hunts Point Terminal Market.

In 2005, a Turkish friend helped connect him with a landlord renting 800 square feet month-to-month near East 96th Street, a challenging location often cited as the northern boundary of Upper East Side affluence and the beginning of economic descent into Spanish Harlem. Ali kept that store open until 2008, before relocating to 92nd Street. Since then, his business has grown exponentially, and he plans to open a second store by the year's end.

PRODUCE BUSINESS first set out to track down Ali at the Hunts Point Produce Market after spotting his delivery truck, vibrantly adorned with hand-painted graffiti of fruit that borders a covenant offered to his customers. It enthusiastically proclaims, "Produce is our business! We buy our produce directly from the Hunts Point Terminal Market. We love providing customers with great produce at the lowest possible price. After all, that is what





our name stands for! STRAIGHT FROM THE MARKET!"

Unsurprisingly, Ali regards Hunts Point not merely as an amenity, but a lifeline. "Sometimes I go to Hunts Point twice a day. If I didn't go there and get the deals that I do, I would've gone out of business a long time ago. Mornings on the market can be full of stress and excitement, but also happiness, especially when I find good deals!"

Making the most of fluctuant prices and good relationships at Hunts Point helps him maintain a competitive foothold in produce that would be far more difficult to achieve with grocery items. He explains, "As a small independent retailer, it's hard to compete with big chains. We don't see high margins on grocery items." No stranger to most salespeople and foremen on the market, Ali's model is hinged on his ability to navigate the market for the best deals. "Some days people will sell cheap just to free up space for new inventory."

While planning his store, Ali took cues from fellow Manhattan grocers. "I had some of the best examples right in front of me — Garden of Eden, D'Agostino's, Fairway. I realized the importance of display. No matter how fresh your products are, you won't succeed if you don't display well."

He adds, "You should always be open to new ideas and realize what you don't have," echoing his advice with a lesson he recalls from a Harvard finance class. "Our professor said that in business, you need to know what you know, know what you don't know, and get to know people who know the things you don't so you can learn from them."

As Ali intended, his store's popularity has grown largely out of his willingness to extend low prices on produce to his customers. Several customer reviews on Yelp.com applaud the store for quality produce and good prices. "I like getting good deals, and I like sharing them," says Ali. "People deserve that here. I think a lot of customers overpaid for years and didn't get the ripeness they deserved."

Driven by neighborhood demand, the produce department's organic offerings have grown considerably. "The market has changed since I opened, and I've changed my product line accordingly. When I first

opened, we only carried five to 10 percent organic, but over the years, Straight From The Market has transformed into a mostly organic gourmet store. For grocery items, the margins on organic items aren't substantial, but they are in produce."

The store is open 24 hours, seven days a week — a rarity in the neighborhood. That's possible thanks to the help of Ali's sister and business partner, Asiye. Like her brother, she earned a degree in the United States and had the opportunity to go to medical school, but decided to stay in the family business. "My sister is the best thing that has ever happened to me, and I love her more than anything. We've worked and lived together for almost 10 years."

Ali is proud of how far the store has progressed, especially despite some of the inherent limitations of its location. "This is not a prime location for an organic grocery, and the building's owner doesn't want any produce displayed outside. From the outside, it's not my perfect vision, but once customers are inside, they see what's going on."

Not 10 years after opening his first store, Ali found himself empowered and confident in a bright future for his business. Currently, he's in the midst of preparing for expansion, and he hopes to open a second location in Queens or Brooklyn before the end of the 2013.

pb

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# BROOKLYN FARE

Brooklyn's diamond in the rough shines with the downtown Brooklyn community. **BY MICHAEL FEMIA**

**O**pened in April 2009, Brooklyn Fare has since blossomed as one of the borough's premier independent supermarkets. It's not just a figure of speech when owner Moe Issa characterizes it as "more than a market." Brooklyn Fare is also home to the Chef's Table, the only New York City restaurant outside of Manhattan to earn three Michelin Stars. As expected, produce is taken seriously here.

The market is the eye-catching jewel of an intersection shared with a fatigued corner deli, a fenced-in parking lot, and a multistory behemoth that houses public

assistance offices. At closer look, it becomes clear how a premium grocery could thrive here. The store is situated near the forefront of fresh residential development in Downtown Brooklyn, yet only a block away from the tree-canopied streets and well kept brownstones of Boerum Hill, where Issa grew up.

Long before Brooklyn Fare, Issa harbored the dream of opening a neighborhood market. "I'm a foodie. I've always been interested in food, and I thought this would be a safe way for me to get into the food business." Eventually, he gained exposure to the retail business while working as a Pepsi franchisee.

Lessons learned along the way helped hone his vision. "I visited a lot of stores over the years, and it was always in my head that I'd open my own some day. I looked at a lot of other stores and always felt that I had to do something better. Over the years, I saw a lot of stores open and close, and I learned from choices I saw other people make."

Still, Issa knew he couldn't be prepared for everything. "Go into a business that you're not too familiar with, and you'll make mistakes. I learned a lot of things the hard way, but at least I learned. We're going into our fifth year, and we're doing extremely well."

## PRODUCE AS THE ANCHOR

In less than five years, the produce





Moe Issa, owner of Brooklyn Fare



department has nearly doubled in size. "It's a lot of work, but it's our most beautiful department. I knew from the start that it would be the anchor of the store, which is why I gave it space up front. It's refreshing. We want it to make you feel good even if you've had a bad day.

My philosophy has always been to give customers the freshest produce possible, and to price it reasonably. Keep the product moving, and keep it fresh. You can't cut corners."

Like many independent retailers in New York, Brooklyn Fare takes advantage of proximity to wholesale vendors in the Bronx. In addition to placing orders with Bronx-based foodservice distributor, Baldor, Issa's buyer frequents the houses on the Hunts Point Market and shops around for the best prices on premium products. "I can't buy whole trailerloads. That's why we go to Hunts Point. It's the most logical way to do it if you have a store in the metropolitan area."

"We also try to get as much local product as possible. Our customers are attracted to those items, and I firmly believe in supporting local business. I try to give new items a shot whenever I can." Issa notes that while some local products carry a higher price tag, many of his customers are willing to spend the extra dollar. "There's a younger demographic interested in knowing how things are made, and helping the local community grow." He

also views it as a way to pay forward the support that neighbors, who have become customers, have shown him over the years. "When I opened up, a lot of people supported me because I was from the neighborhood. Now I have to help the people who are starting up."

"It was a learning process to figure out what customers in the neighborhood wanted. Consumers here are heavily into organic, but at the same time, we have plenty of people who want conventional items. Like any other department, it has to evolve over time. We'll do whatever we have to, and we listen to our customers. We make changes and bring in new products all the time. If somebody requests something, we'll give it a shot and see how it goes."

Issa makes a concerted effort to connect with his customers, and remain well attuned to their needs. "We know we need

to keep reinventing and improving ourselves. We encourage feedback, and we listen. It's a neighborhood store, and I try to make it as customer-driven as possible. Customers dictate where the store goes."

When Issa recruited neighborhood residents to join a focus group to drive in-store changes, the response was overwhelming. "I got 400 e-mails, and I was only looking for 10. I listened to what they wanted, what they thought of the store, and what could be better. Engaging with the community helped us improve. A lot of customers volunteered to participate because they wanted to feel that they were involved in the growth of the store."

Hardly four years after opening Brooklyn Fare, Issa has accomplished a lot, and he shows no signs of slowing down. "I wanted to think outside the box. I wanted to make Brooklyn Fare a kitchen and a supermarket. That concept means a lot to me. I wanted my prepared food to be top notch, and we've done that. We brought in a highly experienced chef to make the food for the store. Earning three Michelin stars for the restaurant was a great accomplishment, especially in Brooklyn."

Issa is already planning to open a second location. "This summer we will be opening another store on 37th Street between 9th and 10th Avenue in Manhattan, and it's progressing very well," he reports. "It will be about the same size as the first store, and the same concept." **pb**

## BROOKLYN FARE

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FAX: 718-243-0926

Monday-Saturday

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Sunday

8:00 am - 9:00 pm



**House .....Unit(s) .....Phone**

A & J Produce Corp.....	126-133, 137-144, 450-463	718-589-7877
Alphas Corp.....	223-225	
Armata, E. Inc.....	111-120, 338-341	
	369-370, 372-376	718-991-5600
Best Tropical Produce.....	237	718-861-3131
Chain Produce.....	400-402	718-893-1717
CM Produce LLC.....	123-125	718-328-8388
Cochran Robert. T. Co., Inc.....	408-412	718-991-2340
C and J Produce.....	238-241	718-991-5050
Coosemans New York, Inc.....	242-244, 249	718-328-3060
D'Arrigo Bros. Co. of New York, Inc.....	301-308, 310-320	
	323-330, 332-336	718-991-5900
Fierman Produce Exchange, Inc.....	247-248, 250-257	718-893-1640
Food Barn.....	31B	718-617-3800
Fresco LLC.....	258-259	718-589-5000
Fruitco Corp.....	200-204	718-893-4500
Georgallas Tomato & Produce.....	447-449	718-842-6317
Gold Medal Produce.....	163-168	718-893-5554
Henry Haas, Inc.....	464	718-378-2550
Hothouse AFL.....	110	718-542-3777
Issam Kanawi.....	331	718-542-2217
Juniors Produce Inc.....	438-439	718-991-7300
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Katzman S. Produce, Inc.....	153-157, 423-428	718-991-4700
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Mendez Int'l. Tropical Fruit & Veg.....	152, 158-162	718-893-0100
Nathel & Nathel, Inc.....	347-350, 354-364,	
	367-368, 465-468	718-991-6050
National Farm Wholesale Corp.....	434-437	718-617-6229
Okun, Morris, Inc.....	205-220, 429-433	718-589-7700
Pan Hellenic Food Corp.....	440-444	718-328-8654
Porricelli, Ciro.....	342	718-893-6000
Renella, J. Produce, Inc.....	351	718-991-4210
Rothman, D.M. Co., Inc.....	106-109	718-991-4920
Rubin Bros. Produce Corp.....	147-148, 269-270, 272-274	718-589-3200
Top Banana LLC.....	413-420	718-328-6700
A. J. Trucco, Inc.....	337, 343-344	718-893-3060
Yola Produce.....	371	516-292-8821

# HUNTS POINT TERMINAL PRODUCE CO-OPERATIVE MARKET DIRECTORY

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- ★ Giving Back To The Community
- ★ Interviews With City Officials, Health Authorities, Food Experts
- ★ Produce Factoids/Trivia
- ★ Educational Outreach
- ★ Personal Accounts of Vendors
- ★ Behind the Scenes In Restaurants
- ★ Retailer Profiles
- ★ What's In Season
- ★ Merchant Bios
- ★ Day in the Life...







ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF HEINEN'S FINE FOODS

# Heinen's Fine Foods Carries On Family Philosophy

A small meat market with origins going back to the Great Depression grows into a fine foods grocer with its original credo: to provide world-class customer service while offering the freshest, highest quality foods. **BY OSCAR KATOV**

**T**he fortitude that carried the Heinen family through the economic crunch of the Great Depression 80 years ago showed it had the right stuff to be a successful retailer. It also proved to be the foundation for today's Heinen Fine Foods Inc. — a prospering enterprise that reflects youthful multi-generational energy, ambitious distribution logistics and supplier synergies.

“During a trip to all of our stores, we learned that 83 percent of our customers were buying something in the produce department,” said Chris Foltz, Heinen’s director of operations. “That’s a huge impact — something really significant in contributing to the strength of the company. It was clear that we were experiencing a wow factor.”

The company, which was created by Joseph Heinen as a small meat market in 1929, now consists of 17 stores in the greater Cleveland area and one in Barrington, IL, a Chicago suburb.

Seventeen stores means serving 17 communities. Foltz and his produce staff organized a very efficient distribution system and developed productive working relationships with farmers throughout Ohio, California and Mexico.

“We self-distribute everything, which is pretty unusual for an independent” Foltz says. “We bring all of our produce into the warehouse, and it stays there as a resource. This logistical operation allows us to easily receive truckloads to our stores for sales instead of buying at the local market or buying from distributors,” explains Foltz.

“We have deliveries five days a week to stores (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday) which means the stores are getting fresh items on Monday morning to start the week. And they can get



Tom and Jeff Heinen carry on the family business, now entering its 85th year.

*Editor's Note: We thank the Food Marketing Institute for its recommendation of independent members who are recognized for their outstanding produce operations in this series of PB articles.*



up to three deliveries a day if necessary. We can meet demands. For example, kale is moving like crazy. We used to have it delivered by the case and now by the pallet — reflecting a big change in consumer interest,” says Foltz.

“Some of that popularity comes from the Dr. Oz TV show, which attracts our core women customers. If the talk is all about greens, collards, or kale, our sales are huge on those items. As a matter of fact, we feature those superfoods in our ads — as a special of the week, and we tie them to demos in the store with recipes,” says Foltz.

Foltz emphasizes that the “wow factor” is a target to aim for in the store’s operation. “In our surveys, we measure selection, quality and helpfulness of staff in every department. Our metric for produce was 70, which meant that 70 percent of customers leave highly satisfied. Our score went to 72 percent when we highlighted quality and freshness of produce.”

As we all know, “satisfied customers” relate to a business’ bottom line in a tremendous way. At Heinen’s, 16 percent of the company’s total sales from all departments are derived from fresh produce sales.

### SOURCING SPECIFICITY

“To win in produce means heavily investing in it,” Foltz explains. “We have a produce director, we are filling a vacant merchandising position, and we have three buyers. One buyer does some quality control at the warehouse — a pretty big investment

## HEINEN TAKES ANOTHER BOLD STEP



Cleveland Store



Barrington Store

“After 80-plus years in Cleveland, and 17 stores, we took a bold step and opened a store last August in Barrington, IL, a suburb of Chicago,” admits Tom Heinen, co-president of Heinen’s, who plans to open a second Chicago store in Glenview in spring of 2014.

“The customer feedback thus far has been positive,” says Heinen. “Many of our

peers think we’re crazy, expanding into a new market in the midst of the worst economy since the Great Depression. But our grandfather opened the first Cleveland supermarket during the Depression. We made it then because of our commitment to our associates and their commitment to our customers. We’re confident that same commitment will serve us well in Chicago.”

in staffing.”

“We buy a lot of produce from Mexico,” says Foltz. “We want to know how they grow and handle their products. We’re very specific because sourcing is critical to us. Our brand differentiates us. If they use pesticides, we want to know why, because we prefer they don’t. Our buyer goes to Mexico several times a year to check out our growers, to validate their practices.”

“Careful attention to sourcing details with vendors in California is imperative,” Foltz says. “Our managers visit farms, and there are

occasions when we arrange for their specialists to visit us and train our produce managers to understand the variety, even to determine the sweetness of the product, because it is taste that sells the product.”

Steady growth in produce sales has included a steady growth in organics.

“We started pushing organics about five years ago when they were under five percent of our sales,” says Foltz. “Today, I think we’re over 15 percent. We have about 140 organic items authorized. But, that doesn’t mean we have them in the stores every day, because they’re not always available — or we’ll reject them at the warehouse through our own quality control.”

“However, it’s important to know that the term in the fields goes beyond organic,” says Foltz. “It’s more about how people grow products that are really sustainable, if they use pesticides, and how and when they use them. For example, the Amish farmers who grow for us are not certified, but probably 90 percent of the product we buy from them is organic.”

When speaking about locally grown products, Foltz notes that “almost 70 percent of what we sell through September and October are products in season locally — reflecting the effort initiated seven or eight years ago to begin developing relationships with more local farmers. Produce had always been important, but there was a substantial shift in priorities and goals. The company determined that our produce operation was going to be the best in the marketplace.” **pb**

## TWO UNIQUE RELATIONSHIPS TO BETTER SERVE HEINEN’S CUSTOMERS

“One of our key branding positions is sourcing. Our commitment goes beyond just ensuring the best quality,” explains Chris Foltz, Heinen’s director of operations. “We care about the character of the people with whom we do business, their commitments to their associates, their passion for excellence, and their commitment to us. For example, we have a unique relationship with Melissa’s/World Variety Produce, Inc, a Los Angeles-based specialty provider. We believe in the products so much that they procure kishu and pixie tangerines grown in the Ojai Valley of California for us. We have a full-time associate, employed by Melissa’s, who supports our team and our customers with education, demonstrations, and training.”

“In support of the growing need to know where our food comes from, how it’s grown, and the nutritional content, we are investing in a new position in produce — fondly referred to as our Green Coats,” says Foltz. “These employees will be trained and certified as nutritional experts by our Chief Medical Officer, Todd Pesek, MD, author of the best seller, *Eat Yourself Super*.”

“Dr. Pesek has been guiding our wellness initiatives for over two years. By early next year, we plan to have the first Green Coats on the floor,” reports Foltz. “Literally in Green Coats, these experts will serve our Cleveland and Chicago customers with nutritional advice and educate them on where and how our products are grown.”





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# Seven Ways To Sell More Garlic

Year-round availability and multiple convenience options add to garlic's appeal as a versatile ingredient with growing demand. **BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD**



Garlic consumption in the U.S. has reached an estimated 2.3 pounds per person, according to 2011 USDA Economic Research Service statistics.

**G**arlic was once considered a specialty. Not anymore. Today, this flavorful member of the onion family is an essential ingredient in a wide variety of the world's cuisines and in dishes that grace American's dinner tables. Garlic consumption in the U.S. has reached an estimated 2.3 pounds per person, according to 2011 USDA Economic Research Service statistics. What's more, garlic represented a stable 0.5 percent of produce department dollar sales during the 52-weeks ending March 30, 2013, according to data supplied by Nielsen Perishables Group, a Chicago, IL-based fresh food consulting firm.

Ed Osowski, director of produce and floral for Martin's Super Markets, an 18-store chain based in South Bend, IN, says, "Consumers are using more garlic both for health benefits and increasing flavor profile in their dishes in part because of cooking shows."

## 1. ASSURE SUPPLY

Garlic's contribution to produce depart-

ment dollar sales is virtually the same year-round. In 2012, this figure ranged from a low of 0.4 percent in Q2 to a high of 0.6 in Q4 in 2012, according to the Nielsen Perishables Group.

There are two reasons for this. Anthony Sharrino, president of Eaton & Eustis, in Chelsea, MA explains one reason: "Consumer demand for garlic is steady. In the winter it's used in pasta, soups and stews. In the summer, it's used for marinades on grilled foods."

Secondly, there's 52-week supply of garlic in the U.S. from both domestic and imported sources. Jim Provost, owner and president of I Love Produce, in Kelton, PA, explains, "Demand for garlic in the U.S. is primarily filled by domestic supply from California and imported garlic from China. There has been an increased interest in locally grown garlic regionally, so local farmers are growing what I call the 'non-commercial' varieties that are predominantly grown in California and China.

Though this is a growing market, it is a very small piece of the overall picture. Other suppliers to the U.S. market include Mexico and

Argentina. Their interest in the U.S. market has waned for the past several years due to strong demand for their garlic in Europe, Brazil, Japan, New Zealand and Australia."

The trend in the global garlic marketplace over the past three years is that supply has not kept pace with demand, resulting in historically higher prices. Prices in the U.S. are strong so far for 2013 and will remain as is until the new annual garlic crop begins shipping out of both California and China in July.

Patsy Ross, vice president of marketing for Christopher Ranch, LLC, in Gilroy, CA, says, "If the weather stays on course, we expect normal yields for our garlic crop this year."

California garlic is placed into cold storage where it can last nearly the entire year.

"China seems to have a normal crop, from what I hear," adds David Grimes, chief executive officer of the David E. Grimes Company, in Hollister, CA. "Rumor has it that the dehydrated garlic pipelines there are pretty depleted, so that may be good for the U.S. crop."

David E. Grimes Company's Grimes believes that consumers care about the origin



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**“Market prices will often dictate the retailer and consumer request ... however, no matter the origin, the most important issue is traceability.”**

— Louis J. Hymel III, *Spice World, Inc.*

of their garlic. “It is very important to know where your garlic product originates. I believe there are still sanitary issues with the Chinese garlic. In other areas, I believe there are no issues to worry about.”

Paul Auerbach, president of the Maurice Auerbach Company in Secaucus, NJ experiences a mix of garlic requests from the industry. “Some retailers want USA only, others want ABC (Argentina, Baja Mexico or California) and still others will take garlic from anywhere.”

Salvatore Vacca, president of A.J. Trucco, Inc., in Bronx, NY feels that the industry is not picky when it comes to garlic origins, but there is one exception. “If there’s a choice between California and China, and the price is similar, then many retailers will take the California.”

“Market prices will often dictate the retailer and consumer request,” says Louis J. Hymel III, director of purchasing and marketing for Spice World, Inc., in Orlando, FL. “However, no matter the origin, the most important issue is traceability.”

Eaton & Eustis’ Sharrino agrees. “Retailers care where their garlic comes from more than wholesalers due to traceability.”

**2. FOCUS ON FRESH**

Maria Brous, director of media and community relations for Publix Super Markets, a 1,000-plus-store chain headquartered in Lakeland, FL, says, “Whole bulbs are still by far the Number One sellers for garlic in our stores.”

John Duffus, sales and marketing manager for The Garlic Company, in Bakersfield, CA, agrees, “Bulb garlic is the anchor of the category.”

“The best way to sell bulb garlic is bulk by the head,” recommends Trucco’s Vacca. “Open the carton and show the customer it’s fresh. When the garlic is packaged, customers wonder when it was picked.”

On the other hand, Provost says five-bulb packaged garlic is the current best-selling retail



garlic product for I Love Produce. “The package allows for easy merchandising, and offers the consumer a convenient way to pick up garlic at a good value. Retailers used to want the biggest garlic available for these packages, which were normally colossal. In the last year, they have taken advantage of smaller size garlic, like Jumbos, in order to meet an everyday retail price of 99 cents each.”

Christopher Ranch’s Ross adds, “Another benefit of packaging is that it provides room for education, for example, usage suggestions and recipes.”

White bulb garlic is most preferred by U.S. shoppers. However, Trucco’s Vacca says, “Some people, especially Hispanic and Asian customers, like the purple garlic better. It has a stronger flavor. Then again, some customers who don’t know what it is are taken aback when they see the color. In that case, retail education is needed.”

Red or purple garlic is available out of Argentina from December to March and out of Mexico from late February into June or early July.

“Spring garlic or green garlic, which is a mild-flavored immature garlic, is more popular in foodservice than retail,” says Robert Schueller, director of public relations for Melissa’s/World Variety Produce, in Los Angeles, CA. “It’s a high-end product that’s hard to find and very seasonal. It’s only available from March to May or June.”

Christopher Ranch’s Ross agrees, “We tried marketing green garlic, but it didn’t get much traction at retail. It needs a lot of education. That’s because it looks like a green onion or scallion with a big price difference.”

“Elephant garlic isn’t true garlic, but instead related to the leek,” explains Melissa’s Schueller. “Because it looks like garlic, except for much bigger bulbs, elephant garlic is rarely seen in bulk because it can confuse customers. We sell it packaged.”

**3. OFFER CUSTOMERS CONVENIENCE**

“Bulb garlic has more than held its own against peeled garlic at retail,” says I Love Produce’s Provost. “The predominance of cooking shows that feature chefs teaching consumers how easy it is to peel garlic by smashing it with the side of a knife or mallet has helped.”

However, David E. Grimes Company’s Grimes says, “The peeled garlic is fresh-tasting and easy-to-use, and customers like the convenience.”

Osowski at Martin’s Super Markets says, “In the value-added category, we carry peeled garlic and a variety of jar garlic.”

“Vacuum-sealed pouches of fresh peeled garlic are making headway in both retail and consumer acceptance,” says The Garlic Company’s Duffus. “The standard is a 6-ounce gusseted stand-up pouch with six 1-ounce pouches inside each containing three



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or four cloves — or enough for a recipe.”

“Growth in the garlic category is primarily in fresh and peeled forms, especially in high-end cooking locations such as New York City, New Orleans and San Francisco,” says Christopher Ranch’s Ross. “However, jar garlic continues to enjoy steady sales.”

Duffus agrees, “Minced and chopped jar garlic are most popular, while organic and roasted are niche items.”

Spice World offers minced garlic in an easy-to-use 20-ounce squeeze bottle. “Squeeze garlic has become very popular with consumers,” says Hymel.

Another value-added product is black garlic. “Black garlic is aged for a month in a special fermentation process where it develops a darker color, softer texture and sweeter taste than regular garlic,” explains Melissa’s Schueller. “It started off with a big boom, but it’s plateaued now and not a huge mover. A few high-end retailers carry it. Black garlic needs a lot of education. American’s don’t understand that it can’t be used the same way as regular garlic. It’s a completely different product.”

#### 4. ADD ORGANIC TO THE MIX

“Organic garlic has moved out of its niche,” says Christopher Ranch’s Ross. “We see growth of 10 percent annually and can’t keep up with demand.”

According to the Nielsen Perishables Group, organic garlic accounted for 8.7 percent of total garlic sales during the 52-weeks ending March 30, 2013 — down slightly from 9 percent the prior year.

“Organic garlic is available year-round from California, Argentina, Mexico and China,” says David E. Grimes Company’s Grimes. “Pricing seems to be levelling out, yet it still costs a lot more to produce the organic, so it’ll always be more pricy.”

Despite its higher costs, many companies offer a full line of organic garlic products. For example, Spice World offers every form that includes fresh, peeled, jar and Squeeze bottle.

#### 5. VARIETY IS THE SPICE OF SALES

“You’re always going to have the cooks who use fresh garlic for flavor and others the processed for the ease of use — even though the taste is not the same,” explains Grimes.

“Then again, customers can change their purchase habits based on meal occasion,” explains The Garlic Company’s Duffus. “You want fresh garlic when you’re preparing a special meal. When you want the same flavor, but are in a hurry, that’s where peeled comes

in. Then there’s the times you want garlic flavor, but either ran out of fresh or have to put a meal on the table fast. That’s the place for jar garlic.”

For these reasons, Osowski at Martin’s Super Markets offers 15 SKUs of conventional and organic garlic in a variety of forms.

Similarly, Publix’s Brous says, “We have several varieties in which we sell garlic: bulk, in 6-ounce bags, in sleeves, tri-packs, jumbo packs (two heads in sleeve), 6-ounce whole peeled, 12-ounce whole peeled, elephant garlic, and minced garlic with olive oil in the jar.”

“Variety has contributed to making garlic a major profit category within the produce department, and consumers are driving the demand,” says Spice World’s Hymel. “It’s important that the four main categories (fresh bulbs, peeled, ready-to-use jars and squeeze) are available. This can be doubled by offering each category in organic. It’s also important that consumers are offered a variety of dollar-value pack sizes in each item along with some specialty garlic items, such as packed in olive oil or roasted.”

In other words, adds Hymel, “Large garlic displays with a complete variety will increase total garlic sales.”

#### 6. DISPLAY CORRECTLY AND CREATIVELY

Bulb garlic doesn’t need refrigeration, so there is some flexibility with display options.

“Display it next to onions,” says Trucco’s Vacca. “Both have similar usages.”

Christopher Ranch’s Ross suggests creating a colorful display. “Display bulb garlic next to tomatoes and avocados. After all, garlic is an impulse purchase.”

“Group non-refrigerated garlic in one section of the produce department,” recommends The Garlic Company’s Duffus. “We’ve seen a couple of retailers put up a stand-alone display rack with bulk, 1-pound bags of bulbs, and jars. This is a real positive sign. If the product is too spread out, customers won’t find it easily.”

Since peeled garlic products need to be refrigerated, retailers make the following merchandising suggestions. Osowski, at Martin’s Super Markets, says, “We display our value-added garlic in a refrigerated shelf set along with the packaged herbs.”

Another ideal location, “is with the bagged salad sets or next to the mushrooms,” suggests Duffus.

“Cross-merchandising is another way to generate additional garlic sales along with incremental items,” says Spice World’s Hymel. “Seasonal cross-merchandising is another





# 40 UNDER 40

## TENTH ANNUAL



PRODUCE BUSINESS is accepting nominations for its Tenth 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, 1974).

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**“Organic garlic has moved out of its niche. We see growth of 10 percent annually and can’t keep up with demand.”**

— Patsy Ross, Christopher Ranch, LLC

way to increase dual item sales.”

Garlic is displayed in the ingredients list of the Aprons’ Simple Meals kiosk at Publix Super Markets to recreate the meal of the week at home. “We demonstrate and sample the meal in store, and then offer customers recipe cards to recreate the item at home,” explains Brous. “All the items needed (food and ingredients) to recreate the meal are conveniently displayed in a kiosk adjacent to

the Simple Meals demonstration counter.”

**7. PRICE AND PROMOTE**

“Garlic is priced best by the head rather than the pound,” says Christopher Ranch’s Ross.

Garlic is price-promoted throughout the year at Publix Super Markets with special promotions, such as Italian Days, we’ll feature garlic along with peppers, olive oil, bread, etc,” says Brous.

Spice World’s Hymel suggests pairing avocados and garlic as a seasonal promotion for Cinco de Mayo along with other garlic themes for football season, grilling items, steak, or anything on the BBQ pit. “Halloween and vampires ... the list goes on,” jokes Hymel.

Christopher Ranch uses a custom Halloween display box for its garlic. The company hosts contests with retailers such as Save Mart, Lucky Supermarkets and Food Max utilizing these boxes. “When you bring garlic to customers’ attention, they buy more,” Ross says. **pb**

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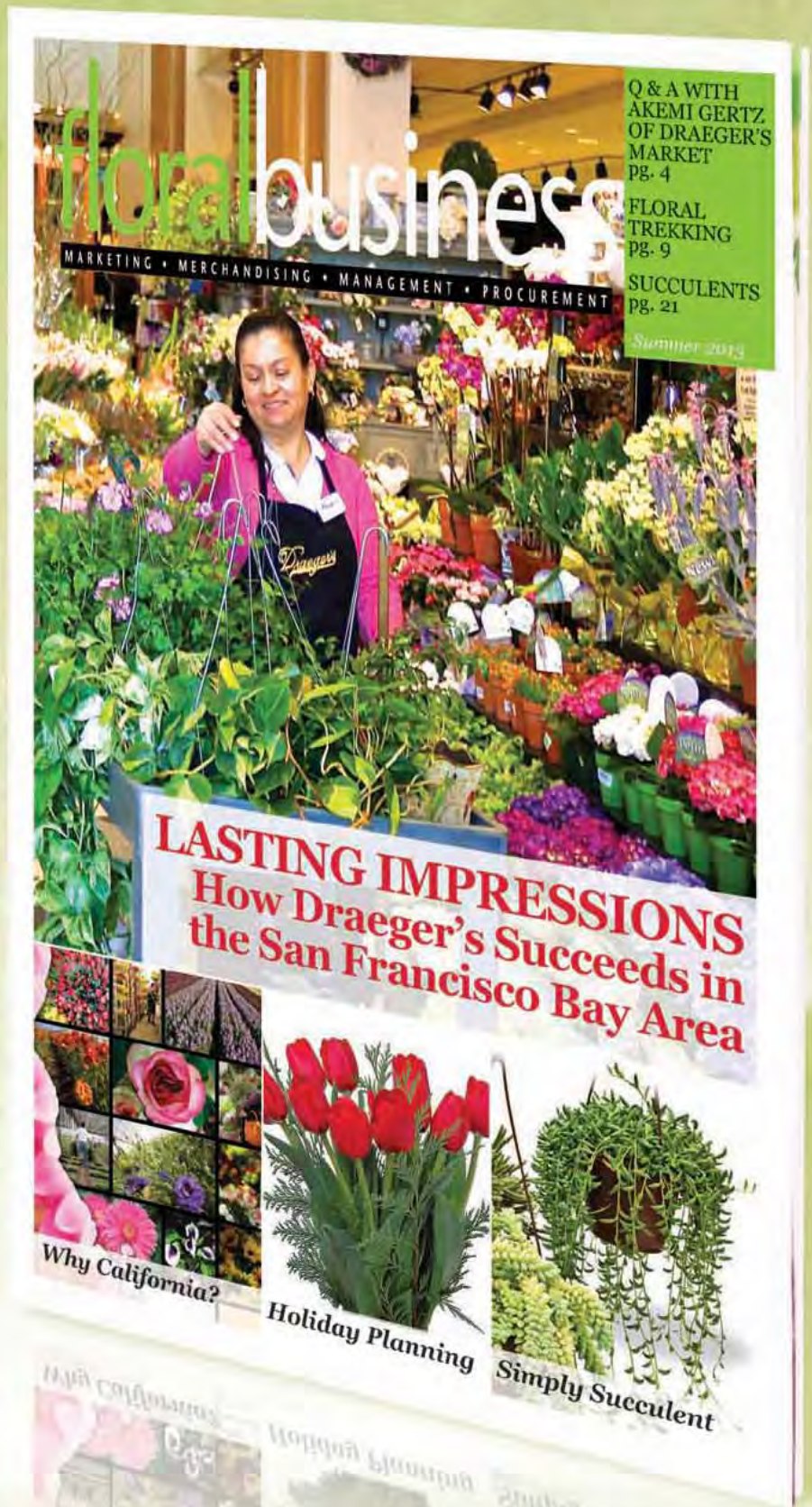


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# Enhance Your Produce Portfolio With Dates And Dried Figs

Get creative with product placement and follow industry trends to increase year-round sales of dates and dried figs. **BY MICHELE SOTALLARO**



PHOTO COURTESY OF HUGO'S FAMILY MARKETPLACE

Dates and dried figs are beyond seasonal flare. Retailers creatively integrate fresh hand-made items with bulk product.

The outpouring of television cooking shows such as *America's Test Kitchen*, or channels like *The Food Network*, and even magazines like *Cheese Connoisseur* have inspired consumers to eat healthier and to play *Top Chef* at home in their very own kitchens. This fueling desire to experiment with food is great news for produce departments because it's become a playground for every novice cook and experienced foodie. Experts unanimously agree that it behooves retailers to use food-pairing merchandising in Produce with dates and dried figs to capitalize on this hyperactive cooking/baking trend.

"Our largest single marketing expenditure is consumer print advertising," says David Anderson, director of marketing for Bard Valley Medjool Date Growers Association, based in Bard, CA. "We do a spring and fall print advertising campaign in *Cooking Light*, *Eating Well*, *Prevention*, *Food Network Maga-*

*zine* – all providing us national exposure."

"Valley Fig Growers has been participating in several TV cooking show sponsorships on PBS," says Linda Cain, vice president of marketing and retail sales at the Fresno, CA-

based Valley Fig Growers Inc. One of the shows is *Cook's Country* (companion television show to *America's Test Kitchen*), hosted by American chef, Christopher Kimball. On the West Coast, Valley Fig Growers also sponsors



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## SWEETEN SALES WITH STELLAR'S TIGER FIG

Increased production of a highly demanded new fig variety poised to profit retailers.

Retailers across the country this summer will be able to ramp up fig promotions as a popular new variety becomes more available. Stellar Distributing in Madera, CA, has announced significant production volume increases of the popular tiger fig allowing for greater promotion and sales potential.

"We introduced this promising new variety to our California fig program a few years ago," states Kurt Cappelluti, Stellar sales manager. "Last year we shipped 15,000 boxes but this year we estimate an amazing and very promotable 100,000 boxes. Shipments will begin August first."

Stellar is the exclusive seller of about 300 acres of Tiger figs growing near Madera, CA, and has been preparing the marketplace for success. "These figs have been very popular in the past year and we've been challenged to adequately supply retailers," explains Cappelluti. "We've been priming the market by providing small amounts of production over the last few years to familiarize consumers with the product. We're excited to now have significant promotable volume."

The Tiger fig's sweet flavor, striped green and yellow skin, and bright red flesh set it apart from traditional figs. "Consumers love the honey-like taste and the bright red color when they open it," states Cappelluti. "The fact that it's different really attracts them. It's definitely something retailers can create excitement over."

Stellar recommends spurring promotion and consumption through sampling, demos, visible displays, and signage that draws attention to the figs.

The Tiger fig will ship in 12 eight-ounce clams, six 12-ounce clams, eight one-pound clams, 12 one-pint baskets, half trays, family pack trays and full trays. "We want to ensure a wide variety of pack options so retailers can take full advantage of

this delicious and profitable new item," says Cappelluti.

Stellar starts the season on May 1 with Sierra, Black Mission and Brown Turkey figs out of California's southern desert and closes the season with those same varieties by harvesting in the central San Joaquin Valley. The Tiger fig enters the market on August 1. Stellar will ship with no break from May 1 through January 15, 2014 due to the volume from the Southern California desert crop and

Central San Joaquin Valley crop.

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# Tiger Figs

Perfectly named, the **Tiger Fig** is recognized for its unique yellow stripes over green skin.

The exquisite red-purple colored interior has a jam-like texture and consistency with delicious flavors of fruit, raspberry and honey. This medium to large size fig is available in Madera, California from mid-July through November.



*Exclusively Available from Stellar Distributing*



**“We cross-merchandise produce throughout the store to spark ideas in customers for new ways to serve the fruit. We often merchandise dried figs and dates in the deli alongside our assortment of recommended cheeses.”**

— Dan Donovan, Giant Eagle

award-winning cookbook author, *Joanne Weir's Cooking Confidence*. “We think that we’re helping to build awareness and interest in our products by advertising on those specific shows,” adds Cain.

“We also do a fair number of recipe releases that come out several times a year,” says Cain. In addition, the company includes a variety of educational content on its website to inform people about dried figs year around, particularly highlighting Blue Ribbon Orchard Choice California Figs. “We think a lot of the reason for our figs’ popularity is attributed to these marketing endeavors,” concludes Cain.

“With the growing popularity of food programming and celebrity chefs, we continue to see increased knowledge and interest among our customers about the various uses of both traditional and unique foods,” says Dan Donovan, spokesperson for Pittsburg, PA-based Giant Eagle, a supermarket chain with 231 stores in the Northeast. “Regarding dried figs and dates, we’ve noticed trends in tying together items

such as bacon and pecans. Many customers have also experimented with dishes such as dried or fresh figs stuffed with Gorgonzola and wrapped in prosciutto or simply adding the fruit into baked goods such as muffins, cookies or scones.”

“With date popularity over the past five years, there’s been an explosion of higher-end recipes ranging from protein shakes to stuffed pork loin,” says Ben Antongiovanni, vice president of sales at Bakersfield, CA-based Atlas Produce and Distribution Inc. “Dates are versatile and add a natural sweetness to anything you’re cooking.”

Antongiovanni explains that Atlas works with a couple chefs internally to create new recipes for the company’s website. “We like to put up one or two new recipes every two weeks to keep things fresh online. We’re also reaching out to magazines, like *Cooking Light*, in addition to cooking shows and websites to get Medjool date recipes out there.”

### Thinking Outside The Box

It’s important to complement these

marketing efforts by increasing date and dried fig visibility throughout the produce department in some non-traditional ways.

“Dried figs pair well with any number of different items,” says Valley Fig Growers’ Cain. “They work really well with cheeses and chocolates in addition to standard appetizers, salad and entrée applications. We have a couple of different recommendations for cross-promotional strategies for retailers.”

“The Blue Ribbon Orchard Choice Fig Balsamic Vinegar is perfect next to spinach salads or refrigerated cases where the salad mixes are,” proposes Cain. “In an effort to get Produce additional rings, we suggest they work with the cheese and deli departments to get some additional placements. Bleu cheeses and brie cheeses are especially good pairings. There is no cheese that a fig doesn’t pair well with, because they help to break up flavor and provide different texture as well as adding to the nutritional profile.”

“We cross-merchandise produce throughout the store to spark ideas in customers for new ways to serve the fruit,” says Giant Eagle’s Donovan. “We often merchandise dried figs and dates in the deli alongside our assortment of recommended cheeses.”

“In addition to cross merchandising, we conduct several in-store sampling events for customers to try the fruits and learn different ways to incorporate them into their everyday meals,” explains Donovan. “For example, we recently did an in-store demonstration with Medjool dates, which are much larger and richer than the average date. We suggest that customers try using the fruit for stuffing,



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PHOTO COURTESY OF BARD VALLEY MEDJOOL DATE GROWERS ASSOCIATION

Grocers are migrating to healthier impulse items in the check-out lanes. Embrace and maximize new areas to promote produce.

serving with cheese, or simply as a tasty snack on their own.”

Rick Hogan, produce department supervisor and manager for Hugo’s Family Marketplace, based in Grand Forks, ND,

names his favorite kind of date and location within his stores. “Medjool dates are the only ones that I recommend for our stores to carry. They are usually the best tasting and the freshest. We merchandise the bulk dates with

grapes or berries. We order anywhere from 25 to 75 pounds at a time,” says Hogan.

Jewel Date Company is the label of Medjools that Hogan orders. “We buy them from Melissa’s/World Variety Produce (based in Los Angeles, CA) as 15-pounders,” says Hogan. “They are pricey but tasty.”

Hogan’s philosophy on dried figs is similar. “We buy Greek string figs. They seem to be the best of the bunch and do the best as far as sales. They are a little more expensive for dried fruit, but as long as the quality is good, we don’t find that it holds the customer back as far as price.”

In order to compete with unique offerings from competitors, Hugo’s created its Premiere Choice branded private label of specialty items. One of the successful signature products is a homemade cookie with dates. These Premiere Choice items often inspire people to try new foods as well as remind customers to make purchases that are typically produce impulses — like dates and dried figs.

“You always have to think of the items that are on the grocery list and place the impulse items, like dates and dried figs, next to them. They should always be right up front and



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center,” advises Hogan.

Atlas’ Antongiovanni agrees that it’s key to display dates somewhere high in Produce. “If they end up on the floor, they won’t sell. People can’t see them and won’t reach for them. They should be high with the bananas and berries — especially the Medjools since they are a fresh item. They should be merchandized as fresh and not with the dried fruits.”

### Strong Visual Presents

Grabbing the consumer attention using non-traditional tactics is a strong approach, and can be just as effective as pricing strategies.

“The biggest way we like to promote product is by a store putting discounts for them on their frequent shopper card,” says Chad Hartman, director of marketing at Tropical Foods in Charlotte, NC. “That’s what we find consumers want: to go into a retail store, see the deal, swipe their card, and get a deal.”

Valley Fig Growers’ Cain agrees that price can be an appealing bargaining chip as well. “The allowances we provide retailers permits them to price our items at two for \$5, or sometimes, if they are willing to help us out on margins, they can do three for \$5. So there

are some pretty aggressive ways to get consumers in and trying the product.”

Using shippers to highlight variety is another favored method among marketers to boost visual presence for dates and dried figs. “The single greatest volume opportunity for retailers is to merchandize the shippers,” says Bard Valley’s Anderson. “With the shippers, we can create almost any configuration of product. We can do Medjool dates, date rolls, or we can do conventional and organic varieties.”

Bard Valley’s secondary shippers are available in 15 different product configurations with seasonal header cards for the holidays — especially for the all-popular Ramadan.

Ramadan is a Muslim holiday, and observant Muslims fast during the day, and then after sundown, the tradition is to celebrate by eating customary dishes containing dates.

“It’s absolutely critical that retailers with Muslim shoppers merchandise dates appropriately for the holiday,” says Bard Valley’s Anderson. “It’s a significant sales opportunity.”

“We package dried fruits in resealable trays or square cubes, and we do quite well with



PHOTO COURTESY OF TROPICAL FOODS

those,” says Tropical Foods’ Hartman. “A lot of our trays and cubes are used next to traditional produce items where customers can see the product.” The Tropical Foods displays typically focus on the low sodium, fiber, and potassium health benefits for consumers.

“We recommend displaying dates next to bananas — since they are high in potassium,” suggests Atlas’ Antongiovanni. “Also, we make a date coconut roll and date almond roll, and we’re asking retailers to display the date rolls

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## The Date Darling

Sometimes called the "king of dates," the "diamond of dates," or the "crown jewel of dates," the Medjool date is the most popular variety among its category. The tree fruit that originated in the Middle East and North Africa resembles the flavors of caramel, honey and cinnamon boasting an unparalleled sweetness — it's no wonder why it is a crowd-favorite snack.

"What we see now is a dynamic, growing business both on a category basis and brand basis," says David Anderson, director of marketing for Bard Valley Medjool Date Growers Association out of Bard, CA. "Through tracking with IRI and AC Nielsen, the Medjool is a variety that has a great rate of sales year-round because it's a snacking date versus a variety that would be used seasonally like the Deglet Noor (which is a baking date). It's a fresh fruit item and people perceive it as such, so they are going to consume it more frequently."

Anderson suggests merchandising multiple SKUs to increase sales. Bard Valley Medjool Dates market five varieties of snack packs under the Natural Delights label. These packs include date

rolls covered in almonds, chili lime seasoning, coconut, a conventional Medjool date, and a pitted Medjool date.

Interestingly enough, the pitted Medjool is only available through Datepac, LLC, the largest Medjool date packing and marketing facility in the United States, which is located in Yuma, AZ. Datepac was established in August of 2002 by local Bard Valley, CA growers. The mission for this grower-owned company was to consolidate the packing of Medjool dates for the Bard Valley growers. "Eighty-five percent of what the Association produces runs through Datepac, and it is the only vendor in the U.S. that offers a pitted Medjool date," says Anderson.

Anderson believes retailers should also consider merchandising Medjool dates in the checkout lane. "A number of retailers are starting to test a candy-free checkout lane. I think there is some merit to the idea, but we're trying to wrap our hands around the concept. It's certainly a unique idea from a merchandising standpoint. It's a sweet-tasting snack item, which would fall in line with lots of items sold at check out. **pb**

with the energy bars — especially since, here in California, the energy bars are starting to make their way to the produce section. It's a natural alternative to energy bars without all the additives and excess sugar. That business has really taken off for us. People are starting to eat the date rolls before a run or a workout. We've had great success merchandising them by using this strategy."

Atlas' Antongiovanni says that the company includes QR codes on the Medjool date's packaging to educate consumers and promote awareness. When the code is scanned on a smartphone, a video plays explaining the origins of the Medjool date. "When the video is finished playing, the user has an option to click on nutritional information or recipes — in essence creating virtual recipe cards at point of sale," says Antongiovanni.

Valley Fig Growers' Cain suggests using wing or side stack displays. "The product has no shrink and a two-year shelf life, so you don't have to work it as soft fruits," says Cain. "Product is pretty much carefree once it's on the shelf. So when new merchandise comes in,

all that needs to be done is a little product rotated, but beyond that, they are pretty low maintenance.

"Dates are an item that are right in line with consumers' healthy snack desires, easily merchandised, so the trade doesn't have to invest a whole lot of risk to merchandise them," says Bard Valley's Anderson. "It's a long shelf life with very little shrink, and they come in every package configuration possible to address different price points as well as taste profiles."

"When we do trade shows, we're discovering the consumers are falling in love with figs," gushes Valley Fig Growers' Cain. "We used to be more aggressive with getting people to talk to us, but now people come to chat with us to find out more about the products. We're not just known for the ubiquitous Fig Newton. Instead, you will find figs in a number of different products such as nutrition bars, Greek yogurt, ice cream, chutney, sauces, and jams. We feel like we're really coming into our own. Customers and retailers alike are discovering the great taste, nutrition, and value of California dried figs." **pb**



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# WHY IS *THEIR* PRODUCE DEPARTMENT BETTER THAN *OURS*?



**D**uring my career in Produce, there have been many occasions where I was sitting in a meeting of retail management personnel when the following situation developed. The retail management team had just returned from a trip to a distant marketplace and visited many different stores.

One particular topic was certain to be brought up in these discussions. “While visiting stores in the area, we went into XYZ market and that was the best produce presentation we ever saw! It looked great! Why can’t we have a presentation like they have?” Whomever made this comment secretly knows why our presentation doesn’t look like XYZ market, but the question and problem is placed squarely on the table. While one may know why the presentation is not as good, one doesn’t know all the reasons why. In other words, they just don’t get it!

We all know that the reasons for the differences in store presentation are complex. They include factors such as: labor allocation, personnel training, back room procedures and preparation, department size, procurement policy, display equipment, delivery schedule, warehouse rotation, warehouse inspection procedures and schematic planning. While each of these factors has influence on the successful presentation, and ultimately the sales of the department, there is one area that essentially covers all of these factors and can make the difference in your produce presentation. That factor is total commitment to the produce operation at every level by management. The solution is just that simple, the commitment of the resources and support is necessary to achieve the goal of a superior presentation. This action is the key element that separates those retailers with the best presentation from all the other opponents.

This is a major reality check for management. Do they really want to take the actions necessary to ensure a successful outcome? Are they willing to make adjustments to their processes or continue to pay lip service to the produce operation? To make protocol changes, it will take a great amount of soul-searching by management to determine if they are ready to take all steps necessary to cement their commit-

ment. Cost is of great concern to management in enacting such a plan.

In far too many cases, management looks at this as simply another cost to add onto their operating budget. Instead of looking at this as a drag on the operation, recognize the potential for increased sales and profits that far outweigh the initial cost expenditure. In my experience, I have sympathized with both perspectives. Obviously, the second approach of recognizing the potential of the commitment always works the best. However, in our cost-conscious industry, the overriding management concern of increasing cost usually wins. It requires a rare type of courage from management to play down the cost aspect and promote the benefit of increasing sales, profits, and the Produce image

for the store to the team. It also takes vision to recognize that the improvement in Produce’s image drives the improvement in image for the entire store.

It also takes real courage to provide the truthful answer to why the produce presentation in your store is not as appealing as the one management saw in the XYZ market. The best approach, as outlined above, is to put the emphasis on the benefits of the commitment in

terms of sales and profit versus the cost of the resources and support. It will take a great deal of planning and careful consideration to ensure that the answer and solution not only makes sense to management but also represents a positive step forward.

Too often, when confronted with this type of comment, we feel that our philosophy and/or performance is being attacked, and we respond emotionally. How you respond to this challenge can serve as the reality check for your operation regarding where you are and where you want to be. While retail management seems preoccupied with cost, it has repeatedly been shown that the right balance of sales and profit return versus the cost is always a strong argument for adapting and moving ahead with positive change.

In this manner, you can be the catalyst for the change that allows your team to take the produce operation and presentation to the next level. It will become increasingly important to be constantly improving and setting your operation apart in the competitive landscape. Utilizing periodic reality checks, not just in response to challenges, will give you the true picture of the operation’s present status. They will form the basis for your strategic plan to lift your operation to the next plateau of success.

**pb**

**It requires a rare type of courage from management to play down the cost aspect and promote the benefit of increasing sales, profits, and the Produce image for the store to the team.**

**By Don Harris**

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





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# WATERCRESS MAKES ITS MARK STATESIDE



**W**atercress (*Nasturtium officinale*) is a well rooted crop within the United Kingdom. Sales records go back several hundred years since the start of commercial farms. Traditionally, watercress was sold as a market crop throughout the U.K. Since U.K. supermarkets started stocking watercress in the late 70's, the demand and commitment

has led to watercress packs sold in the U.K.'s top seven supermarkets as well as in Europe.

Along with solo packs of watercress, the herb also is added to various mixed salad products and is often highlighted. During the past five years, where the salad sector has seen a decline, watercress has emerged and achieved annual growth. Weekly sales can exceed 1.3 million packs.

## The U.S. Contribution To U.K. Sales

U.S. watercress is a great product and fortunately very similar to what we produce in the U.K. and Spain. What makes the U.S. a great location to produce watercress is the climate and the transportation links. The system that we use for orders enables our U.S. farm to increase shipments to the U.K. for packing within 24 hours. This speed gives us the unique opportunity to service on demand and achieve some of the best service statistics in the market.

## Home In The U.S.

The U.S. proportion of U.K. sales probably tops 20 percent annually, but watercress success in the U.S. is attributed to specific availability per month. The United States produces approximately 0.7 million kg. per year for the U.K. market, but this is dependent on the success of EU businesses that operate at the same time. The proportion of U.K. sales can exceed 50 percent in months when sister businesses in Europe are at reduced productivity due to cold weather.

## What Is Watercress?

Watercress is a member of the cruciferous family and native to Europe and Asia but now found throughout the world. It's a peppery, dark green semi-aquatic plant that is commercially grown in running spring water in man-made watercress beds. These beds are located close to abundant supplies of spring water and are harvested up to seven times in a season.

The mineral composition of the water is reflected in the nutritional content of the plant; as a result, it's well known for its cleansing health attributes. The knowledge of watercress health benefits is well documented for thousands of years. Early cultivation was located close to monasteries serving the ill for local supply.



**What makes the U.S. a great location to produce watercress is the climate and the transportation links.**

## Health Benefit Discovery

More recently, researchers throughout the world have completed numerous clinical studies confirming the positive effects of a key compound found in watercress known as phenethyl isothiocyanate (PEITC) — most notably reported as a potential anticancer agent.

These health-improving attributes have been significant enough to generate positive food supplement sales by carefully capturing the natural properties in refined powders. Many nationalities have specific methods of consuming fresh watercress, and they range from eating raw to cooking with it. At one point, availability in many parts of the U.S. was restricted. Since watercress has a naturally short shelf life, investment was minimal and contributed to lack of interest.

Watercress is a summer flowering crop that is harvested in the U.K. during the months containing an R, and this is counterbalanced by our U.S. Florida farm. Since the 1950's, and the coming of commercial seed production, the industry has enabled year-round availability

by growing seedling crops to avoid flowering before harvest and sale. This adopted change in availability has supported sales, which see several seasonal peaks, responding to specific buying incentives attributed to marketing campaigns. U.S. sales and demand for watercress increase in the months of U.S. supply due to the popularity during detox/diet periods. Our U.S. export season starts at the end of the U.K. season in November and peaks in January through April.

## A Lesson For U.S. Exporters

Understanding the specific reasons for consumers buying a particular product is essential. With watercress, we find that it is not just an alternative to other salad leaves but a preplanned and conscious purchase by a consumer. In order to be successful with watercress, a reliable and well planned procurement program is essential — continuity on the shelves is paramount. Forming a long-term working relationship with key stakeholders is essential to ensure that an appropriate investment is made for infrastructure and marketing.

## The Future Of Watercress

U.K. watercress sales are currently growing by 9 percent each year. This progress is mainly a direct response to the 11-year marketing campaign. We monitor sales by frequency of purchase and penetration. Currently penetration is rated at 20 percent and frequency is at 5 percent, so there is still significant opportunity left within the U.K. We find that key sales increases are related to specific media releases. After each surge of sales, the retention is better, and the key factors of retention are quality and availability.

**Tom Amery**

Amery is managing director of The Watercress Company, Dorset, U.K., one of the leading growers of watercress, with farming operations in the U.K., Spain and Florida.



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Nathel & Nathel	104-105	718-991-6050	www.nyapplecountry.com
Naturipe Farms	58-59	239-591-1164	www.naturipefarms.com
New Jersey Peach Promotion Council	45	973-744-6090	www.jerseypeaches.com
New York Apple Association, Inc.	65	585-924-2171	www.nyapplecountry.com
New York Apple Sales, Inc.	116	518-477-7200	www.newyorkapplesales.com
Niagara Fresh Fruit Co.	132	716-778-7631	www.niagarafreshfruit.com
Northeast Produce Inc	132	860-793-2700	www.northeastproduce.com
Orange Enterprises	32	559-229-2195	www.orangesoftware.com
Pacific Tomato Growers	132	209-450-9810	www.sunripenproduce.com
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Jerry Porricelli Produce	101	718-893-6000	www.porricelli.com
Pro*Act, LLC	7	713-398-4000	www.proactusa.com
Produce for Better Health Foundation	47	302-235-2329	www.pbhfoundation.org
Produce Marketing Association	39, 167	302-738-7100	www.pma.com
Produce Pro Software	34	630-395-9600	www.producepro.com
QMP Sales & Assoc., Inc.	154	866-282-8120	
R Best Produce Inc	97	516-705-0800	www.rbest.com
J. Renella Produce, Inc.	83	718-991-4210	
Rice Fruit Company	133	800-627-3359	www.ricefruit.com
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Southern Specialties	133	954-784-6500	www.southernspecialties.com
Spice World, Inc.	153	800-433-4979	www.spiceworldinc.com
Spice World, Inc.	151	800-433-4979	www.spiceworldinc.com
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A.J. Trucco, Inc.	93	866-AJTRUCCO	www.truccodirect.com
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United Fresh Produce Association	156	202-303-3400	www.unitedfresh.org
The USA Bouquet Co.	12	786-437-6502	www.usabq.com
Vision Import Group LLC	67	201-968-1190	www.visionimportgroup.com
We Are Many Foundation	134	877-319-9613	www.wearmanyfoundation.org
Western Fresh Marketing	161	559-662-0301	www.westernfreshmarketing.com





## A LESSON FOR THE SEASON

This month's Blast From The Past is ironically fitting for PRODUCE BUSINESS for many reasons — the obvious reason being the holiday this month. This B2B ad is one that might have been seen in the pages of this magazine had it been around in 1944.

John Pandol, vice president of special projects of Pandol Brothers out of Delano, CA, found the ad and suggests that it might have been distributed by first class mail, with produce shipments or delivered by a company's representative.

It is interesting to note that a few of the ad suggestions are still put to good practice in 2013. "The merchandising suggestions, such as big displays and keeping produce well stocked and fresh by rotating items, are concepts that are still valid today," says Pandol.

Some callouts in the ad, for example cutting cantaloupes and watermelons then covering them with wax paper to prevent the exposed surface from drying out, are outdated; others might deserve a revival. "The reference to seasonal favorites is something we should really reconsider," says Pandol. "We try and have everything all the time. We convince ourselves that fruits and vegetables are the same all year. Yes, these items are always in season, but some seasons are just better than others. The consumer gets this. All the talk about 'local' and farmers markets is really a cry for seasonal."

Pandol is a true veteran of the produce industry and has a childlike affinity for it. "Whatever happened to the delightful Santa Rosa plums for 4th of July — and the rest of the plum-o-rama?" Pandol reminisces.

The *Blast from the Past* is a regular feature of PRODUCE BUSINESS. We welcome submissions of your old photos, labels or advertisements along with suggested captions. Please send materials to: Editor, PRODUCE BUSINESS, P.O. Box 810425, Boca Raton, FL 33481-0425, or e-mail [info@producebusiness.com](mailto:info@producebusiness.com)





Ted Vignolo, our founder

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